

MY FIRST TIME



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A note from the editor:

I read, edited, and compiled all of the stories. It is impossible to recount what it felt like. Some stories took my breath away.

The youth talk about things they may never have shared before, chronicling experiences that can't be described except in the first person. Growing up alone with their secrets is so personal, and sometimes tragic, that it can't be made up.

Some of the stories are really hard to read because it is unimaginable what a person can go through. Some will make you feel sad and powerless. What they have in common are gifts – the power to refocus on your goals and values, and relief in resilience of the young.

I learned a lot from every single story. They are all different and I like them all. I am grateful to everyone who shared. Every single youth in the Creative Writing Group has my total respect for their work.

Thank you to each youth in the Hillcrest Creative Writing Group who shared their story.

Jana Winter
Intern
Oregon Youth Authority

My life

My name is Bobby & I was raised in Portland, OR. As a baby, I was surrounded by drugs, weapons, bouncing around from house to house. When I turned 2, I got sent to a foster care for around 3 years while my parents decided to turn their life around & get me back. All though childhood I didn't have much, it was just enough to be able to wake up with a shelter above my head & clothes on my back & food to eat. During those years, I found love for any kind of sports especially baseball. I played baseball & had a natural talent for it. Age 15 came around & I had the opportunity to try out for a U.S.A team. I didn't really want to go because I didn't think I was good enough. My pops said I was & convinced me to go. I made the team & got to travel to Dominican Republic. We played against China, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Mexico & a couple of other teams. We took second place!

Right when I returned to the states my grandma had passed away. Mother was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. I was close to grandma & when she did pass it affected me a lot & it caused me to start drinking & use drugs a lot. I drank to blackout to try & forget everything bad that has happened. All the substance abuse lead to commit crime. I robbed people left & right, which landed me to my incarceration. I got arrested at 17 & was charged with 11 counts of robberies in the second degree. Two of those were robbery ones. I was sentenced to 5 years, 10 months. This event opened my eyes & lead me to where I am today.

A lot has changed, especially my prospective on life. I plan to keep my sobriety & gain as much education as possible to help me succeed later on in my life. If it weren't for my incarceration, I would have probably be dead or on the streets. This opportunity taught me a lot about myself & a lot of life lessons.

Bobby T.



Hidden

Bonscott S.

Lately, I've been feeling hidden, like a secret, something that's untold. I feel like something people don't wanna talk about, like a disgrace. I used to always feel like that, but I was in a public state at the time, But now when I see my family, or get a letter from a friend, I feel almost forgotten, like a sick cancer patient, like people don't ever think they'll see me again. I remember when I was out, Before I got in trouble, I had a Bad feeling, things started moving really fast, like time was nonexistent, then, after I got caught, and put in Detention. I was alone.

I Don't know why I did what I did, I wasn't thinking rationally, I let my anger take over. I had problems, when I was in the community, But I could Deal with my problems, now that I'm here, I hear about things with my family or friends, and I feel obligated to help, But I can't. It's weird Being so alone, I feel hidden away, Like I'm Stuck in a maze that has no end, like I'm trapped in a lockbox and nobody can find the key.

Have you ever Been caught Doing something stupid or funny, or have a girl you like see you Doing something stupid? That's how I feel when I see my family, like I'm in this awkward environment, and I'm not allowed to leave. But I'm stuck. One day, I'll Be Back, One day I'll go Back to my life, then I'll put all this Behind me.

This whole situation has Been a learning experience. It has taught me to put things aside, to let things roll off my Back, to ignore the negativity and move forward, not get held Back. People will laugh, they will say things about you, But the only thing that will Separate you from those people is your integrity. Having the ability to ignore Somebody's negative comments, makes you a stronger person, people will call you names, But only YOU know who you truly are.



Brandon D.

Part I Initial arrest

It is 10:00 PM. My heart is pounding. Uncontrollable perspiration dampens my T-shirt. The Pyrex glass continuously spins unleashing demons into my soul and diamonds into my lungs. Exhaling, I let the endless cloud disperse into the room, blurring every one's vision yet dissipating any fears or reluctance I might have possessed. I put the glass down, outwardly ready for the short walk to my next destination. There is a chill outside, but not a chill that comes from a frosty breeze on a winter day. Rather, the type of chill that comes when you are taken out of your comfort zone. The unnerving feeling that makes your hair stand-up causes your palms to sweat, or your thoughts to race making you aware of your surroundings. Your gut is clinched; a symptom of human nature saying something is off. This feeling leads me to leave everything habitually carried behind. Pockets empty and waist naked; I begin walking at a faster pace than usual. Focusing on getting there, I ignore the lights of the oncoming traffic. Seemingly out of a crack in the road, a single cruiser pulls on the side of me with the headlights leading. Like a mosquito bite, by the time I realized what is happening; it's too late.

It felt like within seconds more red and white lights appeared at my feet, chest, and in my eyes creating daylight out of night. Defeated, I decide not to try my luck and run. So I raise my hands, reaching for the clouds hoping this was a dream and I could fly away. Instead of going up, I am ordered to get down. Flat on my stomach I repeatedly hear the word

“airplane”. Only after the voice intensifies I hear the full phrase “like an airplane”. I spread out my arms and then I am told to move backward. Anything that would normally be kept in the waist area would have slid out. Nothing did. Satisfied for the moment, I feel a knee hit my back and the cold metal of the handcuffs latched over my wrist. I hear the sound of thunder in the distance and remember thinking how fitting it was. On my feet I finally notice the countless uniforms on the ground and in the sky; both two legs and four. I'm led to a street car with a cage in the back. This must be what a wild lion feels after they walk into a trap, when their neck is roped, then led to a cage as the surrounding population observes. Traffic is at a stand-still even though the lights are green. It is amazing how busy we pretend to be and how inconvenient other people and their problems are until what you normally see on T.V. appears right in front of your eyes; only then do people make it relevant to themselves and we begin to see change. The door opens, I look to the sky, then look to my right, and with the rest of his face hidden, I peer into my arresting officer's eyes.

Brandon D.

Part II Court Appearance

At 6 in the morning the cell light shines bright. Awakening in a haze I sluggishly retrace the events of the previous night. History tells me I'll be out by lunch, by tomorrow, or next week at the latest. I hear my door latch open, followed by my name being called. Thinking history would repeat itself I put on the rubber sandals and walk to my liberator. Instead of liberation, I learn I will be going to court. I put my hands on the wall then proceed to be inspected. A simple reminder of where you are and where your dignity lies. After being shackled, I stand among others of the same class then *herded* through a series of locked doors. Like a cow trying to jump a fence, is equivalent to a human getting through those latches. The drive isn't long enough to only hear I will not be released, but rather indicted. The drive back was even shorter. I arrive back at my dungeon and instantly feel the internal effects of my physical environment. Silence is absent, freedom is imaginary.

GROWIN' UP

Brown

Was it hard growing up in Portland, Oregon? No but everyone has his or hers hard times. For me mine was growing up in a home that was so corrupt, you knock on a door and no adult would open it, it would be me or my little brother. If you wanted to talk to my mom you would have to rip her lips from that glass pipe that took her from raising her kids. One of the only times I can recall seeing my mom was when I got in trouble at school and it was time to discipline me. So that made me have a lot of hate towards my mother and made me want to be more like my father who was always in and out of jail. When school came that was when I was forced to make sure my little man has the best clothing to wear for school and that was when I started to get caught stealing from stores, and selling drugs to my mother's friends, knowing the drugs may end up in my mother's lungs, but all that hate made me not care because who was going to look out for me and mine. But the hardest time was when I caught five years for something so small.

I came in thinking but I had real friends that would not tell what happened but knowing that I had sixteen codefendants changed everything. Now I am left with hopes and dreams and all I can do is good for I can make it home to my little brother.

Diversity / Experience

My name is Carlos S. and I am 20 yrs. old.
Serving 90 months for Robbery in the 1st degree and unlawful use
of a firearm against another.

When I first came to jail I can honestly say I wasn't too surprised by
the number of minorities I was surrounded by.

Sad to say, the criminal justice system has a biased way of
sentencing people. You come to notice that they tend to give longer
sentences to people of color if you say?

For me it was never too hard to fit in. I've always been able to get
along with people quit easily. It was never hard for me to make
friends.

It wasn't until after I got sentenced that I realized this is not a
lifestyle I'm willing to live for the rest of my life.

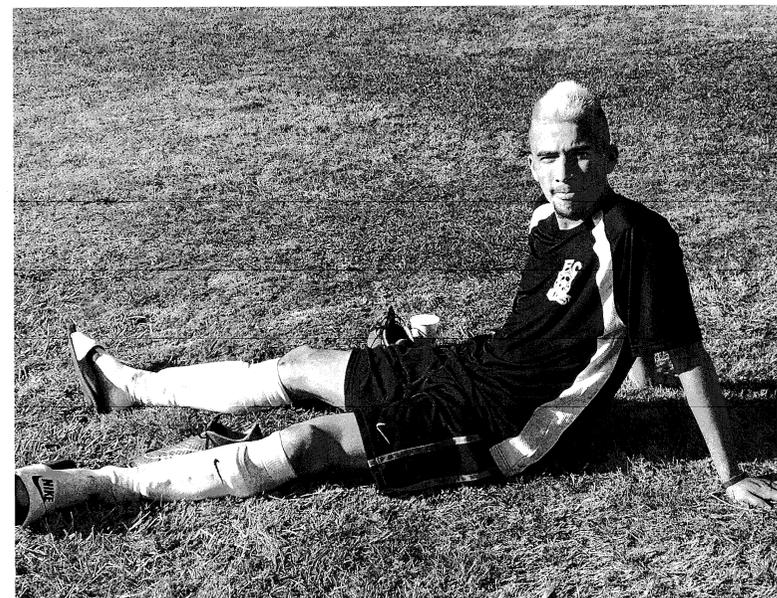
I did a lot of growing up since I first got arrested.

I now realize not only does family come first, although we often
take them for granted and I also learned that it's always business
before pleasure. I've always known that you have to work hard in
order to achieve what you want in life, and now I know what it is I
want. I know that one will fail plenty of times before really
succeeding. That's how the great ones do it anyway. I learned that
the only the only one that can tell you "You can't" is you. *I learned
that the sky is the limit.* And last but not least I learned the potential
that I have to succeed in this world and my time is now.

And to close this all here is something in a song from Drake that
motivates me.

"I want it all/that's why I strive for it/this means you'll never hear a
reply for it/any award show or party I get fly for it/I know that it's
coming/I just hope that I'm alive for it."

That's me.

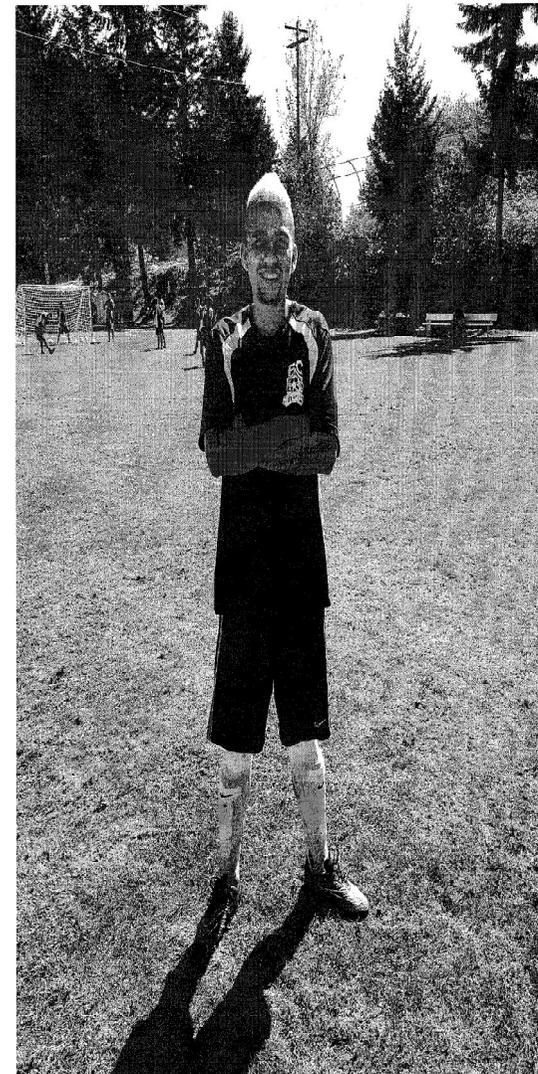


First time/How it was

My name is Carlos S. and I was raised in the San Luis Obispo area of California. I grew up a Jehovah's Witness up until I was nine or ten years old. I can honestly say life for me growing up was good. I was a happy-go-lucky kid growing up. I enjoyed playing sports, watching movies, and going to the neighborhood rec center. The game changer for me came when I was about 9 or 10 years old. My parents were having issues and to make a long story short, they decided to get a divorce. My mother then decided she was going to move me and my four brothers to Oregon due to the fact she had no family left in California. I guess I took the divorce pretty hard. My mother was then forced to work long days and we had no adult to really watch or monitor what we were up to. I did pretty good in middle school when referring to my grades. I made honor roll every year of my middle school years. I would also end up getting expelled every year either for fighting or

smoking weed or whatever. To make a long story short, I was arrested when I just turned sixteen for robbery in the first degree, attempted murder, unlawful use of a fire arm. I ended up being sentenced to 90 months (7 ½ years) for what I did. I call me coming here my "blessing and my curse". The curse of course being the amount of time I was given for my first time ever being arrested. And I call it a blessing because had I still been out I would have probably end up dead or here for a more serious reason. I have accomplished things here that I never would have thought of completing when I was out. I now have a G.E.D, a high school diploma, a culinary arts certificate, and I am currently working on getting my certificate to become a certified barber in the state of Oregon. I plan on also getting a degree in business. I can also say OYA helped mold me into a good young man. It has helped me realize my potential. I know now what I want to do with my life and am ready to go out there and make an impact on other people's lives. I am 20 years old and have 3 ½ years remaining in my sentence. I get out March 3,2018. Being here I realized that I was being selfish growing up. I blamed my mom for the divorce and didn't realize what I put her through. I now know that

I am responsible for all of my actions and realize that the only people that have been here with me through my experience are the same people I took for granted. My mother is my best friend and is the most important woman in my life. She's my inspiration, my motivation and I pledge to never cause her any more pain than I already have. I am a very ambitious person and I want to have my first million dollars by the age of 30. I plan on having my own barbershop and starting my own non-profit organization called the L.O.S. foundation. Los being my nickname and standing for "Left on the Sideline" and will focus on the low income families around Portland and eventually all across the nation and provide the families w/mentors for their kids that will guide them from elementary school to graduation and beyond. Basically being a helping hand and guidance to help lower the chances of these kids going to jail and higher their chances for success. If I have one thing to say to these families it would have to be to take advantage of all they have to offer and think and keep a positive mindset. Family is key during the whole time/situation.

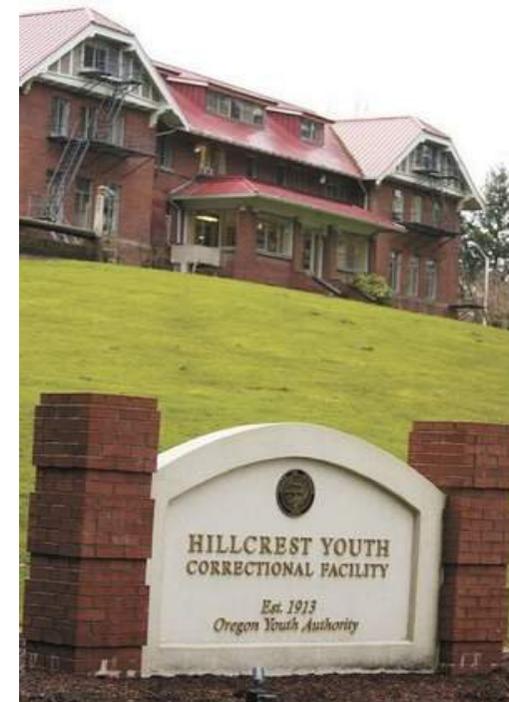


BUMPS IN MY ROAD

MY CRIMINAL LIFE STARTED AT A YOUNG AGE. I WAS DOING PETTY CRIMINAL STUFF AT THE AGE OF 8. I SPENT THE NIGHT IN JUVY HALL IN SPOKANE, WASHINGTON, FOR A BURGLARY 3. THE CHARGES WERE DROPPED AND I WAS RELEASED THE NEXT DAY. THINGS WERE PRETTY BAD. ONE NIGHT I WAS JUMP BY 6 PEOPLE FROM A NORTHERN GANG. I WENT TO MY COUSINS WHO WAS A KNOWN SOUTHSIDER. HE WRAPPED UP MY HEAD AND CHEST. ABOUT A WEEK LATER I WAS ASKED IF I WANTED TO FIND THE PEOPLE THAT DID IT. WHEN I SAID YES, I WAS SIDE BLINDED AND BEAT IN BY 3 LEAD MEMBERS. I RAPIDLY BEGAN TO EARN MY STRIPES. I LATER FOUND THE MAIN PERSON WHO JUMPED ME. I LET ALL MY BUILD UP ANGER EXPLORE ON HIM WHICH ENDED ME UP IN HILLCREST, FIGHTING ATTEMPTED MURDER CHARGES. I BEAT MY CASE BECAUSE HE DIDN'T SHOW UP TO TRAIL. I KNOW IF HE WOULD HAVE COME, I WOULD HAVE BEEN CHARGED. GOD WAS ON MY SIDE, BUT INSTEAD OF STARTING A NEW LIFE, I KEPT UP MY CRIMINAL LIFE. IN THE BOX ALMOST EVERY DAY FROM FIGHTING RIVALS. WHEN I WAS RELEASED, I DID GOOD FOR A YEAR, THEN CAME BACK TO HILLCREST, THAN TO ROUGE VALLEY CORRECTIONS, WHERE I WAS INVOLVED IN A RIOT THEN SET BACK TO HILLCREST CORRECTION FOR THE 3RD TIME. I WAS RELEASED 5 MONTHS

LATER AFTER THE RIOT. I QUICKLY FELT BACK TO MY OLD WAYS AND ENDED UP BACK HERE, TO HILLCREST. I KEEP TELLING MYSELF THAT WHEN I GET OUT, I'M GOING TO STAY IN GONNA STAY OUT. I HOPE TO GOD WHEN I'M OUT I'LL REMEMBER WHAT IT FELT LIKE TO BE AWAY FROM MY FAMILY AND MY CLOSE FRIENDS. KNOWING THAT WHEN I'M LOCKED UP TIME DOESN'T STOP LIFE KEEPS GOING AND THINGS STAY CHANGING. WHILE IN JAIL I LOST 3 FRIENDS FROM BULLET AND ONE GIRLFRIEND. REST IN PEACE TO MY LOST ONES. FOR THEM I WILL MAKE IT.

CHRISE.



My first meal inside

There was a beef patty. That's all I remembered about that day on the second tier of suicide watch. Except for the other things I remember. That horrible day. I picked it up between my right thumb and forefinger. A modern marvel. I have never witnessed a stranger alien relic that people call foodstuff. Perfectly circular, small like a coaster on your coffee table. One with the color-changing abilities and skin texture of a chameleon.

One you dropped in a bucket of afterbirth. Where you could find such a bucket remains a mystery. Brown and bumpy.

Then I brought it to my nose, just for a curious sniff... Never in my life have I ever been so horrified by sustenance. I immediately tossed it against the wall, buckled over, hit my forehead on the cold lifeless, metal toilet seat and threw up my spleen and two ribs.

After falling into a stupor for two hours, I rose up and yelled at the ceiling "What evil wizard is responsible for this monstrosity." Then I slid my hand down my stressed face. Then dry heaved for the next three days cause the stench was impossible to remove from my hand.

A pleasant evening dinner, indeed. I left the restaurant before I could take a bite. Except I couldn't leave. :(

Douglas H.

SLOW BURN

I guess I'll start with running. We all do it. Almost everybody. Well, surprise, I was running too. I wasn't running from the police, nor would I say I was on the run. Like many who find themselves in my position, I was running away from my crime scene. My crime scene just so happens to be my home too. In a way, I guess I was running away from life. I wasn't running because I was afraid of getting in trouble, but more so because I was horrified by what I did, and I was in a state of despair about what I had become. I didn't plan for what I did, nor did I expect it. I was never a troublemaker. Just one of those shy, energetic, and somewhat dismal semi-Gothic kids who didn't get out much because of his awkward social disposition. It was three o'clock in the morning, wintertime. The tears running down my face became frosty cold. My breath came out in white plumes of vapor, vanishing quickly into the orange glow of 1990's era street lamps. The strangest part was being barefoot. (I was planning on trying to get some sleep before all this happened) My feet were so cold. But I didn't know it, not until about thirty-minutes after I made it to the only safe-haven I knew: my friends house.

I'll just call her Alexiandradre tae. (for confidential purposes). And I had emotionally hurt her with my insecurities and self-ignorance. She and her mother, whom I'll call "Dime", took me in and my time of trauma, and try to get me some psychological help, but they were referred to the police.

Now, before I continue, I have to make sure you know a little bit more about me; My family and most friends have never dealt with police or anything related with crime issues.

With that said, I trust the police. Regrettably.

I was soon arrested without incident and has told them everything (I was the only perp, so no "snitching" took place). Yet again, regrettably.

After spending the night in the Marion County juvenile detention hall, they transferred me to the Marion County correctional facility (adult jail). I was only sixteen, but a little spearmint green paper with a frowny face on it explained that I was not considered to be an adult. The canteen officer was supervising the "drunk tank" and he was a grade-A asshole. Had I been who I am now, I would have said it myself, but I wasn't. So I didn't.

After a short hearing, starting that I would have no bail, they took a great photo of me, with puffy eyes from crying and the suicide smock on, they whisked me off to suicide watch. Don't get me wrong, I was very sad, but I wasn't suicidal. Tell that to them though. I was cold, sad, half naked, and couldn't force myself to eat. Eventually they moved me to a brighter room and allowed me to get out of my room every so often. So I read Kite Runner in a cocoon. I fashioned out of my sheets and blankets and nothing else. But, all good things come, and they said "Rabble, Rabble, Rabble", and my cocoon was destroyed. It took me a very long time to get the fact that I wasn't going home anytime soon through my skull. The state was pressing the charges, my "victim" was testifying on my behalf, but the D.A. never budged. Five years ten months, then three years' post-prison supervision, that is what they offered me to start, and that is what they offered me through the entire process. I was eventually moved out of suicide watch and placed in the protective custody unit with all the sex offenders, crazy folks, and senior citizens. Cool, yeah, place the only sixteen year old

in the facility, one who looks so skinny that he can fit his fist under his ribcage, in with the pedophiles, rapists, and child molesters. Needless to say that I needed to ignore my urges to show them my usual kindness and sympathy.

At one point I was beat up cause I didn't want to fight back. I'm sure that had it not been three in the morning that I could have worked up the intelligence to say, "Hey, this guy is pulling my hair and tearing chunks of my scalp off my head. Do something." Little did I know as I was about to pass out from his choke-hold that this fight... No, ass beating was going to change my life in more of a positive way than I could have imagined.

Before I could be damaged any further, the guards came by and took us both out in cuffs. I went to the medical room for a few minutes, just long enough to get the bleeding of my head to stop. Then, I was taken to the disciplinary unit. The hole. I fell asleep with blood matted hair. There were other people in the hole, and since I could only make it out of my solitary cell for a shower, shouting out the door to my new companions seemed to keep me within my limits of below-par sanity. I would make sure they eat their vegetables, and we would sing and laugh and talk. My considerate curiosity and honesty helped them accept me as someone they could socialize with.

But, those moments were a small minority compared to the amount of time I spent alone. For I was alone. That is when my vital change took place. I was pacing back and forth in my cell, talking to myself, reminiscing, thinking about hanging out by myself, rollerblades on, behind a school on the weekends. I still have no idea the name of it, but that was irrelevant. Sitting alone, on top of the on monkey bars. Then I pulled a stick of gum from out of my wallet. Then it occurred to me that I really like gum. Then, people turned the corner. Now, did

I want them to see me as the same sick, twisted individual I had been spiraling down into as long as my adolescence spanned?... No, I wanted to be a good man. I wanted to be open, but also honest with myself. I wanted to protect them, and give them all I could offer. But more than any of that, I wanted to surprise them. For them to honestly wonder what had changed me to be that man, and have skepticism about me because no man could be that good. No man could be that selfless. I would never be, because I feel good when I do the right thing, and guilt builds and never leaves me when I don't, so I would be a selfishly good man. That is what I set out to become.

I was let out of the hole, and taken back to the juvenile facility. They said it was because out of the goodness of their hearts. I wasn't retarded though. They had been building another facility next to the jail, but it hadn't been finished, and the jail was getting crowded. So they got rid who they could, and since I was underage, that included me. But it wasn't better in juvenile detention, it was worse. It was the second strictest juvenile facility in the state at the time, and I couldn't do so much as flick my eyes in any direction without permission. Two minute showers, a strict exercise regimen that seemed like army drills, and no interaction with any of the other youth.

Surely, and quicker than ever before, I was dissolving. I suffered at the time, from anemia, my insomnia, severe vitamin D deficiency, and an almost debilitating depression. Multiplied from the lack of any emotional or physical stimulation, coupled with almost no human interaction, and with my court case heading steadily downhill, I was a fractured shadow of what a human should be. At one point, my cell was next to another that a girl, named Katie, live in. She had drug issues, blonde hair, glasses, but was very polite and in all cases of interaction with others, nice. One night we headed back to our cells, and

we faced the walls next to our cell doors as they took count and opened them up. The second before I went into my cell, I heard from my right a heartfelt “goodnight.” I whispered it back, and cried myself to sleep. I still remember what she looks like, what she sounded like, and how much it meant to me.

But nothing brought me down more than being sentenced. In front of my loved ones, my friends who I had taken for granted. My plea for thirty six months was ignored, and they told me that they had no other choice, and that it would be better for me and the people around me if I was put away for longer, although my vital change took place over three months before. That I was dangerous, and that this what was right.

It wasn't the physical aspect that hurt. I had built up the patience of a saint, and I had been waiting for or on something for my entire life. Where I would be staying is soft core corrections, so it wouldn't be hard to survive. Mentally, I was crippled. My lack of educational exercise from county had left me dumbstruck, and so I had to start from little more than a fifth grade mathematical stand point. Emotionally, I was devastated. I knew I had lost many of the people I cared for. Opportunities lost, potential gone. My only dream was a simple one. Find love, marry, have a family. That was my definition of success. That is what I believed and still believe that that will be the only thing that can give me true happiness. Now, that was unattainable. I felt like a man in a field of burning, unrefined oil. Black and acrid is the infinite expanse, and there is no difference from the ground to the sky. I knew not whether it was night or day, cause the sky was not but the thick black smoke that surrounds me, which is the same as the thick jet sludge that I stood in. I choked on my own words, suffocating who was and am. The only difference was the pylons of fiery red. The furious heat that scathed me and reaped tears from my eyes. But this

plain was not what surrounded me, it lived inside of me, was a part of me, and it was the condition of my vitality. My soul, my heart, my humanity could and was on the verge of dropping dead, and my body would never have known the difference.

What has stopped it from happening? I had no hope to live off of.

It was the hope of what was left of my family. Who am I to deny them who they so desperately want to have back?

Just a man in a burning field of oil. He can't die. Cause he knows that if he can't find the sky when he drops, then he won't be able to find heaven in the end. He will only burn and rot, stuck, solitary, with all the other dead bodies who died alone. The mass grave I will never contribute to.

That is what you must do. In a state of despair, live off of others hope for your future. If you don't fit in, carve out a niche in an element that no one else knows, dominate it, and they, although they won't understand or sympathize with you, will learn to respect you as an element all your own. A constant, one that will always be, so they must coexist with you or fall. Prone to bad luck? Deal with it. Once you take ownership, blame for pretty much everything, than it no longer matters what people think of you. After that, people will have to learn to deal with you.



Douglas H.

My first time

I remember my first court date like it was yesterday. It was the longest 5 minutes in my life. When they told me I was facing a life sentence, my heart dropped into my stomach. What I remember the most was walking back to my unit after court with my indictment sheet of the charges. I was facing. It was the heaviest paper. I thought my life was over and that I'll never get out. I am almost three years in my sentence but honestly I am a lot happier now from when I first got arrested.

Time will tell what will happen in the future until then I just got to take it day by day.

Ezequiel V.



Detention

My first time in detention was boring.

I was 12 years old and thought I was a bad ass. I got into a fight in school in front of my friends, so I thought I was cool. When I arrived to detention, they asked my name and age and they put me in a cell. I wasn't sure if I was going to stay overnight. I heard other people in the cells next to me. Some yelling and some crying. I went there in the morning around 9:30 am.

Lunch time came around so it was 12:00pm. The food was crap. I ate it all because I was hungry. After lunch the cop that arrested me talked to me some more about what happened. He told me I had to go to court. My mom was on her way to pick me up. By the time my mom picked me up, it was around 6pm. I ran in my room for a long time. My mom was running late so they collected my older cousin. I finally got picked but my cousin was angry at me for getting in trouble. I went to court for the charges and I didn't get put on probation luckily. All I had to do was pay a fine and attend anger management classes. That was just the start of my problems. After that I was in and out of detention. By the time I was 17, I got charged for some serious

crimes. I was a Norteño gang member and facing years in prison. At the end of it I got sentenced 8 years. I'm now 22 years old. I wish instead of thinking detention was burning, it was scary instead. Sometimes we have to learn the hard way.

Gabino Z.



Story of my life

10-2-14

Isaac C.

It started as a normal day, I had woke up early in the morning and went to work. I arrived home at six in the afternoon to nobody there. Not liking to be alone, I called some friends, who told me that there was a small kick back going on and that I should go over to smoke some weed and drink some Bombay. Without hesitating, I agreed to stop by to check it out.

After I got ready, I drove down to my brother's house in Canby, from Portland. I showed up around 8 o'clock and people were all starting to show up.

After 3 hours of smoking, drinking, and having a good time, I asked my cousin, Daniel, if he would like to go to my car with me, so we could smoke a cigarette and listen to music. While we were heading out the door, my other little cousin Cesar asked, "Where are you guys going?" Once we had told him, he asked if he could tag along. When we finished smoking, my cousin Daniel asked if we could go on a drive. When I said no he asked again saying, "Come on, let's just go around the block or something?" I caved in. I didn't give it much thought, I just turned my engine on and back my car out of the drive way then, threw it in first gear. Instead of simply going around the block, like I should have, I decided to take a drive through some back roads

so I could speed. I almost made it to another close town before I stopped at a closed gas station to turn back around and return to the kick back. Speeding, I followed the road back to Canby, hitting 100mph going down a hill coming to a compound turn. My body was pushed up against the door and window because of my blown suspension and I could tell that I was going too fast for the turns, but before I knew it, I was already taking the next left turn. As I straightened my car with the road my car started fish-tailing, causing the back of my car to shoot out to the left. To straighten my car back out, I turned my steering wheel to the left, causing my car to sling-shot itself to the right. While I was sliding parallel to the road, I took a glimpse

out of my passenger side window, then looked into Daniels eyes, not knowing it would be the last time.

The next thing I know, I'm waking up to a distinct smell of cement and the sound of gargling. Not knowing if I was knocked out for a couple seconds or a few minutes, I opened my eyes to see grass where my windshield was, and due to the pull of gravity, both mine and Daniels arms were lifted up toward the roof. Upside down, dizzy, and disorientated, I unbuckled my seat belt and fell. I tried finding the door handle to open the door, but I couldn't find it. As I searched, I realized the window on the door was broken, and so I crawled out. Once outside of my car, I leaned over and looked

inside the window I had just crawled out of. I saw that Daniel was still upside down and my little cousin Cesar wasn't in the car. Every breath Daniel took sounded like he was gargling, and without knowing it, every breath he took, was suffocating him. Starting to panic, a sick feeling emerging in my stomach, I saw a car slow down and stop, so I ran to it, telling the driver to call 911 because my cousin was still in the car. Starting to freak out I ran back to my car, I began calling my cousins name repeatedly, getting louder with each time I said it. It was at this moment that a random lady pulled me away from the car. Trying to calm me down, she asked me multiple irrelevant questions like my age and where I'm from. While she was asking me

questions, realization started to come back to me, and I asked, "Is my nose broken?" She said, "Yeah, it's pretty bad." "Should I break it back?" I asked. "No, let the paramedics do that." she said. When she turned around, I pushed on my nose and heard 2 loud pops as I broke it back. After that, I noticed my little cousin Cesar, walking down the road.

Instinctively, I got up and ran to him. I hugged him tightly and said, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean for any of this to happen, I'm really sorry!" I took a step back and noticed he was pale and white as a ghost.

By this time the paramedics were taking Daniel, into the ambulance. On the way to the hospital, I didn't want any of this to be real. I closed my eyes tight, wishing it

was all a dream. Before I knew it I was already in a hospital bed. Policemen and investigators came in questioning me about what had happened, only to leave and come back again to tell me that my passenger didn't make it. I couldn't believe it. I didn't want to believe it. All I could do was look at my hands, thinking in my head, "These are the hands that killed him. I killed him. It's my fault he's dead." I started to cry and that's when my parents came in, looking like they had been crying, and overly stressed, they looked down at me on the bed and with no words, but had a look that spoke many. After a little bit my dad asked me who died. I said, "Daniel." which made him start crying again. He told me how sorry he felt about the whole

situation and said, "We'll get through this." All I could do was cry and look at my hands. I couldn't bear to look into my parents eyes, I didn't want to be there, alive, knowing my cousin was gone. I wanted the person who died to be me so bad because it wasn't fair to me that I was alive, yet I was the one behind the wheel driving, while he was sitting passenger and he's the one who lost his life. I felt lost, alone, guilty, and depressed. I became numb, and detached myself from everything. I didn't even feel it when they gave me stitches for my nose. The next morning, when my parents had gone home a councilor came in to check on me, and how I was feeling. She told me my life was never going to be the same. I got arrested shortly after for manslaughter in the second

degree, DU99, and assault in the 4th degree. I pled guilty to negligent homicide and DU99 and got sentenced to 50 months. Now I sit in jail with the guilt of my cousins life on my shoulders, knowing that the pain will never get any easier. There is not a day that goes by where I don't regret what happened and there is nothing in the world, I wouldn't do to get Daniel back. I learned an important lesson at a tremendously high price and to me it wasn't worth it. I do a lot of, "could of's." and "should of's." and no matter how much it hurts, I can never bring him back.



Rest In Peace

Daniel Gonzalez

• 3-3-94 - 5-10-13 •

*"Never leave our hearts,
Never leave our thoughts,
as time goes by,
you'll never be forgot."*

Importance of Education

James D. 8/21/14

Prior becoming incarcerated, I was 16 years old with no real drive towards school. I wasn't a bad student, however, I just did not want to attend class. I would show up to class only to turn in homework and take tests. A normal school day usually consisted of me showing up to school before class started only to leave again with friends for the rest of the day. I figured opportunities would present themselves without an education, so why put all of the effort into school? I had a job already and it wasn't bad pay, so I imagined that my employment would rise from there. Then I was arrested for a robbery crime. It seemed like all of my job aspirations and dreams floated away once. I became incarcerated.

Gaining employment seems almost impossible for some people, and they are not convicted felons.

Add a felony and years without job experience puts even more of a strain on potential employers attempting to hire recently released inmates. With an education it becomes a little more practical to gain employment. Education is a must for people leaving an incarceration setting. Most all ex-felons won't have an inside connection to a Fortune 500 company, but with some form of education, that becomes more of a reality for all. After finishing my Bachelors degree (in Managerial Economics) upon release I now have 3 different job opportunities ranging from Nike to an I.T. company. Earn an education, it will pay off!

I got arrested on 7-19-13 for Robbery in the second degree, which is a Measure 11 and is a 70 month mandatory sentence. Within the week I was arraigned and read my charges at Washington County Court. It was my first time going to county jail and actually facing a long stretch of time and facing prison. I had just turned 18 on 6-23-13 and was with my son when the Swat team came and kicked down my door. I was caught off guard and was hella mad because I felt disrespected in my own house. When the cops seen me holding my son they lowered their guns and told me to step outside. Once outside detectives read me my rights and cuffed me, when I got to jail I was told of what I was facing. At first I thought I was going to get out soon but after speaking to a lawyer I realized that things weren't going to be that easy. That's when shit hit the fan and I started to take things more serious. So as time went by I sat around in county jail, on Pod Ce cell 10 booking #13-09903, and started to prepare myself for the worst possible outcome that could happen. While in jail I continued to work towards my high school diploma and learning more about my chances at court. I've been to court 3 times and for the first two times the DA only offered me 10 months with good time. I kept rejecting those offers and kept hoping that I'll catch a break. After a long 9 months of pushing my court dates back I finally got a good deal and took it. In April 18, 2014 I signed my deal of 60 months with a second look under OYA custody, which meant that I'd be in a youth

correctional facility instead of prison. The next day I was put on transport and moved to Coffee Creek Correction Facility, which is the only women's prison in Oregon and the men's intake for prison. That place is the closest I came to living in prison because of the way everything was laid out. I stayed there for 3 weeks before I got on transport and moved to Hillcrest Youth Correctional Facility. I thought that I was going to serve my time at the unit I got to but I was told that I was going to have to go through the whole intake process. That took another month and a half till I got to a living unit at Hillcrest. Finally on May 29 I switched over to sigma where my homie from my varrio was at. I felt a bit less tense because when I got there I already had friends there waiting for me. As a part of my plea I agreed to take alcohol classes and anger management classes so that I can rehabilitate. At the unit they offered me those classes. I have a 4 year old son waiting for me to come home, I'm 19 years old and never had a father of my own growing up. I'd hate to follow my father's footsteps and abandon my son, so I call him and write him letters every chance I get. He is my chance of being the father I never had and here I am spending my time behind bars. If there's anything I'd regret it would be losing all this time with my son because that's time taken from both our lives. I never had much of a childhood because I grew up too fast, I started gang banging with my uncle and cousin when I was 9 years old and got shot in the chest with a 25 when I was 11.

My Life

I've been in my gang for 10 years and all I really got was a criminal record and 3 friends in the cemetery. Ever since I had my son I've been thinking about all the things I've done and thank God that I haven't lost my life. I still have my whole life ahead of me and I don't want to waste any more of it behind bars, I want to spend my life being the best father that I can be. When I get out in 2018 I hope to be more mature and become a man, till then only time will tell how or where I will end up. If I had any advice to give it would be to think about what you do and how it will affect those around you. Since I've been locked up I lost my friends, my girl, and my family. When it comes down to it all you just get to choose your own path and hope for the best. If you don't it's alright because you'll learn the hard way in life lessons that could change your future. I know it ain't much but I hope that my story can change some of your choices in life and open your eyes to reality.

Thank you,
Jesse B-R.



- *My first time* -

So I guess to start this off I just want to say that you never really know what you have until someone takes it away from you. That happened when I was sentenced to serve 10 years in corrections. Luckily I had my best friend who I think of as a brother to support me along with his family. If I didn't have this people in my life I don't know where I be to this day. My name is Jonathan B. and I have been reason. The thing that I come to value most in my life is my freedom. I miss it every day and the things I've done in my past continue to creep up on me as a reminder to not discard this opportunity and take advantage of this second chance. I was very angry when I first came into corrections, I was angry at myself, the situation in general and the idea that I threw 10 years of my life away! On the other hand though, my family and friends helped me stay focused on the positive side of things and help push me to do as good as I can! The best piece of advice I can give people who get themselves in a tough situation that lead them into corrections is to not let the time they take away from you go to waste. Everyone gets to make their own choices! Alright right then.

"Choice is the Freedom everyone gets."

-John B.



Second chance

J. P.

My name is Johnnie P. and I am 18 years young. I was first incarcerated when I was 15 years of age on a robbery 1 charge. I was sentenced to 38 months with a second look at 19 months. My first time through was difficult. There was the fact that I was charged with a Measure 11 and I was doing time as an adult. It was also difficult because I knew I was going to be away from my family for that long period of time. My most difficult outcome that I had to overcome while in corrections was being so far but so close to being with my family. One little slip up and I could have lost my opportunity to get out early. Throughout my incarceration I had many days when I felt alone inside and felt like everything would

screw up and that I wasn't gonna get my second look. I have met a lot of people that had make mistakes, just like me, but came back when give the chance to succeed with a new beginning. I kept telling myself that I wasn't going to be like them and come back when give the chance to change my criminal ways. After about 2 years, I was paroled back out into the community. I have been anticipating my release since day one. I felt that I was in control of everything and I would succeed and get on with my life but I felt to overwhelmed and got ahead of myself and forgot what I need to do and started to use drugs and relapse in my criminal behavior. Now I am back to Syvare one about to be release in 13 days from now and looking forward to succeeding.

SENTENCING DAY

DECEMBER 8, 2011:

I WAS CHARGED WITH FOUR COUNTS OF AGGREGATED MURDER, TWO COUNTS OF UNLAWFULLY USE OF A WEAPON, TWO COUNTS OF ROBBERY AND TWO COUNTS OF KIDNAPPING IN THE FIRST DEGREE. I WAS FACING 10 CHARGES LOOKING AT 30 YEARS TO LIFE IN PRISON. BY THE WAY, I WAS ONLY 15 YEARS OLD. I HAVE BEEN FIGHTING THE JUSTICE SYSTEM FOR TWO YEARS TO HOPEFULLY RECEIVE THE LEAST POSSIBLE AMOUNT OF TIME. THE ONLY PROBLEM IS THAT THE JUSTICE SYSTEM SAY I'M A COLD-HEARTED PERSON WHO HAS NO REMORSE FOR WHAT I DID. AT 13 YEARS OF AGE I WAS OLD ENOUGH, MATURE, AND SOPHISTICATED ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND ALL OF MY ACTIONS. THIS WAS ACCORDING TO THE JUDGE AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM. FINALLY, AFTER TWO LONG YEARS FIGHTING, PRAYING EVERY NIGHT TO GOD TO MAINTAIN HOPE, FAITH AND TO REMAIN STRONG FOR MY FAMILY. FINALLY EVERYTHING COMES DOWN TO THIS DAY. THE JUDGE WILL EITHER SEND ME HOME OR SENTENCE ME TO 30 YEARS TO LIFE IN PRISON...MY HEART IS BEATING A LOT FASTER THAN USUAL. MY PALMS ARE SWEATY, I CAN FEEL A SMALL DROP OF SWEAT RUN DOWN MY BACK SLOWLY. I AM SUPER NERVOUS AND VERY ANXIOUS. EVERYTHING WAS MOVING SO FAST, EVERYTHING WAS A BLUR AND NOT MANY THINGS MADE SENSE TO ME. I JUST HOPE I DIDN'T LOOK AS NERVOUS AS I WAS FEELING. I SAW

TWO SHERIFF OFFICERS COMING MY WAY TOWARDS THE HOLDING CELL. THEY ARE COMING TO TAKE ME TO THE COURT ROOM. USUALLY I WOULD BE WEARING AN ORANGE JUMP SUITE. HOWEVER, MY CASE WAS A LITTLE DIFFERENT. I GOT TO WEAR A WHITE BUTTON UP SHIRT, SOME BLACK DRESS PANTS, AND MY NIKE ALL WHITE AIR FORCE 1'S. I WAS WALKING HANDCUFFED, A CHAIN AROUND MY WAIST, SHACKLES ON MY FEET, AND TWO COPS ON EACH SIDE. WE WALKED THROUGH A COUPLE OF DIFFERENT ROOMS AND THEN THE COPS TELL ME THAT WE ARE ALMOST THERE. AS WE KEEP ON WALKING THROUGH THE HALLWAYS THERE ARE PEOPLE STARRING AT ME IN DISGUST. THEY KEEP ON LOOKING AT ME LIKE IF I WAS A MONSTER. I CAN'T HELP IT BUT PUT MY HEAD DOWN IN SHAME. AS WE TURN A CORNER THE OFFICERS SAY, "WE'RE HERE." I LOOK UP AND THEY OPEN TWO BIG DOORS FOR ME TO ENTER. AS I WALK IN THE FIRST THING I SEE IS MY FAMILY, A WHOLE LOT OF PEOPLE, AND A LOT OF OFFICERS. THE FIRST SOUND THAT I HEAR IS CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK A HUNDRED TIMES AND SUPER FAST. REPORTERS WERE TAKING PICTURES...I TOOK A DEEP BREATH AND KEPT ON WALKING WITH MY HEAD DOWN. THE OFFICERS LED ME AND LEFT ME TO SIT WITH MY LAWYER. THE JUDGE WALKS IN AND EVERYBODY STANDS UP IN A MATTER OF RESPECT. ONCE HE SITS DOWN WE ALL SIT BACK DOWN AND THE JUDGE EXPLAINS THE PURPOSE OF THAT COURT DAY. AFTER HE IS DONE ALL THE GAMES ARE PUT A SIDE AND WE GET DOWN TO BUSINESS. "WILL THE DEFENDANT PLEASE STAND UP." I STAND UP SLOWLY READY TO FACE WHATEVER HE DECIDES TO THROW AT ME. HE ACKNOWLEDGES ME AND STARTS READING OFF MY CHARGES. "FOR THE TWO ROBBERY CHARGES THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OR TRACE OF THE MONEY. THEREFORE, THOSE CHARGES HAVE BEEN DROPPED."

I TRY TO REMAIN CALM BUT MY HEART SKIPS A BEAT EVERYONE IS SO QUIET AND TENSE. I'M TRYING TO BREATHE NORMAL BUT MY HEART IS BEATING SO FAST AND IT IS SO LOUD THAT I THINK EVERYONE CAN HEAR IT.

"THE TWO COUNTS OF KIDNAPPING HAVE ALSO BEEN DROPPED."

I COULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT I WAS HEARING. THE JUDGE HAD DROPPED FOUR CHARGES.

"AGGREGATED MURDER COUNT 4...
NOT GUILTY.

AGGREGATED MURDER COUNT 3...
NOT GUILTY.

AGGREGATED MURDER COUNT 2...
NOT GUILTY."

MY HEART DROPS, MY PALMS ARE SWEATY, MY BODY IS HOT, MOIST. I CAN FEEL SWEAT DOWN MY BACK. I AM NERVOUS, SCARED AND ANXIOUS TO HEAR THE LAST CHARGE. I TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND TRY TO KEEP CALM AND COLLECT. YET IT IS SO HARD BECAUSE I'M ALMOST FREE TO GO HOME.

"AGGREGATED MURDER COUNT 1...
WE FIND THE DEFENDANT GUILTY..."

GUILTY WAS THE LAST WORD I HEARD. ALL MY ANGER, FRUSTRATION, FEAR, ANXIETY ALONG WITH EVERYTHING ELSE HIT ME IN THE FACE WITH A REALITY CHECK. MY WHOLE WORLD HAD COME TO AN END. ALL MY DREAMS AND HOPES WERE ALL GONE. I WAS NO LONGER A KID, SHIT I NEVER WAS. I STOPPED BEING A KID THE DAY I GOT ARRESTED. I MADE SOME OF THE BIGGEST AND HARDEST DECISIONS WHEN I WAS 13, 14, AND 15 YEARS OLD. I WAS FOUND GUILTY AND SENTENCED TO 30 YEARS TO LIFE IN PRISON. I WAS ONLY 13 YEARS OLD. I THOUGHT MY WORLD WAS TO ITS END. BUT THEN I TURNED AROUND AND SAW MY MOM, AND FAMILY CRYING. HAVING TO WATCH THAT

KILLED ME. I DECIDED RIGHT THEN AND THERE THAT EVEN THOUGH I WAS IN THE WORST SITUATION I COULD EVER BE IN. I WAS GOING TO TURN SOMETHING BAD INTO SOMETHING GOOD. AND IN THE PROCESS I WAS GONNA MAKE MOM PROUD.

TO WHOEVER IS READING THIS ALL I HAVE TO SAY IS KEEP YOUR HEAD UP, STAY STRONG, NEVER LOSE HOPE AND ALWAYS DO THE RIGHT THING FOR YOURSELF AND FOR THOSE YOU LOVE. LIFE MAY BE HARD BUT YOU ARE STRONG AND BUILD THOUGH. SOON EVERYTHING WILL BE BETTER. REMAIN PATIENT. YOU'LL BE HOME SOON.

Respectfully: J.N.

8/9/14

Communication

Life has many turns. Some are for the good and some are simply not too good. Nobody really has an explanation to the things that happen in life. One second you could feel on top of the world, like you own it. And the next second you could lose everything you can think of. This will bring you down and make you feel real sad. Can you imagine losing everything you love? Can you imagine having almost everything you desire, to not having anything at all? As many would say, those are the ups and downs of life. And to be completely honest that is one hundred percent true. Life can change dramatically in a matter of seconds. However I believe there are many good things that can happen out of a bad circumstance. Do you understand? No, okay let me say this; I am incarcerated in a youth correctional facility. There is maybe over 120 youth locked up some under 18 and some over 18 years old. However, not just because we have been removed from society for crimes that we have committed, it does not mean we have to give up. Or that we are terrible people. Sure it is very hard to continue and live a life being away people that we love (family, and friends) yet we stay strong and focus on us to better our lives after a something bad that has happened. I believe that everything happens for a reason.

I have been incarcerated for almost five years next month (on Oct-10). Many times I feel like I have no power, like I have no say in anything that I do. For the most part this is pretty true. They tell me when to eat, when to take a shower, use the

restroom, when and where I go to, just about everything I have to ask permission. They run my life. So this makes me feel that I have no say in my life. Almost as if my body was in auto pilot. Therefore I feel small, like a grain of sand on the beach. I have no voice. People out in the community do not really care for an inmate. They believe that if you're in jail you are in there for a reason and you need to pay for what you did. An inmate is to be seen as a dangerous criminal that will never change. And many people in the community believe this, because they do not know the "inmate" all they know is what they see in TV and the stereo types many people have come to recognize an "inmate". However once you meet a new person it could change everything.

Meeting new people is such an amazing thing and one of the best things that could ever happen. It is almost as when you meet someone new you are introduced to a whole new world. With that one person you meet many other people and everyone does something different. Being incarcerated has limited my introductions to new people. Sure we meet new people but never someone from a different country or someone important in a sense. It's amazing how much of an impact you can make on a person. Earlier in this paper I mention that I feel small and powerless. That I feel like I had no say in anything that I did therefore I have no say or better said no voice. However, meeting someone from a different country has really been a wonderful experience. Not just because I am incarcerated it does not mean my voice will not be heard. Yes it might be quiet at first but soon meeting the right people my voice will be louder than a lion roaring! The main thing I want to say is that no matter who you meet in this world it is always

good and important to be yourself. Let that person get to know you and hopefully that person will learn from you. Maybe you can teach somebody the value of life, or maybe how valuable life is. That it is not about the cars or who has the best woman, that life is much more than that. Life is about family, your children and grandmothers and grandfathers. It's not about money. It's about being there for your family and loved ones whenever they need you. That a hug and a "I love you" from your children is much more worth than a hundred dollar bill. The simple things in life will bring you more happiness than anything else in life. No matter where you are people will learn from you. Hopefully they all learn something good and pass it down to someone new that may need the help or advice. What would this world be like without communication? Let us all learn from each other and help our children that are in need. Maybe meeting different people from all over the country can help us make a difference. And even locally can start a small difference. Let us repeat history, let us pass down wisdom down to younger generation so hopefully they will not have to suffer too much.

Respectfully: J.N.

Running Amuk

I've been lying, cheating, drugging and stealing since I was thirteen years old. For that first year or so I felt amazing smoking weed everyday. Kicking it with my friends and hanging out with various females. I felt invincible, like there was nothing in the world that could bring me down. I never thought that things could go so wrong so fast.

It was an average mid-fall evening, it wasn't raining, but I could feel the rain coming soon. A few friends and I were sitting outside one of their houses smoking a little bit of weed when one of them suggested we roll out to do something. I thought that he just wanted to go skate a little bit before it started raining, so I went with them and we skated around for a little while until we got to this big house and my friends stopped. I asked him what he was doing and he said the guy who lived here had a weed grow shed in the back of the house. I didn't know how to respond to that. I didn't want to help him because my older brother just got arrested for something similar to that. Yet I still found myself "needing" to do it, not only because I didn't want myself to think I am lame, but also because I felt an unrelenting sense of loyalty to these kids, they were my friends and I was their friend. So I told them I was game. We set ourselves up, organized it to where we each had a job and I being the youngest, had to be look out.

I don't know how long I stood out there, I feel like it was twenty minutes, but realistically it was more like five. I was sitting there about half way through my second cigarette when I heard a screen door slammed

open and some dude started yelling about how he is gonna call the cops.

So we were running as fast as we could away from the house and were about a mile away before we started walking and they showed me what they got from the house. Now I didn't know how much they really had at that time, but now I could definitely realize the magnitude of the situation. From what could see, they had collected a good quarter pound of weed. Seeing such a large quantity of drugs in one place did a little more than sketch me out.

I kept peeking back over my shoulder thinking that the police are rolling on us about what we just did. I looked back and didn't seem them coming from in front of us. They flicked their sirens on and my friends started running of and I stayed put, the officer got out of his car like two guys didn't just run off.

The officer told me he only stopped me because he knew who I was and that I was a run away and he needed to call my mom and let her know that he found me. My mom told him to bring me home and he did.

I got no charges but I learned a lesson that night. The lesson was unfortunately that I could get away with a lot of things. So survived to run amuk another day.

M. F-H.



Marsel U.

The story of recent years – Intro to college, 10-1-14

My name is Marsel and I am 20 years old. I have been incarcerated for four and a half years and has 12 years left on my sentence for manslaughter in the 1st degree with a fire arm which was a result of gang activity in Portland, OR. When I was at the height of my gang involvement I was arrested at the age 16. As I look back it is a great loss, that I can never get back. Being incarcerated has taught me many things which I embrace and presented opportunities I may not have had if I weren't down. My life has changed and has been put on pause, but it is not over.

I was raised with 3 sisters and 1 brother with both my parents present in my life. I lived with my mum three fourths of the year during school and with my dad throughout the summer. The way I was raised I should not be in a place like this. School and sports were the theme in my household at both my mother's and father's house. College was the goal, college was the dream for my brother, sisters and I, and now that. I am in a place like this. I found something that will help me make it through. College has become something I look forward completing while I am incarcerated and if I don't I plan to on being close enough to begin taking classes at a four-year college with a transfer degree. Right now I am taking classes at Chemeketa Community College. Working towards Oregon Associated Arts Transfer Degree. Being involved in college

has opened my eyes and made my life so much more promising and limitless. It also makes me feel good, because of my siblings are also obtaining the goal of attending college. My parents raised us for this moment and it is an honor to be able to still make them proud through education while being confined.

These opportunities that I have come across will definitely be a challenge once I go deeper into them, but character will be formed and I will be set back on the track my parents set for me at birth. I accept this challenge with open arms and plan to change my image with an educated mind and actions that help change the communities I come from. With a clear mind I have realized all the possibilities that are possible after being educated. With a degree in either speech and communications or business, which I plan to get dealing with people that "matter" I will be able to persuade them in the direction that helps my cause. After taking advantage of opportunities while being incarcerated I would like to present similar one's once I re-enter the community.

I re-enter the community in 2027 and by then by no means is over. While my life was put on pause, I found a way to continue growing and improving through my teens as well as twenties. These last couple of years have been hard, but these next dozen will also be a challenge that builds one into a professional.

**FIRST TIME
LOCKED UP WAS
REALLY
DEVASTATING,
BECAUSE OF THE
TIME I WAS
FACING.**

**MY FIRST BEAL
THEY GAVE ME WAS
PLEA FOR 50 YEARS.
IT WAS ONE OF THE
WORST DAYS IN MY
LIFE, BUT AT THE
END OF THE DAY
THEY OFFERED ME
A BEAL FOR 32
YEARS NO LOWER
NO LESS, SO I TOOK
IT.**

**NOW I SIT HERE
TRYING TO DO GOOD,
SO I CAN GO FOR MY
CLEMENCY BEFORE I
GO UP STATE.
BUT JUST BECAUSE I
GOT A LOT OF TIME
DOESN'T MEAN IT'S
THE END OF THE
WORLD.**

**I STILL HAVE
STUFF TO LOOK
FORWARD TO.**

M.

County

I was arrested the day before I turned 18. I was sent to Donald E. Long, which is a Juvenile Detention Hall in Portland, Oregon. I remember waiting in a holding cell for about an hour before I was allowed to take a shower and change into the uniform that they had there, sweatpants and a sweatshirt. After that I was “celled in” for the night. During this time I was coming down off of heroin, and I was starting to go into withdrawals. I don’t really remember too much about my first day there, but the next day I was transferred to Multnomah County Justice Center, which is for adults 18 and older.

My first 3 hours or so were spent in a large room where my information was processed. Eventually my name was called, and I was brought into a room where I was strip-searched, and then changed into the Multnomah County “Pinks & Blues.” My street clothes were placed into a garment bag, and then I was led into an elevator. It arrived at the 10th floor, which is strangely called Dorm 7. I went inside of the floor which is 7D, and I bunked into cell 28. It was an 8x10 cell with a long shelf, a bunk with a mattress, and a combination sink/toilet.

The 1st breakfast that I ate was horrible. Imitation eggs and re-hydrated potatoes. Disgusting. I already wasn’t feeling to well, and the smell of the tray made me throw up into the toilet. I couldn’t eat any meals for about 3 days.

Twice a day our cell doors would pop open, and we would have an hour of “walk time.” During that hour you could walk laps around the day room, or sit down at one of the tables to play cards or

dominos with one of the fellow inmates. I’m not going to lie; it was a little scary the first time that I “walked.” I had just turned eighteen not that long before, so I was nervous because I was the youngest person in the entire facility.

I happened to be at the Justice Center in Portland right when the Occupy Movement camped out in the park right across the street from the skyscraper. I remember looking out of the 7x1 window in my cell at all the people down below. It was kind of sad to watch all the people scurrying around like tiny ants, so busy with their own lives. I wished that I could have been out there with them.

After about a month there at the Justice Center I was moved to Inverness, which is a much larger facility out in SE Portland for inmates awaiting trial. I was moved to Dorm 11, which is an open dorm, meaning that there were no cells, just about 100 bunk beds lining each wall of the very large room. It had a very different atmosphere than the Justice Center. I was in that dorm until Christmas came around.

Now for the holidays like Christmas or Thanksgiving we were fed a little bit better than normal. We would get double portions, and the food was of a higher quality. Unfortunately it didn’t make up for the fact that you were away from your family.

On my first Christmas locked up some guy picked a fight with me. I was sprayed with mace, and then tackled by the Cos. They handcuffed me and took me to the isolation unit. (Isolation is “lovingly” referred to by the inmates as “The Hole”.) As soon as I got there I was strip-searched, and put into an all-white jumpsuit. The next day my cell door was popped open, and a loudspeaker out in the dayroom told me to open up a door in front of me. I opened the door, and inside was a room with a chair and a glass wall with a phone. A guy in a dress shirt on the other side of the window

motioned for me to pick up the phone. When I did so, he told me that for getting into the fight, I was sentenced to 30 days in the hole. After 2 weeks if I didn't get into any trouble, I would be allowed to get my pink & blues back. In the hole you are on lockdown for 23¾ hours a day and you are allowed to get outside of your cell for 15 to shower or make a phone call. I did my time in there without much incident, and I got out in exactly 30 days.

After the hole, I was sent to Dorm 15. It was where you are sent right after getting out of the hole. There's not much to say about that dorm, other than that it was pretty boring. In March I finally signed a plea deal for 70 months. The next day I went to the Department of Corrections intake facility, Coffee Creek.

Nicholas B.

Nate C.

8/27/14

Experiences

By accepting me, you will need to accept my past... and not hold my worst fears against me in the future. –Unknown

Having to experience incarceration at such a young age has affected many things in my life. Sometimes I feel that being imprisoned has put many fears into my mind. It has revealed to me a different perspective of how life is and how prison is when taken from the community and being told how to live it. Growing up not understanding how behind the fence is or how the system works; only to understand the statistics that are demonstrated through movies about crimes and prison. For example, displaying a high-quality action movie with a lot of violence will not prevent crimes from happening but to paint a picture into a child's brain of how crimes are committed. As growing up not understanding anything about prison, my life was twisted upside down by one little mistake that change my life forever.

I was 17 when I was charged with my first crime offense in Portland, Oregon where Measure Eleven (M11) takes places. As I was going through the justice system while being held in detention for court, I didn't know what to expect. I was not used to people telling me what to do, when to eat, when to go to bed, nothing. What I thought for myself was that I wouldn't be serving any time because I know deep down I didn't commit any crime. Then I found out that I was being charged with M11 and was looking at a lot of time. I was lost,

confused, and scared because I had felt that I was wrongly accused and pressured to admitting to something I did not commit. When I turned 18, I was sent from detention to county where I was held with the adults waiting for trial. I was then offered a plea bargain where I was sentenced to 7 years 6 months to Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) where I'd served my time in a juvenile correctional facility. Now at age of 22, I had served about 4 years 10 months into my sentences. As I had adjusted myself to this new life, I had committed myself to education that is offered here at Hillcrest Youth Correctional that will benefit my future when I do return back to the community.

First thing first, There are many open opportunity that are offered here at Hillcrest, such as general high school education, electrician, painter, plumber, grounds worker, and etc. The life skills and work experiences that had benefited me throughout my time had lead me to graduate with a high school diploma and finish treatment groups. I then continue my education into barbering school where I was able to be a license barber in the State of Oregon in December of 2013. As part of the barbering program, you will be graded by a certain amount of hours and work you put into the class. The certain amount of hours you would need to put in is about 1350 hours, which would take you about one and a half years to graduate from the class. The class comes with a hands-on training where you would have to practice cutting mannequin hair to other youth offenders. After graduation, you will be given a complete barbering kit and certificate to help you when you transfer or are released.

Second thing I was interested in as a hobby was that I love to cook; I was recruited to participate in a culinary program that is also offered where we sell deli sandwiches and baked treats to customers of Hillcrest. Also in this program, I also was given a certification of basic culinary training for completing the program in which I can pursue into the culinary institution's or use it as a resume for a cook in the future.

Last but not least, there are many opportunity that are given here to anyone who is willing to change their ways of life and accept the help that is offered. Going into the whole justice system was hard for me; none of my family members have ever been in the system before and as the first and second youngest of a family of ten, things were really difficult to deal with. The most important thing to remember is that your family will play a big part of your life while going through this time. As when time gets hard, your family will always be the support system throughout your struggles, just like what my family had shown for me. It's not just you that has to go through the system by yourself, it's also them too.

In conclusion, having to experience this at such a young age has taught me a lesson. At 17, I wouldn't have ever finish high school and wouldn't have known anything about barbering or culinary school. I probably would've done something more irresponsible that probably would've lead to something reckless. One little mistake has changed my life forever but has indeed made me a better person and given me a bright future to look forward to. As an inspiration, here is a quote to those who understand the situation we all lived through and had succeeded through our justice systems.

“When one door closes another door opens; but we so often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door, that we do not see the ones which opens for us.” – Alexander Graham Bell, Scottish scientist and inventor

Doing time not letting time do you

Parrish B.

When it came time to be sentenced, I was welcoming to my new future and ready to move on. Through out my whole court process and being held in detention, I for sure hated going to court. To me it felt like I was going just to be poked and prodded at like I was cattle for sale and I hated it. But once I landed at Hillcrest. Yes I've had my bumps in the road but for the most part I've had probably the best prison experience. I think I've accomplished lots in the last 3 ½ years such as graduating high school, enrolling in college, working in lots of different jobs from electrician to bike shop.

When I was sentenced reality set in that I could not give my daughter the life she deserved because of my actions.

I feel that as long as you know how you wanna do your time then you'll make it. But if you wanna do it somebody else's way I think you'll run into obstacles that could be avoided. Think less about how much time you have & spend more time on what I'm gonna accomplish & how have I bettered myself over time.

8/27/14
Thomas G.

First time being incarcerated, it wasn't what people made it seem to be.

You just wake up at a certain time to eat then maybe do jobs and go back to bed. Your choices really.

But compared to the daily things I was used to doing it was a major change.

The day was unexpected to myself and my family, but the fact that I was about to serve the rest of my life or at least 25 years behind doors or in a cell was a wake up. Mainly just to show that the choices I made were more serious than many thought.

But for the law or mostly my family it's not expected for someone at age 15 to commit a crime like I did. At least for them but living the life I chose I see now that that's what was coming just didn't know the date or time or maybe I may have ended up where he did, but that obviously wasn't the road given to me. And whether I chose to change to be more of the person I am, well that's up to me just as it is for anyone else.

Many people that get locked up say asking a prayer for forgiveness or something good to happen and that's not bad or a real weakness as many would say (at least to me) because when you come from a family or you're surrounded by people that go to church or have a Bible hanging around the house then saying a prayer expecting something good to come out of it is normal. Maybe because when you're young you pay attention a lot to your surroundings so just seeing someone like mom, aunt, or anyone open that book believing good is what comes from it is what you may expect, too. Especially if

you look at the person and see how they're doing in life compared to maybe what they did or went through in the past. So whether you believe in saying a prayer or not just expect what comes at you to a certain point and don't struggle with what was dealt to you from the road you chose. There's many words to explain it but you'll learn in every situation you go through in life how to deal with it. Just as I did.

Here's a poem since some things seem easier to explain through them instead of just trying to write it down:

With all my pride and honor I still live the life I chose. And in my heart hold a single rose for each and everyone lovin' me for me. The rose I give last forever only fading when you turn the other way but after the death of me the harder you squeeze the closer I'll be and in the eyes of the ones that watched me it's hard to believe that from the hand of me death is what I seen. 15 shots, 5 years later, I am still me not letting the 25 to life face me, take advice and give but only to the strong not the weak. What I see is what you could see, 23 hours lockdown feeling like it's been forever forgetting the whole purpose of love and regret. So if you got it then embrace it with everything you got and don't worry about what comes at the end.

My life

VenancioB.

My name is Venancio B. I was born in Bakersfield, California. I am 19 years old. When I was 4 years old, my family and I moved to Portland, Oregon. Nine months later, my father walked out on our family. As a single mother, my mother worked two jobs, day and night. By the time I was nine, I was introduced to gangs by my older cousins. With my mother at work and no one to watch over me, I was out and about with my older brother, friends, and family members. As time kept passing me by, I was determined to make my own money. On my 12th birthday, I got a brown paper bag. Inside was an OI' English and 4 blunt with marijuana. After that day I started selling marijuana at my school and my neighborhood. Making money tilt good kids my age were looking up to me and that was just the start. Two years later people all around my neighborhood knew me and what I was about. My girlfriend told me she had heard what I was doing and asked me to stop. But me, liking what I was doing had no intention on stopping. I even stop going to school for the most part. Weeks later the school call asking where had I been and set meetings with my mother for me to come back to school. It was the last week of the first term. I was in my math class, when the principal and two sheriffs came in the class and pulled me out to talk to me. One of two cops asked me how was I doing and if I had anything I shouldn't have on me. I simply replied and said no. Then minutes later they were in the principal's office. The cops were in the office reviewing the schools cameras, before I knew it I was in handcuffs.

They walked me to my locker and I knew I had been busted. They found my money and my drugs within seconds I was on my way to the Juvenile Justice Center to face my charges.

April 13, 2008 two days after my birthday at my hearing I pled guilty to delivery of marijuana, and minor in possession, only 13 and not having a criminal record I was released on an ankle bracelet for 10 months and 3 years probation.

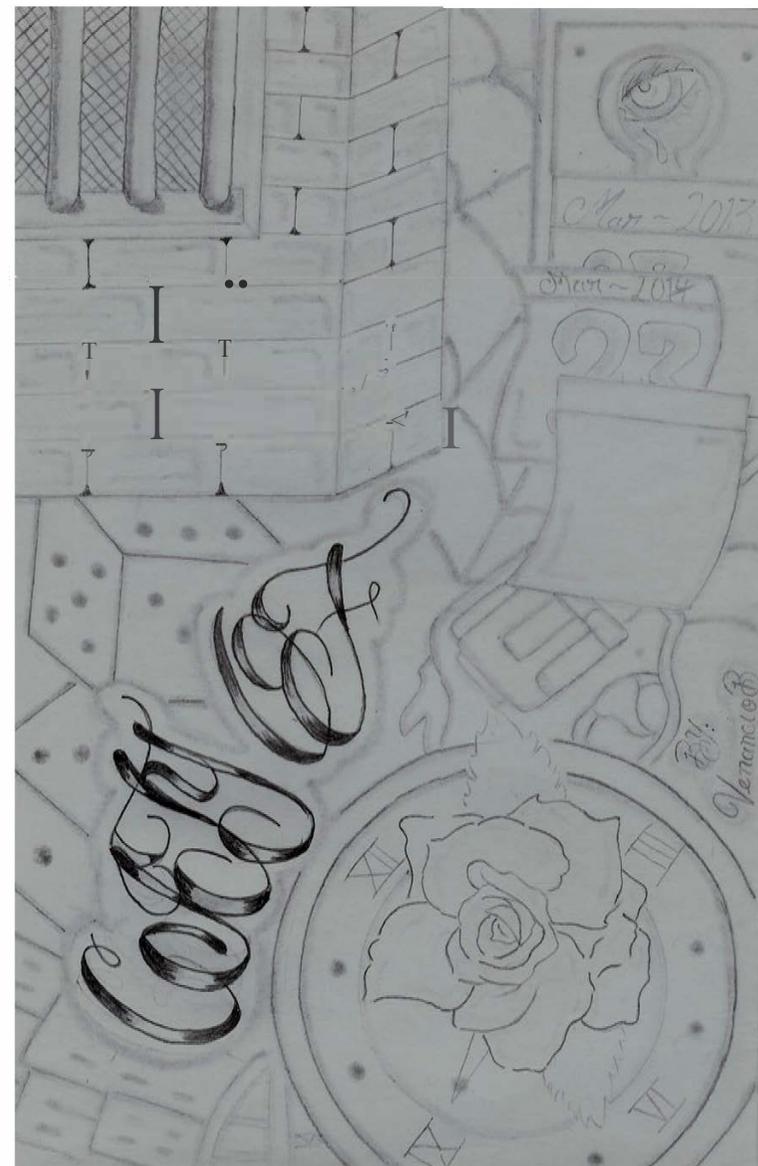
8 months later I violated my probation, I was on my way home from my alternative school in Gresham. On the school bus with my homies we were sitting in the back of the bus, listening to Califa Thugs, when a sucker step to us talking crazy before I knew it my anger got to me and my fists was connecting with his face. From a distance I hear the word "Stop!" repetitively and it was the school bus driver. He stopped the bus in front of a public middle school, and radioed the school through the bus radio, before I knew it my friends had stopped me but one of my homies got mad when the sucker spoke wrong again this time we went all out we broke his nose, 3 ribs and left him unconscious. As the bus driver tried to stop us I seen 3 cops running out the middle school with their hand on their holsters I knew we had to leave, I told my homies "We have to bounce!", but the bus driver would not let us of so I ran to the back exit door unlocked it and kicked it open. As soon as we touched pavement we were gone 2 hours later I was at my girlfriends house on 197th. I didn't tell her what was going on but one thing was for sure I had to find a way home. I stayed at my girlfriends hoping the heat had

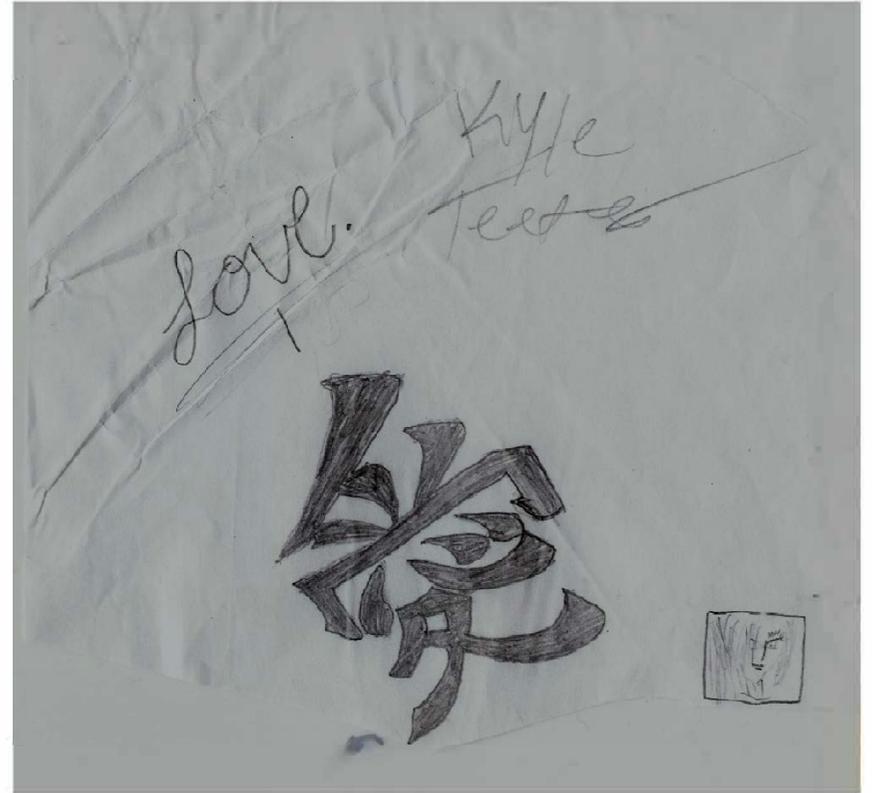
calmed down. I left her house through the back cuts before I knew it was at my spot on southeast 187th. I walked in my house to find no one home. So I took a shower, changed to new gear I put on my all white Air Force, my khakis and a new white t-shirt. I exited my house through the back door, paranoid I walk to my gramas house across the street. I walked in to find my mother and more family members inside having a BBQ. Seeing my family having a good time my mind went at ease, half an hour later my older sister seen to Portland Police Officers headed to my house. She pulled me to the side and asked me "What's going o...". Before she could finish her sentence I was walking to the back door. I stopped when she spoke out loud and said "Don't run. You're only making things worse." I knew she was right. As my sister went to see what the cops wanted, they told her to stay put. The police officers recognized my sister and said "Where is Venancio?" I could tell my sister wasn't going to rat me out in front of our family, because it was against the code. I couldn't risk involving my sister in what I had done, so I walked out there. As soon as the police seen me, they drew their guns and said "Put your hands up! Put them high where we can see them!" I put my hands up, thinking to myself that this would be the last time I would see my family. I was in deep thoughts. I didn't see the other cops rolling up from every direction.

A year later I was release to a group home where I spent another year, on my 16 birthday I went to court to see if I could return home. The judge approved of me but told me I would be place under Oregon Youth Authority for 5 years. On April 11, 2012 around 9 pm I was celebrating my 17

birthday with my homies and my brother. I was so drunk from all the bottles we had. Patron Grey Goose, Hennessy and 1800, my phone rang within minutes. I got in one of our stolen car to pick up some more homies and girls. I was on my way to 122nd and starts when I seen a cop on my tail I got nervous so I took the next left turn coming up to see if I was being followed, but the cop went straight. 10 minutes later I seen another cop behind me. I knew they were on me. I took another left on 181st heading the opposite way of 122nd now, within seconds the cop car was closing up on me.

I told myself I wasn't going back to jail or to no group home, so I sped and as drunk as I was I was in control of the wheel at least that's what I thought till I hit a curve. I At this point I thought I had hit someone and I lost control of the car and crashed into a mailbox x through the fence and about 7 feet away from someone's hhouse. When I woke up I knew I was in city hall in Gresham. I couldn't remember what happened till a cop asked me wwhere had I got the car and that's when reality hit me. I kept silent until I got a lawyer. In no time I was back at Donald E. Long in NE Portland waiting for my court day. On May 15 I got sentenced to a year at correctional facility on OYA which means, I can get out within a year or till my 25th birthday. 18 months later and I am still incarcerated living life one day at a time waiting to parole out in about 3 to 4 monts from now.





My time with OYA

- For the youth of the Hillcrest Creative Writing Group -

My story is probably not a special one...after earning my high school diploma, I completed my studies in "Education Sciences." I did an internship for the program in a German juvenile correctional facility. I loved the work with the youth there and found that I am interested in the juvenile justice field, so I decided to become a volunteer there and to study Criminology and juvenile justice as well. You could say that I started my internship and the volunteer work as a motivated young woman who wanted to help others and improve myself.

What I also knew was that I want to live in another country for a special, not too long, time (because I didn't know how long I can do it without being homesick).

For me it was clear that I should look for an opportunity in the US because of my interest in the country. I wanted to see how people live here, I wanted to improve my English and, because I am motivated and eager to learn, I also wanted to experience work in the US in order to improve my knowledge. Additionally I wanted to get to know the differences between the German and the American justice system and the work with youth. I started planning about two years ago to arrange an internship with the Oregon Youth Authority..

Differences between the systems were evident on my first day. A lot of people I met spoke well about their work, the

employees and the youth. I noticed that immediately, because the focus in Germany is different.

OYA has a more progressive approach to youth. PHD is a great model, because you can see it in the work and in peoples' interactions. People are helpful. The youth told me that they are doing well. And, I was surprised that there are units where there are no fights among the youth. "We all are in the same situation!" one youth said. That's the truth. Seeing how this little "family" works is great and I have been made to feel a part of this work.

Being welcomed from everybody makes me feel happy. I am grateful for my host family has shown me what Americans really life like, offered me different things to do and helped me with everything I need; The people from Central, who took so much of their time to explain me the system, their work, their points of view, etc; The people in the facilities, who showed me around, explained their work and how facility procedures work; and last, but not least, the youth who are very open-minded, who shared experiences with me, and who explained everything to me that I didn't understand, whether I wanted to know or not.

The work with the youth was like a gift. It gave me a lot, either if it was funny moments, like the afternoon that all the Omega youth sat together with big smiles on their faces, moments where youth shared their stories with me, and the and youths' invitations to join their families and them during family engagements. Especially touching was a great birthday surprise -- singing me happy birthday, the German birthday cake-creation, the Origami, the picture, and the card with the

best wishes. All that they did for my birthday made me feel like a part of the OYA team.

I am not able to list everything, but all of this and more make me very thankful.

I want to say that I never met so many people who love doing their job as much as the employees of OYA. I also appreciate that every youth treated me with respect.

The time here showed me that there is a way to work with youth that can include your heart and that including your heart is not a wrong or a bad thing. It is necessary. I have learned a new mantra!

قوياكن

Be strong.

I want you to remember that. You can go through bad situations but you can nevertheless reach your goals. I believe in that.

If I could, without being homesick, I would stay here for a much longer time. I will always keep my host family, OYA, the work it does, the employees and the youth in my mind and in my heart. I am more than grateful for this amazing time.

Thank you for everything!

Jana Winter

قوياكن

Be strong