



Healing Arts

STORIES & POEMS FROM THE SYSTEM IMPACTED COMMUNITY

CORE / PCC
INSCAPE

SPRING 2022 CHAPBOOK NO. 6



Untitled Sculpture / Mario Loprete



Lost Stiletto / Greg Martinez

CONTENT WARNING

This issue includes frank language and detail about incarceration experiences, including violence and drug use.

PCC INSCAPE

The Literary Magazine
of
Pasadena City College
Since 1943
Pasadena, CA

PCC Inscape and *Inscape Magazine*, formerly “*Pipes of Pan*” Vols 1-29, has been in continuous print at Pasadena City College since 1943 and is published by the Creative Writing program in the English & Language Studies Division. It appears at least once per year in print and occasionally online and as special print projects and partnerships and is generously funded by the Student Services Initiative. All issues of the magazine going back to 1943 are housed in the PCC Library archives. PCC students serve as the magazine’s staff, reviewing submissions, communicating with authors, marketing the magazine, and contributing to layout and design composition.

All PCC students and affiliates as well as PCC community members are invited to submit work for the magazine. Submissions guidelines, online issues, and information regarding this year’s staff are available at the pccinscape.com website.

The PCC Creative Writing program is a member of the Associated Writing Programs for Two - Year Colleges and the CLMP Council of Literary Magazines and Presses. The student content reflected here does not reflect the opinions of Pasadena City College or the editors of PCC Inscape Magazine. All rights revert to authors and artists after first printing. You can purchase copies and subscribe by visiting pccinscape.com.

Please consider making a donation to the PCC Creative Writing Foundation Account to support PCC Inscape Magazine, the Octavia Butler Short Fiction Prize, our Visiting Writers Series, Professional Development, Fieldtrips for students and more. Send checks payable to the PCC Creative Writing Foundation Account to Attn: Dean of English, Inscape Magazine, C245, Pasadena City College, 1570 East Colorado Blvd. Pasadena, CA 91106. Email pccinscape@gmail.com for more information.

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PCC INSCAPE

Chapbook N.6

SPRING
2022



This special issue chapbook of PCC Inscape is in partnership with The Community Overcoming Recidivism through Education (CORE) program and the Formerly Incarcerated Radical Scholars Team (FIRST) club, both of which focus on building community on and off PCC’s campus that will support students system-impacted by incarceration with social, emotional, and academic services aimed at assisting with college enrollment, transfer empowerment, and community leadership opportunities. The following editorial staff members from CORE and FIRST volunteered their time to complete this publication in celebration of and to amplify voices of the system-impacted community at PCC and beyond. Visit pasadena.edu for more information and to support this incredible program.

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ADDITIONAL ART, WRITING, AND CONTRIBUTOR BIOS ARE IN
OUR ONLINE COMPANION ISSUE AT PCCInscape.com

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Introduction

Every one of us has a story to tell and an experience to share, and sharing these experiences highlights what we all have in common. We at CORE are a tight knit family and we have a community of people who want to make a change in this world. The agony and distress that we all have faced as system-impacted people is what brought us together. CORE is a safe haven for us to blossom into who we truly are.

As part of the CORE (Community Overcoming Recidivism through Education) program at Pasadena City College, I knew that partnering with Inscape so that our community can share our stories and experiences with our larger PCC Community would be an important first action we could take to heal ourselves and others through the power of writing and art. We choose to tell our stories so that people who read them can change their own lives. Some who read these experiences will cry, but hopefully some will begin to feel enraged by what we have been through and become allies and advocates for reform and support. These stories are our lives. We choose to use the power of art and writing to heal ourselves. Writing, Art, sharing our experiences, these have been tools for HEALING, which is why we celebrate the HEALING ARTS with this Inscape partnership.

In this issue you will read stories and poems and narratives describing heartache, violence, abandonment, and struggle, and it will help you realize all that we have in common. We each should acknowledge the mighty warriors inside of us who have been able to and continue to try clawing our way out of the darkness and shining into the light.

With the support of our CORE family, many of us are on a journey turning our weaknesses into our strengths. What you may read as a life of hell, we experienced as a normal way of life. However, without the darkness we experienced, we would have never been able to see the light.

We hope that the work you read and view here will change you, and we hope you will see our lights shining bright within us.

– Jessica Leeth Young, Healing Arts Prose Editor

Edgar Archila

Incarceration Has Affected Me

Incarceration has affected me mentally, spiritually and emotionally in several different ways. Not only has it had a major impact on my life, but it has also impacted my loved ones as well. For starters, being institutionalized since the age of 12 has made me socially awkward. I hate being in crowds and I get anxiety when I'm around a lot of people. My social skills have been affected dramatically and now I'm forced to put on a kind of mask I'm still trying to get rid of.

Behind those walls it's all survival mode. Dog eat dog, shark eat fish. It's sad. I've lost almost everything due to spending so many years in prison. All the friends you think you had forget about you and life goes on. My wife left me and took my kids and moved in with another man, got remarried and started a new family. All the while, my kids are missing their dad and suffering right along with me.

Having a drug addiction and trying to maintain my habit while incarcerated was an arduous chore. Not only is it expensive but I've gotten into so much trouble behind owing everybody money. It's such a ruthless environment. I have been beaten time and time again in a vicious manner which left me traumatized along with experiencing race riots. It's a continuous job watching your back and not knowing what's gonna happen next.

This term I did in prison I honestly didn't think I was going to make it out alive. I thank God I did. I believe that to heal from my decades of incarceration is going to be a lifelong process. I hope I'm wrong. I'm definitely working on a daily basis to heal by interacting with people and by reminding myself that I'm no longer in a hostile environment. I interact with my kids on a day-to-day basis and I remind them how much I love them. I drop to my knees every day and thank God for my freedom.

Jonathan Avila

Incarceratyion Has Directly Affected My Loved Ones

Incarceration has directly affected my loved ones and family members. As far as I can remember, getting arrested or going to county jail was normal and a rite of passage to be seen as a man and to be respected as a member of my gang.

July 16, 2018 would be the first time I got to experience what it would feel like to be locked up with grown men and active gang members.

Two days away from my 18th birthday I was coming back from a house party with friends and we were all drunk and high. As I was driving, I stopped at a light and one of my homeboys decided to play a joke on me saying the light was green. I passed the red light not knowing a cop car was right behind me. Soon, I found myself in a police chase that ended some blocks down. I was taken into custody where I waited two days to turn 18 to be charged as an adult.

Going to LA county jail had me in fear at the time but a lot of my older homies showed me what to do and how to survive. I went through processing and all I saw was mostly locked doors, tattooed faces, and gangs from all over Los Angeles. The first question I was ever asked by another inmate was "Are you a homie?" That word would carry much value in my life as I was moved to different locations.

As an Hispanic from South Central, there were rules I had to live by. The program was almost like being in the Army. We got up and went to sleep at a specific time. We also had to work out every day and be extremely clean. Being in this type of environment resulted in me having the mindset of a soldier at war because I could only run with my race. All the men I was seeing all had one thing in common: they had no fear in their eyes. I wanted to be just like them. I had to engage in criminal activity and acts of violence to move up in the gang and to earn respect. The

more I went in and out, the more respected I became. I felt like I belonged and I didn't feel like a screw up like I did in the free world.

However, when I came out of prison, I would feel like the world was hard. It was not easy getting a job or to even be seen as a decent human being. Every time I would go to court, the fear of being locked up lessened because I knew I would be in there with my homies feeling united and strong.

The effects on my mindset and my kids was traumatic and long-lasting. I was worried about failing as a father due to my repeated incarceration. When my oldest daughter came to visit me with my mother, the hardest part was looking into my daughter's eyes as she asked me in the visiting room, "Daddy, what are you doing here? What is this place?" Her eyes started filling up with tears and as I held the phone, I looked through the glass window wishing I could grab her and hug her. However, I could not even move. As my daughter started to cry, she ran to a deputy screaming "let my daddy go! Please let my daddy go!!" When my mother and daughter left, the deputy came, put handcuffs on me, and started walking me back to my cell. My heart slowly felt like it was going down to my stomach. My tears rolled down my face from the trauma I had just put my family through. I wiped my tears and reminded myself that I could not show weakness in a place like this. This experience changed my way of thinking, changed my actions, and changed how I treated people.

Later on, as my trips to prison increased, each term became more and more intense.

The day I got out from Soledad state prison it was 6am and all that ran through my head was fear of the unknown. I knew that I had changed a lot along with my trust in people. I did not like people behind me or around me because I viewed everyone as a threat, just like in prison. My pride and ego had swelled and I struggled with that a lot. When a person would bump into me and not say excuse me I felt disrespected. If a person would mad dog me (give me a dirty look) I would take it as a challenge to my manhood; a test to see if I had heart and was brave like a fearless warrior.

I had hard time communicating with my family because of my frequent trips to prison. Their question was always "how long will you be this time?" In reality I felt no sense of belonging,

like I had no family. I felt useless. I would use drugs and alcohol to numb feelings of pain and loneliness. I would run back to my homies because they understood my struggle even though to do so would put me at risk for reoffending. At the end of it all I pushed away my blood family and chose the streets.

It took me many slips and falls before my mind was open to a new way of thinking and my emotions were restored. I began to stop being selfish and self-centered and only thinking about what others could do for me. I started instead to express my emotions more and not to mask them. I also started to talk about my negative thinking with others while gaining a better understanding of who I am.

Today I am in recovery learning how to live life outside of the walls and using new coping skills. Today I have learned to ask for help to deal with my substance abuse and PTSD issues. Today I am learning to be a better father to my children, learning how to trust people, and learning what a healthy relationship looks like. I've substituted violence for open communication. I've started to work on healing emotionally, mentally and spiritually too. Now I have the chance to start a new life and make better choices. Today, I choose to remain free!

J. Chau

Belong

As I sit in a classroom full of young, bright kids, I feel so old and out of place.

Good thing I have this mask to cover my wrinkles and insecurities.

I keep wondering if this is something I can achieve; if this is where I belong.

I don't know where I belong.

Feeling out of place, though I understand this is a temporary task. My God tells me that this too shall pass.

This feeling of inadequacy radiates through my veins. Why did I wait so long to do what I've always wanted?

I'm at a crossroads when I return to my job. I act like I have no past. I'm just one of the gals but I'm an imposter at best.

I keep wondering if this is something I can achieve. I keep wondering if this is where I belong.

My mind frequently gravitates towards my guilt and my shame. All those I've hurt and those that left me behind.

I wish I could change my past and this cold, cold world.

I seek forgiveness but how can I survive? I look to my God and He embraces me with his warmth.

I keep wondering if this is something I can achieve, if this is where I belong.

I spend my time thinking about how I got caught up. I think about how I should have done this or could have done that.

I'm thinking about my failures, my lost friends, and how I'm such a lost cause.

I keep wondering if this is something I can achieve. I keep wondering if this is where I belong.

As I sit waiting for my date I wonder "What if I led a different life? What if I made different choices now?" How could my life be any better?

A shift in my internal thoughts. I'm genuinely thinking about change. When I get out I'm going to take a chance on myself.

I may feel alone but I'm not. I could take this journey by myself but why should I?

There are others going through the same struggle.

Through community, humility, and honest work you'll know where you need to be.

You will make it to where you belong.

Roberto Chavez

Before I Went to Prison

Before I went to prison, I didn't have much experience. When it came to the system, I had only been to the county jail a few times and when they sentenced me to state prison for 12 years with 85%, I felt like my life was over. I remember getting sentenced while watching my sister and grandmother cry; it was heart breaking. I remember doing my best to keep my composure and be a man about it, but now that I look back, I was just a scared kid. However, I would never admit that.

Growing up in the environment I did, there was a sense of obligation to it. I always knew that one day I would have to go to prison; that I was going to be tested. For the most part, I was ready. To be honest, it wasn't as sad as I thought it would be. It's always the thought and anticipation of getting locked up and what you gotta go through that's the hardest. Once you're there the thinking stops and it's all action.

You'd be surprised at what you're capable of and what you can endure when there's no choice. I spent a lot of my time on lockdown and I learned quickly that if you don't stay busy, you'll drive yourself crazy. TV and music could only do so much. Working out and reading were my outlets. I loved to read and would get lost in books, forgetting for a moment that I was locked in a cell.

Looking back, I feel the biggest mistake I made while incarcerated was getting into heroin. However, in a way, it would help me cope with my situation by keeping me numb, but it brought a lot of misery and unnecessary problems. Somewhere along the line I managed to get my GED in there which was the only good thing that came out of that time. I paroled at the age of 30, and to be honest, the whole reunion with my family was just awkward even though they were all happy celebrating my return.

I was just worried about what I was gonna do once I got dope sick. Luckily my grandma had Lorazepam and there was a liquor store across the street. It got me through and for about two months I was doing OK and working. However, one night I went out with my homeboys and got busted and was assigned a GPS ankle monitor. I couldn't go back to work because I had to do the STAR program in lieu of jail. Not too long after that, I overdosed and was in a coma for 8 days. Vomit had gone into my lungs. I also had pneumonia, septic shock, and blood clots in my lungs. When I woke up my lungs were so weak that I couldn't walk and I had to go through physical therapy. I was put on blood thinners and had to breathe through a machine. I remember always feeling tired and weak after that. I felt vulnerable and I had a hard time multi-tasking and holding conversations.

I tried to get sober for a while but eventually went back to using heroin. I started selling drugs but managed to get my driver's license, a car, and ended up falling in love with the mother of my kid. We ran the streets and got high. In our own distorted way we took care of each other. Sometimes we had money, but sometimes we had to steal. Sometimes we had a place to stay, but sometimes we didn't. We lived in abandoned houses or motels. People would take us in and then kick us out. We put ourselves through a lot. Somehow, though, we were happy.

If I would go to jail, whenever I would get out, she would be there waiting for me with a shot of heroin. Eventually she was pregnant and I got sober for a bit. She couldn't stop, though. One day I got caught by my enemies. They jumped me and stabbed me in the head with a screw driver. They also tried to shoot me but the gun jammed. Soon after that I quit my job and joined my girl. In the middle of her pregnancy, we broke up. She found a place to stay but I couldn't be around because of my addiction. Soon, she asked me to leave her alone, so I did. I eventually took off to Pasadena to stay with some girl I met on social media. We stayed in motels and got high.

A few months later I found out my grandma had cancer so I went to see her at the hospital. That same day I found out my daughter had been born. Later, her mom left her at the hospital, so I took off to Lancaster to meet my daughter. I tried to be sober for my daughter but it didn't work out that way. I started selling and using drugs again but managed to get us a place to stay. However, we got strung out again. I eventually got her a car so that when I got busted again, and

I knew I would, she would have some type of security on the streets.

Not too long after that, she left me and I got arrested. When I got out, my situation worsened and I was on the streets. I went back to my old neighborhood and lost myself even more.

I remember going in and out of jail back and forth from Pacoima to Palmdale. It's all a blur, but one thing I do remember was the last time I saw my grandmother. I went to her apartment and passed out in her bathroom. My cousin woke me up and kicked me out. When I was walking out, my grandmother wouldn't even look at me; she was so heartbroken. I felt like a piece of shit. I was a disappointment, a junkie, a dead-beat dad, and a crappy son.

Soon after that I was arrested again, having gotten caught with a gun and a stolen car. This time I wasn't going anywhere and the withdrawals were a nightmare. I couldn't find any drugs to get me through. I sobered up and came back to my senses. I carried a lot of guilt and shame.

I remember calling my grandma to let her know that I was OK; that I was doing better. She was happy. Unfortunately, soon after that, she passed away from Covid-19. I cried for days.

After that I ended up getting assigned drug court and was sent to IMPACT outpatient. I did my absolute best. Later, I ended up getting charged for an assault from an incident that happened while incarcerated. The last time I went to jail, though, something was different about it. I don't know how to explain it, but I just know that I didn't belong there anymore and I couldn't wait to get out. I prayed like I never prayed before and by the grace of God, they let me come back to the treatment program. I took another strike to get here even though my lawyer advised me not to. I told him it doesn't matter because he'll never see me again.

Today, I'm not trying and wanting to change, I am changed. Today I live for my daughter and to be the man my grandmother raised me to be. I take suggestions from my sponsor and from IMPACT because I don't know how to live. I'm grateful for my freedom and for my family.

I don't take anything for granted anymore, especially not my sobriety. The turbulence I carried inside of me is now gone thanks to the 12 Steps. I no longer live in fear. I live in faith. Now I'm learning to adapt and understand the world instead of expecting it to understand and adapt to me.

Daniel Fitzgerald

One Day At A Time

Let me find myself
in these late hours
believing once more
the times ahead.

The fog of days
is heavy in my sky
with sun and stars hidden
from my need for guidance.

Let me find a light, a way
through this dark night,
to face a shining vision
of a new dawn.

And in the morning hours
let there be time
to find myself again,
to begin to live all my days.

Daniel Fitzgerald
Sober Livin’

Lonely here, without dreams.
Yesterday’s sun is the same today.
The night lasted too long again.
I wanted to see you today
but my ride couldn’t make it.
I just wanted to talk a little bit,
let you know I have plans
as soon as Christmas is over.
Thanks for calling every now and then.
Good to know someone cares,
I was sober at the meeting last night.
Eddie was pleased.

Daniel Fitzgerald
November Day

Big pictures no longer
matter.
Dishes washed.
Bed made.
Lawn raked.
A birthday card mailed on time.
That is enough
for now.
Tomorrow may be a shorter day
according to the sun,
but it also may be
a little brighter.

Areanna Flores

Reflections From An Incarcerated Mother

The night before:

A toddler comforts their mother
“Ya, ya, ya mama”
a soft voice the night before Freedom is annexed by the state
My sobbing soul cannot be calmed
What will I do without my child ?
How will I live, if she *is* my life?
How will I breathe without my child’s embrace?
She continues to comfort my wailing and ailing pained heart,
“Ya, ya, ya mama”
Says a soft voice the night before Freedom is taken by the state
But who?! Who will comfort *her* after tomorrow
when my freedom is annexed by the state?
CA State, will *you* step in?
CDCR will *you* rehabilitate this trauma my child and I will bear?
Will *your* courts of Justice bring *my* innocent child justice after tomorrow?
“Ya, ya, ya mama”
Says a soft voice the night before Freedom is taken by the state.
The night is gruesome, and unbearable, but I am forced to say goodbye my child,
Though I am not ready, I will see you soon my love.

County Jail:

Soon does not come soon enough

And the county jail is not a place for you to visit, my child
Though doing time with you would be better than being separated from you

I will wait
I will wait
I will wait, until we embrace again

On the Road to Prison:

transfer of bodies has come,
the state awaits,
And so do my shackles...hands and feet and soul
Attached to another body
You say you need to be relived on the state bus?
Don’t forget to bring your shackled partner with you!
I hear that resilient voice of my child,
“Ya, ya, ya mama”
the night before Freedom is taken by the state.

Reception:

We arrive to processing,
Strip naked, they also want to see your broken soul, every crevasse,
Bend over and cough,
Repeat,
You have earned your processing oranges

A-Yard:

Don’t get comfy in orange, your blues over the wall await
I walk lifeless through the yard
My mind solely on my child despite continuously
experiencing trauma every second
“Ya, ya, ya mama”
I can still hear you!

The soft voice the night before Freedom is taken by the state.

Main Yard:

A few months pass

I am now wearing my blues, both inside my heart,

And outwardly in state clothing

I can't get out of bed, I wake up, and it is *not* a nightmare, it is a reality

my child is nowhere to be seen but in my memory,

of which mind tries to say, "I forgot what you look like my child."

Reality check:

"You ain't going anywhere crying, so do your time!!"

My Wise lifer,

though I still need my child, you provide me with

hope of having a day to go home,

though you, yourself, may never be free,

You have provided me with the beginning of freedom,

As freedom cannot be taken from my mind!

I now say, "Ya, ya, ya mama" strong and loud in my spirit,

months after my Freedom is annexed by the state.

Visiting:

I see you my baby! I feel you my child! I forgot how beautiful you were!

I don't care about the multitude of vending machine items

I simply want to hug you

"Ya, ya, ya mama" together we will make it through this!

You cannot come to the other side with me

Until we meet again my love

"Ya, ya, ya mama" I say to my crying child as we part again

with ailing in my spirit, months after my Freedom is taken by the state.

Until we meet again my love,

Forgive me for the pain this causes,

Forgive me my child,

Will you forgive me?

Forgive me for your experience,

Seeing green suits control blue ones, and free world ones,

Forgive me my child,

Together we will heal,

"Ya, ya, ya mama" together we will make it through this!

For your own words, the night before I left bring me hope!

Days before release:

How can I leave you my friend, without your introduction

to my belief in a Higher Love,

What would've been of me?

She tells me, "there, there, my friend and sister,

I will be okay, if need be, I will stay here forever

for the cause of the Most High, as these plans and

thoughts are above my plans and thoughts"

Forever stands, forever I will have you in my heart

until you come home, until you can

tell your story to the masses

Night before Release:

Lockdown all day!

OD's in the cells, fights on the yard!

Lockdown all day, the day before I see my child!

Will they let me go?

Will I see you tomorrow?

The night is gruesome and unbearable, but soon has come,

and I will see you soon!

"Ya, ya, ya mama" strong and loud in my spirit,

years after my Freedom is annexed by the state.

Reception, Going Home:

Everything stays behind

Clothes, food, clear tv, radio, hygiene, stinger,
and friends, humaxs, . . . incredible souls that have
changed and influenced my life forever! In their guidance,
freedom was found before the physical

“Why do you cry” asks the CO,

“I cry because I made it, I cry because today

I see my loved ones outside of these walls”

There you are at the gate!!!! My child! My mother!

My parter!! There you all are!!!

I hear another CO’s voice, “see you later!”

But no!

Not me,

not me,

not ever!

I embrace my child and loved ones!

“Ya, ya, ya mama” together we made it through this!

For your own words the night before I left brought me

hope, healing, and back home again. I love you my strong,

resilient and brave child

you are but *one* of many other children who felt the wiles
of the injustice system, but today, and always, I love you.

Now, together, let us reach new levels of healing,

and love, in the Most Highest manner. Together again.

Future, here we come!

Anthony Francoso

Love Letter

This is a letter of love

To my community

When I arrived to PCC

I knew no one

I felt alone

I immediately started organizing with the Third Wave

This brought me a much-needed group of folx who supported one another

I identify as system-impacted

I was on a journey to find a community I never knew I needed

The Universe put a number of folx in front of me

Who have been impacted by the experiences of incarceration

We were set in motion to develop and nurture a quickly growing group of folx

I have always been deeply connected to those who are the underdogs

The forgotten

The exploited

The most vulnerable

Day by day

Month by month

We kept growing

Connecting

Building

Organizing

Together we learned how to support one another
to advocate for ourselves and each other
To see the connections deepening
Strengthening due to the experiences we all shared
It is these bonds
this group
this community that brings me many things
My community brings me
 strength, compassion, connection, hope,
 love, light, joy, spirit, energy
My community is my inspiration
My community is my everything
My community is my home
My community is my heart
My community is my soul
My community is my love

Christian Garibay

My Name is Christian Garibay

I am 27 years old and was born in east Los Angeles at White Memorial Hospital. Growing up, I shared a room with 3 other family members but I'm an only child. My mom has always been there for me and while I never really knew my father, at this point in my life, I don't really care to know him.

As a kid I was always getting in trouble being suspended from or school or kicked out of school. I have never been to an actual high school which sucks because that's a time in my life that I'll never get back. At the age of 16 I was too busy hanging out with the wrong crowds. From that point of my life things started to go downhill.

I got pulled over and caught with a gun and I ended up going to juvenile hall. The judge gave me a 6-month camp program. After I got out of camp, a big part of me just didn't care anymore. I started to get high and I wouldn't listen to my mom or my family. I just pushed everyone away and ran the streets. I was constantly in and out of juvenile hall and my mom was stressed out not knowing what to do with me. She is a wonderful and great lady who can't be held responsible for the decisions I made.

As I continued growing up I continued getting high. Once I turned 18, I caught my first prison term for felony evading, GTA and reckless driving. The judge gave me two years and I did a year in prison. I'm not gonna lie, I was nervous as hell, especially being the youngest one surrounded by a bunch of grown men that had been down a long time or had life. A part of me was scared because I wasn't a kid anymore and was with the big boys.

After I did my year, I got out and went immediately to see my mom and family because I missed them. Down the road I started getting high again and running the streets. I kept violating my

parole because every time I would have to check in I wouldn't go because I knew they were going to drug test me. I was constantly in and out of county for violations, absconding, dirty drug tests, being under the influence, or for possession. At the age of 20 I caught a robbery charge because I was out of my mind doing dumb things to support my drug habit. My mom was so hurt and shocked because a part of her felt like it was her fault.

I've spent way too much time in and out of jail and I'll never be able to get that time back. I think the worst part of getting busted is the beginning when you first get into your cell at the police station. As soon as I hit the cell all I would wanna do is sleep, hoping that everything was just a bad dream. I wouldn't even use the phone to call anyone because I would be disappointed in myself and angry. I wouldn't want to call my mom because I already knew she was going to be hurt and disappointed again. I knew my mom didn't deserve to go through the pain, hurt, tears and stress that I continued to put her through. On the streets I would hardly go see my mom or talk to her on the phone. My biggest problem was that I was selfish and didn't care about anyone but myself. I wouldn't listen to my mom, my girl, my family or my close friends, and every time someone would try to give me advice it would go in one ear and out the other.

When I'm busted, it sucks having to move around dealing with drama and different personalities. It sucks having to do things you don't wanna do, succumbing to peer pressure out of fear of being labeled lame or a sucker. It also sucks when I try to call my family and they don't answer because they're tired of my shit and they're tired that I only call them when I'm in jail or when I need something.

Just recently, I lost my grandpa before I got busted. The part that hurt the most was that I wasn't able to say goodbye to him due to the fact I was incarcerated. I was in so much pain knowing that I couldn't be there to apologize for the shit I put him through.

My biggest fear has always been losing my mom while incarcerated. Also, I have a beautiful girl that I abandon every time I go to jail. It hurts when I talk to her and she cries to me. During those moments I feel lost, hopeless, trapped and I hate myself because there's nothing I can possibly do to help her.

At this point of my life, I'm tired of being sick and tired. That's why today I'm thankful God

gave me another chance to succeed in life which started with the IMPACT program. I've been at IMPACT for 25 days and not once have I felt the urge to leave. I love myself now way too much to continue hurting myself. Not only am I doing this for myself, but I'm doing it for my mom, for my girl and for my family. I want people to be proud of me and to not look at me as a disappointment or a fuck up anymore.

There's more to life than drugs and jail, so for those that read this: God bless you and don't lose yourself walking down the wrong path as I once did. STAY STRONG!!

Adolfo Angel Garcia

Familyarity

I remember the day
I learned their true nature
I learned who they where
what they were about

his tight grasp
wrapping around my wrist
shackles chaining me to that moment
refusing to let me go
His ten-ton influence
pressing down upon my chest
Demond hands collapsing my throat
as I look for absolutely nothing
Gouged out eyes
Only seeing vast nothingness
Ensuring I had no escape

She came into the room
a warm breeze followed
a home cooked meal
strolled into my mind
A desperate attempt to find peace
she told me I was safe
I laid my head into her arms and fell asleep

His angry attack of damnation woke me up
Only to remind me
who I am and what I am about
A vicious cycle of his abuse
and her comfort
Deep down a rabbit hole
where dreams ran away
I found peace in that hole
It was my home
furnished with warm padded walls

His voice shook the foundation every morning
Her warmth rocked me to sleep
Every night we had dinner
sharing each other's company
She eased his voice
he woke me up
His bottomless stomach was never filled
her home cooked meal was already eaten

I used to run away
But home is where the heart is
I have to escape it
I don't want to
black hole face
waiting over the threshold
Dragging me into his propagating gravity
I cross the threshold

I smell her home cooked meal
I know her straight jacket arms
Will hold me tight and rock me to sleep

Natalia Garcia

A Eulogy for the Tío I Never Knew

~ From your dark hair to the Nike Cortez's you used to wear

~ To the stories I would hear about you from a young age

~ The smile that could blind anyone a mile away and that laugh that could brighten anyone's day

~ These are the memories I'll keep with me forever that'll bring me joy to the end of my days

~ But at the same time, they bring me a sadness I can not describe

~ I think about the eyes abuela says we share and how I'll never get to see them or you face to face

~ I think about your favorite food that we'll never get to enjoy together

~ And how you'll never get to hear me sing in person

~ Or how I'll never get to give you hug

~ But then I think about how you are now at peace, up there with all our family who is not with us physically

~ I picture you playing cards with great-grandpa and the other family members I've heard so much about

~ Looking down on us smiling at how we keep your memory alive

~ While we're at Disneyland and abuela puts me in the very front of Splash Mountain, and she's laughing while I'm there terrified, screaming my head off

~ I also think about the other qualities we share, like our stubbornness and our will to never give up

~ As well as the qualities we don't share, like how you liked everything clean to the point where you could lick the floor, and me, I come home and all I want to do is sleep

~ I try so hard to learn about you, the man I never knew but know so much about

~ I remember when I was little I would bury flowers, and when abuela would get upset at me for picking flowers in her garden I would tell her, "I'm sending them to Tío Johnny."

~ Did you ever get them?

~ But until I see you for the first time, my Johnny boy, mi "payaso," I love you always, and I'll never forget you

~ sincerely, your only sobrina, Natalia Andrea Garcia

Angela Gonzales

I Know I'll Be OK

I know on paper my life seems undesirable
So I'll start by saying just how grateful I am
For the blessings in disguise in the first place
Without them I don't know where I'd be today

I think about how Pa was put away
After making choices that day
Pretending he was dead when I was eight
'cause I cried everyday anyway
I still can't process or explain but

I know I'll be OK

When I look in the mirror at night
And I see I turned out just fine
I know I'll be OK
Perfect in my own way
Healing at my own pace

I think about those vending machine dinners
And orange suits
Long drives up to Tehachapi
Being patted down
And talked down to

Still, I got myself together
Grew up in some shelters
Now, a daughter of a deportee
Straight A's and no B's
When they thought I wouldn't amount to anything

I believed it for a minute
Until my parents informed me:
I can be whatever I want to be
It's all happening

Michael Juarez

I Pray You're Having a Good Day

Hello! I hope this letter is not cutting into your day or your busy hours of life. With much respect to you and yours, I pray you're having a good day. My name is Michael S. Juarez Jr. I am a 33-year-old father of two beautiful kids, a man who doesn't drink or use any kind of drugs anymore, a man who is close to his God today, a man who wakes up every morning asking for guidance by practicing spiritual principles, a man who shares his issues with the men and women who understand him because they have come from all walks of life; they are people who have helped me learn how to be a better father, a better son, a better brother, and a real man.

I am a man who is trying to be honest, respectful, and share how I feel instead of hiding it. Why, you may ask? Simply because I got tired of the mask I wear to fit in, to feel loved and cared for. Yet, wanting all those things is hard when growing up with no father, as he is doing 35 to life. Wanting all those things is hard when having a mother who wasted all the time she had and held the responsibility of being the man of the house.

My circumstances allowed me to wear the mask of confusion, loss, anger and pain. That pride was the paint on my mask, the ego, the string around it, the low self-esteem, the knot that held it all together.

By the time I found myself in jail and prison, I was filled with fear. Yet I was not afraid of prison and the rules enforced by the COs and my fellow prisoners, but fear of falling short, so fear itself was the key holder of all my masks.

Prison was college to me and every prison was a different college. The 1, 2, and 3 yards were state colleges, while the 4's, 180's, the hole, and the shoe were the Ivy leagues, the Yales and the Harvards. The sad reality was that I had fun in prison, yet being stripped out naked for all to

see, spreading my ass and lifting my balls and dick at any time for COs to let me know my place or COs tossing up my cell, my living area, fucking with my mail and my meals and my feelings. It was all part of the game I was playing. The prison was shown to me like a chess board and all in the walls where pawns open game to use and to abuse that I could sacrifice at my disposal.

I was part of a group that was feared and hated. No one fucked with us. Straight Killers. Men who lost their souls, had twisted minds. Most have nothing to lose. No hope.

The COs remind you daily about your lost hope with their words. They would brag about their houses, their vacations, and those that have dates to go home to. Most return, say see you next time, pay check! So, these killers are career warriors who expect your loyalty, demand you to put your life on the line at all times, to be about the cause. Men who would not think twice about killing a CO, a black, a white, but over all, our own. That meant if I didn't reach these expectations that were demanded of me, or if I didn't conduct myself by the rules that they wanted all of us to follow, or if I made them look weak, then it's me who will be dealt with.

You probably wonder why I would have fun in a place like that. My life was adding up to be ready and willing to survive among these men, to blend in, to be part of wanting to be the one calling the shots. The ring leader. The leech-holder to the predators.

Being taught this life at a young age, from how to act, to who I run with, and which men to learn from, and who I need to follow and obey, to knowing how to cook food with the type of store they sell to us. So, it didn't take me long to know how to be comfortable. Then I learned how a box doesn't mean I'm imprisoned. Nor does it stop us from getting things done and handling things from building to building to another yard or another prison, or to the streets.

Being slammed down from 3 months to 6 months to another 6 months, only leaving your cell to go to medical or being moved to another part of the prison, like an animal shackled, cuffed up hands and ankles connected by a chain, making it hard to move so tight on your wrist that your skin breaks. Only feeding my anger and pride, saying fuck it yet crushing my spirit, my hope, allowing me to accept that this is it for me. Grateful is out the window. God is far from my thoughts, and the last name I call out to or depend on.

I learn how to expand my mind and my body, yet not my soul or spirit. Dead, I've got no room to feel, nor did I allow it or I would be the victim for all that want to test me. Structuring my day, everything I did was my clock. Reading to increase my skills, I worked out to be ready for war. I watched all around me to know how to attract an attack, yet to defend from everyone, especially those close to me. This had me not able to trust anyone, to not receive love nor allow anyone to love me. Reading helped me escape. Letters helped me release, yet also a weapon to get what I need because my skill of song-writing and singing of sweet melody of sweet nothings, a song of love, care, and pride, respect all and everything to trick all that read and heard to do what I needed. From risking their lives and time to things that I can't give back, yet willing to ask from you because I needed things done for others and myself.

Example – “good afternoon. First and foremost, my apologies to you and yours with the most respect for cutting into your day and program, yet . . . I appreciate your time, from me to yours, gracias with the most respect to you and yours, and remember I am you and you are me, so with much pride and respect, gracias.”

Song writing. Song singing came with the greatest skills of listening, remembering, and repeating, knowing my target's weaknesses, meaning, looking for broken people to sing to, too easy to charm and use, from staff to inmates to women in the free world. Singing smooth sweet melodies of sweet nothings but mind-soothing, soul healing, brain washing, all to make me get all of you.

See, I became AF1542 B block cell 32. A number. Just a bar code. A paycheck to the state of California. Yet, a monster. A weapon. A full threat to society. A box master who doesn't fear time, nor your prisons. A soul. A ghost to all, mastering the skill of song whispering, not getting my hands dirty nor putting me out there to be seen or known. Not connecting the puzzle pieces, solving and collecting all the benefits. Not caring who I have to use and abuse to get it from staff, inmates, people that are free or loved ones, because I was greedy. I had to be someone. Because I had false beliefs. These lies I told to myself to justify my reasons.

In all reality, I was a little boy who was afraid of real-life problems who ran from life's issues. I was a little boy who was never shown how to be a real man. I didn't know how not to be angry

and not blame everyone else and God for this life. It's easier to risk my life and live around killers, to be a child doing childish things, of being violent, not dealing with my true issues. I ran from them. I took the crook life. I'd rather be in prison than work and have a healthy lifestyle. Yet I didn't know what that was, nor cared for it, until I became a father. Until I was not willing to allow my son or daughter to feel how I felt.

Lonely, wondering why I was not good enough for my dad to be home and be around me. Chasing his approval and his love, him taking me to the darkest parts of LA and to prison. Risking all of me to receive it because in all reality I'm just that little boy waiting on his dad to come home.

It's sad. I read the most beautiful poetry. I witnessed the most incredible art from drawing to tattoos, even jewelry boxes to other creations. Some of the smartest minds are in prison and have no date because of an emotion and a thought they didn't know how to cope with, but reacted to, and now they're going to die in the box.

It's sad how CDCR only makes it easy for us to come back, not help us to not return.

The state of California pays the true criminals to rehabilitate society's troubled people who, first hand, are involved in drug trafficking to hit lists to lying, causing chaos among the races, selling their souls, bodies, and minds for the right price, yet the people of this great country and state trust them, or don't give a fuck. You tell me yet.

Today I practice principles and take spiritual actions that connect me to my God, and that remind me about his grace that I am alive and free, not in prison or imprisoned, not in my mind, not bottled up anymore, but keeping me grateful, living in humility.

Today I am who I was created to be. A lover, not a fighter. A light in the darkness. A human that feels, cries, laughs, and who expresses himself, not hiding who he is.

Thank you for your time and day.

Jazz

the art of healing

having my father taken before i was earthside created emotional and social disconnections for me. the first time i was introduced to my father i was 90 days old. the person that was supposed to protect me was a complete stranger behind a thick glass barrier. in elementary school i would tell my peers, dad was away for business. one of many lies that i was told to say. trying to make ends meet and finding ways to fill both roles, mom missed school events and looked for ways to overcompensate. during weekends we would travel many miles, hours at a time, for minutes of bonding time. i resented my mom for creating a distorted reality for my sibling and me.

eventually, my father was released from prison and attempted to become a productive citizen. his criminal record was a barrier to any financial opportunities, addiction kept him imprisoned in his own mind, and untreated mental disease kept him from being a father. he was set up to fail.

as my journey brought me into education, ive learned to embrace this story, identifying pain, anger, and resentment towards the law and my parents.

ive put all the broken pieces of my life together in order to create something beautiful - this is the art of healing. i owe it to myself and the daughters of incarcerated parents *to tell my story*; our stories need to be heard. our traumas aren't our fault, but healing is our responsibility. and this must be a collective effort because when we tell our stories we are defeating systemic oppression. it is possible to create a world where our stories are the source of inspiration, resistance, and healing.



Lost Sole Nikes / Greg Martinez



Fabri Fibra - Oil on concrete, 20cm diameter / Mario Loprete



Lost Sole Chucks / Greg Martinez



Pasadena Through Window / Angela Gonzales

James M

I Can Remember

I can remember from the age of 3 my father was in prison and I would go to visit him. I used to wonder why he wasn't around and always locked up. At the age of 9 my father had gotten out of prison and 3 weeks later I found him in my grandma's bathroom with a needle in his arm on the floor from an overdose. Calling 911, the paramedics told me to put him in the tub with cold water.

Growing up I told myself I would never use drugs but by the age of 12 I would pretend to smoke the butts of cigarettes and walk around family parties drinking half cups of liquor and get drunk. At 13 I began fighting at school, feeling out of place, like I didn't belong. I was half white and half Mexican. With my last name being Skipper I was made fun of a lot so to make friends I began stealing liquor from supermarkets. I remember getting caught stealing from Stater Brothers and being arrested. I was held in Whittier police department for 2 hours before my mother came to pick me up. They were the longest two hours of my life and at age 13, I found friends who were older than me who also drank. Soon they introduced me to weed and meth which led to my addiction and subsequent descent into criminal activity.

I began to rob the ice cream man and take money out of my mother's purse. My step father, who worked in construction, had tools laying around which I also stole just to buy meth. My liquor of choice to steal was Tequila. At the age of 15 I began selling meth for a close friend's brother on the streets and in high school, without my friend's knowledge. He would give me meth but I would also buy an 8-ball from him for about \$35. Thankfully I never picked up a sales case. Throughout high school I would use and fight every day, because those were the images I saw in my father's neighborhood, one that I always wanted to be a part of. That life always attracted me, but living with my mom, who worked for the Federal government, that seemed like a world

away. When I went to visit my father in Pacoima however, I was able to indulge. The big homies still wouldn't jump me in because my pops would fuck them up if they did.

Fast forward to 2002. I ended up moving to Iowa with my daughter's mom and stayed out there for 5 years where I worked for a boat trailer company installing electrical wires. Still using meth and liquor, my girlfriend at the time was a bartender in a little town called Schleswig. Every night I drove home I would stop at the bar to make sure she wasn't harassed, but one night I started drinking and got into an argument with one of the town drunks. I got mad and left. I only lived two blocks down the street from the bar but was driving 80mph down a residential road with winding streets and hills. I was drunk and my friend was in the car with me as I saw a car up ahead. The car was turning but I was going way too fast to stop and before I could hit my breaks, I smashed into the front driver side wheel. I knew that I was fucked. Airbags deployed and I immediately jumped out to check if the other driver was OK. However, I still landed in Iowa county jail for 4 months.

In 2007, in my mid 20s, I moved back to California. I began to commit felonies along with petty thefts and commercial burglaries. I did almost two years back-to-back.

Around the age of 37 I was arrested for a residential burglary and I'm still fighting that case to this day but because the District Attorney has no evidence it was dropped to a misdemeanor.

Throughout the years my addiction has still continued to plague me. I mustered up the strength to check into IMPACT residential treatment center and have been here 23 days. Fortunately, I've learned from my past mistakes which have led me to make the decision to change my life. I thank the Alhambra police and the judges for saving my life and providing me the opportunity to recover.

David Moore

The Effects of Incarceration and the Process of Healing

The topic of incarceration was something that was introduced to me at a young age. I'd like nothing more than to tell you that it came with warnings and preventive measures in hopes of trying to steer me away. That wasn't the case at all. The world around me consisted of people, well men who had been to prison and females who wanted them; streets that respected them. I knew from a young age that I too, would be able to say that I've been to prison.

The street/gang lifestyle surely did enough damage to my family. I know this because my mom used to tell me that she felt better when I was busted because of all the danger, violence, and death that had been so common in my neighborhood. I was enmeshed in a culture that perpetuated a criminal code of conduct that was founded in a distorted value system consisting of criminal activity, respect, loyalty, and sacrifice. The tragedy of it all is that the sacrifice was not made for the betterment of one's life; it was made for the moment on an as-needed basis for any random act of violence or challenge that presented itself. The better trained I was to react, the better chance I had at building a reputation, getting away with the crime, or winning the fight.

All of this childhood and young adulthood training would come in handy when I finally made it to the college of the streets: prison. When in prison, one is placed in a situation in which all forms of safety have been removed, the fight or flight mechanism is activated and becomes hyper-sensitive to surroundings for survival. This is all shared in hindsight because the mindset present in myself during this time was that of indifference towards right and wrong.

I made it through the first couple of years being what is considered to be an active participant of my political environment and finding myself placed in solitary confinement on multiple

occasions which, at the time, was an acceptable outcome to my actions. What I did not know at the time is the issues surrounding social sensory deprivation that were being created in my mind through the lack of contact with other people. I had a need to try and quiet my mind to any form of critical thought as it produced uncomfortable and unwanted emotional strain.

During this time, the amount of losses I sustained throughout my life began to weigh heavy on me, and my absence in my children's lives became something that I knew would never be the same regardless of the outcome of my time spent incarcerated (e.g. thinking I may never get out as a result of the unspoken rules/code of conduct being imposed on us prisoners by the predatory inmate milieu). I proceeded to build a wall and a "hardened heart" as the Bible says (Exodus 8:15-32; Isaiah 6:10) This state of being would be my lifeline. Little did I know at the time that it would be a fixed mindset that would govern my life for many years to come.

I was released on parole and fortunately enough, my mother permitted me to stay on her couch. It was awkward to be a grown man living at his mother's house, especially with the ego that had manifested itself in me at that time. Being on high control parole permitted the Inglewood police department free access to my mother's house at any time. In addition, my person was subject to search and seizure upon the slightest request. This happened more frequently as I did not have a vehicle and had to utilize public transportation to get back and forth to work; a job I was grateful to have obtained.

I express the gratitude because of the great many jobs I had applied for and had not received due to my honesty in regards to my current parole status and criminal record. To be completely honest at this point, that job I did get was a result of a lie and omission to the aforementioned information. I was washing cars at a rental agency, getting paid under the table, and that proved to be a problem for my parole officer as there was no way to verify my employment, and of course, to pay my cost of parole services.

The issues with being released is the hardships that accompany the responsibilities that one encounters along the way and obstacles in the way of each one. I could spend all day here talking about the daily feelings associated with the pressure to stay sober, avoid conflict, and resist police harassment, but I believe when I use the words "Vicious cycle" it's all summed up

in that descriptive. I was able to finally get off parole, get a stable residence and a steady job, but the underlying causes of my criminality and reactive substance abuse problem had never been addressed.

The progression through relapse into substance abuse is one I know all too well, but the subsequent hardships of this round was something that changed the trajectory of my life completely. In a years' time I had lost my place of residence, my job, and was back in the area in which I was most comfortable; that's when I received news that my mother had passed away. No words can describe the feelings that surfaced and the amount of drugs it took to suppress them. If it wasn't for being shot multiple times in the stomach, throat, and eye, I don't know what I would've done. At that point, I knew my life would never be the same and so I continued on to the bitter end.

I really was hoping to have it all end in a glorified hail of bullets and some noble cause, but it didn't; it ended with me being bussed back to prison. The loneliness I found in that isolation and despair was indescribable, and the ability to see through the fog was limited due to my having only one eye. I make light of it now, but it was deafening to me at the time. I could hear voices of the past running through my thoughts, glimpses of a future with a trail of lost hope. I feel at that time, my spirit took a permanent vacation and my soul was paper thin. It took all of me to make it through those years, and the conditions surrounding the CDCR's new tactics were almost unbearable.

I don't know how it is legal, but the state of California prison system is allowing general population inmates to be placed on the same yards as the special needs population. When I say allowed, I mean it is being imposed and forced on you. I have never been beat up so bad in my life, and it did not stop. This effort continued throughout the remainder of my sentence, and I am grateful to have been placed in AD-SEG. It is a paradox to think that being alone in isolation is the easier and softer way, but in this case, it was. I wrote letters to halfway houses, treatment facilities and church/religious based organizations in hopes that someone would help me avoid becoming a product of recidivism or another death-toll statistic. I was given the opportunity to come to a treatment center in Pasadena called IMPACT.

At IMPACT I was taught a new way of living through the 12-step process and as a result of my efforts, I was given the opportunity to remain living in the facility and allowed to participate in the residential aid training program. I obtained my high school equivalency certificate, made it through counseling school, and got certified as an alcohol/drug counselor - CADAC II. I completed a yearlong internship. In the process I was referred to the CORE program by a friend who had begun attending college at PCC.

I found a group of people who were like me, who were willing to help me through the application process. I found support and built an academic support system that still supports me to this day. I am a big believer in education being the key to recidivism and the source of inspiration/motivation to recreate one's life. I now work at the treatment facility I went through and teach a group designed to help the at-risk population that I was and still am a part of. The people who have been system-impacted and who are formerly incarcerated are some of the most genuine and underrepresented people around.

I believe that my efforts at addressing the issues of those affected by the system have become my life's calling. I have applied at USC for the Fall and hope that I will be able to attend school a few blocks away from where it all began. A full circle to the same area I grew up in. Instead of being part of the problem, I feel that my experiences and education now provide a sample of the increasing solution.

Education is a means to reduce and eliminate recidivism.

Anthony Mondragon

To Whom it May Concern

To Whom it may concern,

How has art helped me heal from being impacted by the incarceration system?

There are many forms of art that anyone can choose to identify as a helping mechanism. For me it has been being able to take advantage of the opportunities that have come forward in my life. I did not think I would be where I am today a couple years ago. Being a felon and having a strike can definitely discourage you from wanting to pursue a higher education but even though I knew it would be hard I still didn't give up on my dreams. After being in and out of jail at the age of fifteen from Juvenile halls to camp to the county jail I started to realize a pattern in my life and that lead me to spending most of my teen years incarcerated. I did not realize it until I was fighting 15 years for a crime I did not commit but was guilty by association. That was when I realized that my life was over but for some reason GOD gave me another chance to fulfill my proficy and to become who I was destined to be. Keep in mind it's not easy growing up with no family support or financial support because at the end of the day it is up to you to figure out how are you going to pay your bills, pay for food, or just to get by. I believe that the reason why we do things in life is because we have no other option, we must survive in a world that is inequitable.

Nevertheless we must find ways to help improve our lives and help us prosper in any way. Once I came out of the county jail after spending almost 2 years I had finally said enough is enough so I decided to change the way I thought, dressed and acted. It wasn't gangbanging that fascinated me any more, It was getting an education since college is free and they will pay you a certain amount of money every semester as long as you have a high school diploma or G.E.D. and pass

with a C average that was when I opened up my eyes and saw a real opportunity. Why not get an education and get paid for it ? that was a win in my agenda so I took advantage and throughout my years of attending college I fell in love with education because knowledge is power and once you have power you have the power to create change in a world that wasn't meant for us under the eyes of the government and white supremacy. Everyday that you choose to keep pushing forwards will pay off and I am living proof of it. While attending college in the year 2017 I was walking down the hall when I saw a study abroad program poster that said "Taking an Italian class? Why not study it in Florence Italy?", The poster caught my attention since I had taken an Italian class just for fun a couple years back and passed it with a B. I sent a picture to my counselor at Homeboy Industries and she said lets make it happen and honestly I never thought in a million years that it would be possible but after all the advocating and getting a scholarship I was able to participate and study abroad in Florence Italy. At that precise moment I knew that anything was possible as long as you keep pushing forward and put your mind to it you can accomplish anything you want. Fast forward 5 years later now I am finally about to graduate college and attend University. I am the only one in my family who has come this far in their educational career and I will not be the last. I found a way to help pay my bills and at the same time get an education, this is why I urge anyone who is pursuing a higher education or even contemplating with themselves about it to do it because at the end of the day it will be worth it and you never know what blessings you might get out of it. This country is built on exploitation and greed of the minority and this is why we must push forward and get educated, help your friends and families get educated in order to break the incarceration system.. We must urge our sisters, brothers, families, friends and the ones left behind to get educated because once we do we will be unstoppable and create change in this white supremacy world. I will become a lawyer even though I know it will be difficult but we gotta start somewhere and try because if you don't then you will never know what you are capable of. Stay strong and continue to push forward because your life depends on it.

Sincerely,
Anthony Mondragon

Justin Perez

Only Hope

Despite all the absences, there were letters.
Despite talking through glass, there was appreciation.
Despite all the obstacles, there was perseverance.
Despite all the pain, there was patience.
Despite all the anger, there was understanding.
Despite all the bars, there was Hope.
Hope that delivered me from despair.
Hope that one day, we would see each other, again on the outside.
No absences.
No glass.
No obstacles.
No pain.
No anger.
No bars.
And no despair.
Only Hope.

Royce Provost

She Echoes

She echoes in the now,
I can smell that era,
And can taste her flesh,
Salty from tears,
And hear her laugh,
And remember the late nights,
And troubled moments,
When the neighbor called the cops.

Yet death has stolen her from me,
And even though she now dwells in dreams,
I trek to the edge of the cosmos,
Where I hope she'll be...

Consuelo Rios

Hurt As a Child, Healing As an Adult

Early years of my life consisted of moving from state to state, father in and out of my life, no stability. Then everything changed. I was 11 when my father got incarcerated. At the same time they revoked his U.S Citizenship, meaning that after he completed his time, he would be deported to Mexico immediately. Since he was in another state I did not see him again until he got out. I was almost 18 years old. A visit to Mexico was all it took to feel the estranged relationship with my father, realizing I was NOT ready!

Around the same time that they took him away, I discovered he had another family which explained him being in and out of our lives! I was 11! A child! Not knowing how to cope with everything, filled with so much anger, loneliness... the smoking and drinking started.

One night my mother caught me drunk on the street. I was lost, alone, and defeated by pain. After that incident, she realized that it was time to move, to come back home. I finished the school year and moved back to Los Angeles.

Starting all over in LA, sleeping in different houses, on different living room floors and couches. Things seem to be better now. My mother got two jobs and a little place to call home. But she was hardly there, and I still felt alone.

Being the eldest of 4 girls came with responsibilities. Afraid to be a child, afraid to make mistakes, I matured young, became a perfectionist in fear of letting my mother down. I became self-conscious and anxious. I shut down and put up a wall!

Once I started high school, I joined the dance team. Dancing and music helped me forget for a while, but the psychological trauma was still there. I was still lost, still alone, still defeated by

the pain. Throughout high school I drank most weekends, to the point of blacking out.

From the moment I sipped alcohol I did not care how I acted or what I said. Being numb from the alcohol was the only way I could cry and let the pain out. I could never show weakness to anyone while sober. I had to stay strong for my sisters and my mother. I was drowning in my own anger and depression, but this was my way of dealing with the pain.

I started a family of my own. Wanting my children’s lives to be different, not raised by a hurt person, I came to the realization that I needed to forgive and to heal. Resentment possessed my heart, but with every baby smile and giggle, I began to recognize that there was more to life.

Even though I was still not able to voice my feelings I turned to music and art and let the irresponsible drinking go. This process helped me transmit my pain to the world. The colors, the shading, the lines all reflected an interpretation of my expressions.

Through my higher education journey, and through the support of my community, I am learning how to work on myself and to reflect on my mistakes. I am learning how to respect my body, and how to forgive myself for hurting me and others while drinking.

Currently, I am in the process of forgiving my father. I am pledging to heal myself.

Some wounds take longer to close
but I am digging deep
and letting the years of suppressed emotions out.

I am growing from my experiences.
I even talk to my father occasionally.

I deserve to live without resentment and pain.
I deserve to be happy.

I know it is time for a better version of me.

Jose Rivas

All You Have To Do is be Dedicated to Becoming the Best Version of Yourself

I was 18, angry, a gang member locked up, and I was fighting a life sentence. What else could I lose? So I dove right into a dangerous career of criminal activity inside the general population community. I was constantly fighting, sold drugs, used drugs, got involved with the politics inside, and I had to experience racial segregation.

I didn’t care about the consequences that my actions carried, even if it meant facing new criminal charges. I had no goals set for myself or for my life because I felt I had no purpose. In 2011 I was sentenced to 17 years, to be served in a California state prison and was transferred to reception in Delano, then to High Desert State Prison.

My name is Jose Rivas and I served 11 years in the California prison system. My incarceration began in 2009, six months after my 18th birthday. I was a kid in a “grown man’s world” as most inmates like to say. I was afraid. I was among strangers, gangsters, and individuals that would be considered “enemies” out in the street/gangbanging world. Sheriffs who would try to intimidate me and would try to test me in front of my peers to see how far they could get with their harassment tactics. The worst feeling in the world was not knowing if I’d ever make it back home.

While housed in HDSP I decided to educate myself so I went back to school and earned my GED. Education was the key to beginning my healing process because it gave me hope. After earning my GED, Lake Tahoe Community College came to the prison and offered an opportunity to earn an A.A.T in sociology and I signed myself up for the program, and was accepted to be part of the first group of students to participate in the program. At first all my boys would joke and call me names such as nerd, or geek, and would tell me I was going soft.

They were joking around of course, but I felt good to be called some other name besides “inmate”.

My first semester I took five courses and passed them all with A’s and B’s. I felt so proud of myself and realized something that my teachers had been telling me ever since I was in elementary school, that I was indeed very smart. I also realized how much I enjoyed educating myself, but I also found myself applying what I was learning to my life inside. I began helping fellow classmates with their assignments and sharing what I was learning with other inmates to encourage them to pursue an education for themselves. Some followed my footsteps and others stayed the course, but I know that education changed my life completely. I even earned the nickname “Dr. Phil”.

What I learned is that whether you find yourself incarcerated or in college, don’t stop evolving and growing. If someone tells you that it’s never too late to go back to school or start something new in life, please believe that person. I can tell you from experience that it is true, and the rewards are limitless.

Thank you.

Mr. Tezozomac

Tezozomoc

I am Tezozomoc
after my great grandfather.

I’m tired
of all the jokes
that make me
feel as some
aboriginal furred animal
from some island
half-way around the world.

I just want to forget,
to forget this anger,
this emotional fracture,
from owning such a name.

Why couldn’t my tatabuelo
have been Juan, Jose
Justo, or fulano?

Why did
he have to have
some Japanese

sounding name?
And why did his
pictures look
as if he was a philipino?
They all lied to me
about him.
Was he really
Asian or What?

I have spent my
youth dating
Asian women
hoping to some
day understand the meaning
of my name.
But it has not resolved.
I am buried in this
cell where I have time
to think about my name.

Those days
when I ran with “Echo Park”
They called me “El Joker,”
They said,
caused they knew I was
crazy and unpredictable.

I really think
they meant I was sadistic.
That I took pleasure

in pounding brown faces
into concrete granite.

That my taste
in danger ran on
the surreal.
That I loved
Colombian neck ties
on those who fucked with me.

That I was unstable,
unable to allow
personal intimacy.

But this old veterano
in La Pinta told me
what Tezozomoc meant.

He made me cry.
Because they had all
lied to me about tatabuelo.
That they had not liked
him because he too
had been named
“El Joker,” in another time,
in another place,
running with different batos.

Where they called it a revolution.
Here they call us gangs,

hoodlums.
But I know
that I have inherited
much of tatabuelo
Tezozomoc.
We both loved danger,
had no fear of death,
or life.

But it's too late.
This brown veterano face
under my fist
is not moving.

Gabriel Villalobos

Untitled

I had gone to prison at 18 for a strong-armed robbery which led to two people being shot. I was sentenced to 12 years in state prison. I was released seven years later, in 2012, due to Covid-19. Even though I was a quick learner I had no prior work experience which made getting a job nearly impossible. I made several trips back to prison where I got used to being in a controlled environment with guards and inmates. I hadn't a single tattoo when I first entered the system, but after 7 long years, the rigors and stress of gang culture eventually took their toll and I managed to cover my entire body from temple down to my feet in tattoos. Although the main goal was to gain acceptance, the only thing that gangs ever did for me was give me an addiction to heroin. Now I constantly live in fear and deal regularly with pain, misery, and regret.

Today I'm in a treatment facility for alcohol and drug addiction and I blame prison life and culture for this. I struggle with depression and isolation issues, and I have social anxiety and trauma from the violence I was involved in or just happened to witness. I also deal with PTSD which affects me in all my affairs today, but this treatment program has helped me to gain a sense of purpose. I have hope that I can have a better life today and tomorrow. As I continue to stay clean and apply the things I learn in all areas of my life, I continue to witness changes that I never thought possible.

Damien Moore

The Stories are True

The stories are true while the names have been changed, but I'll never forget what I saw in there

I.

“Put your back on your number! Put your back on your number!”

That which should be the sound of rehabilitation is actually the sound of pain, misery and regret. Sometimes the trials are short, but sometimes they last forever. Being told when to eat, shower, nap, to take medicine and when to watch T.V. pales in comparison to being embedded in a culture where the counseling sessions are rape and the recreation is torture...

Prison is a day care center for adults where the teachers are the Corrections Officers (COs) and the principal is the Warden or Sheriff. A crusty, brown, plastic hardened tray with various squares and rectangles molded into them resembles a children's- shaped teaching tool. Where the blocks would go, the putrid smelling food without odor, the texture or flavor is inserted; ready to terrorize even the strongest of intestinal tracts. On a rare occasion I visited the kitchen and spied a package of meat labeled 'Not for Human Consumption' meaning that the FDA's inspection was probably two years too late.

The décor is straight out of American Horror Story: Asylum. Dulls greys, faded yellows, and dim whites surrounding a sea of steel, metal and concrete. The mood is intense and the ambiance reeks of danger, but incarceration is much more than that. It's a continuously degrading process that ebbs and flows to the tunes of survival, suffering and sometimes smoldering silence...

2.

“Hey bitch, I asked to see medical two hours ago and you keep telling me to wait!”

“What's the matter baby, you got a hot date?”

“Fuck you lady wit yo ratchet ass, wearing that Crash Bandicoot ass wig, you need to fix it!”

Female CO Lina Thompson did nothing to deserve such harsh words from an inmate she's bent over backwards to help. Inmate Forrester has no family left, no friends to help, and a significant other whose schizophrenia leads her to believe that whoever has the most fentanyl is her partner for the day. With Forrester gone that person could be anybody and he knows it. Lina Thompson understands that Forrester might be having a bad day; a phone call might have gone unanswered, a cell mate may have a non-existent hygiene routine and his specialty diet tray could've been stolen. But still, to talk to someone whose done nothing but help him like that, and a woman no less, maybe he's getting what he deserves. The fact that he reminds her of an estranged brother that can't seem to get his shit together is maybe the only reason why she dedicates so much time into helping him while subjecting herself to such viperous outburst and tirades. She's got to see this dude every day for at least another year. Guess that's why a drink always sounds so good around 5:00pm...

I treated the COs with the respect they deserve while incarcerated. Hell, these are just people, some good, some bad, that are at a job they need to keep that Netflix subscription going or that iPhone 22 working. One must also take into consideration that Corrections Officers are actually civil servants whose job is to assist the inmates, but many do not understand that and choose to hurt and hinder inmates which is where the majority of incarceration-related problems surface. Me, being in customer service for 25 years, I equate the role of corrections office to that of customer service reps that have to be a little more hands-on than most. Ma used to tell me that you can catch bees faster with honey than with shit so I took that approach to the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) and found that it worked. And although there were some corrections officers who were absolutely terrible at their jobs, they didn't outweigh the satisfaction I received when my respectful and courteous manner netted me results beyond anything I ever hoped for within that structure.

3.

“Get yo lame ass up outta here Johnson. You know you could’ve let me get that extra sandwich. Weak ass nigga.”

“I gotta get you to court on time Mason. You see this long line of men you’re chained too? Don’t you think they want an extra sandwich too? Then we got a bunch of inmates reaching and grabbing and fumbling with sandwiches holding up my line and obstructing justice.”

“Ain’t no fucking justice goin’ on here.”

“There will be if I can get you to court on time thank you and move ahead. Now before I lead you to the holding tank where you will await the judge, I’m gonna unchain you from all your friends here but YOU will remain cuffed. Understood?”

“Yeah, I got it. I’m not uncapcity.”

“Uncapaci-what?”

“Uncapcity. You know, like can’t think.”

“Oh, you mean incapacitated. No, you’re not, but if the judge baptizes you with all of them years you facin’, you will be. Now hold still.”

You wouldn’t believe what happened next, but I’ll tell you anyway. Mason, upon getting unchained yet still cuffed in front attempts to reach for Johnson’s Taser and immediately wished he chose another time and placed to be stupid. The monotony of jail can sometimes dull the senses and convolute any rationale pertaining to sound judgement. Johnson’s buddies heard the ruckus down the hall and were all too eager to run and assist with the day’s latest inmate re-education program module.

Surprisingly, Mason had to be tased by three sheriff’s deputies who obviously had their tasers set to “Thor: Ragnarök” because with three two-pronged Tasers stitched in him, one of Mason’s eyes popped out of the socket, meaning his experience was nothing short of electrifying.

Now why did he wanna go and do that you might ask? Well, in Mason’s case he was facing two counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon on a police officer, a charge that isn’t taken lightly in ANY one of Georgia’s 159 counties. With two prior convictions for assault and one more for aggravated battery, a more serious offense, Mason’s dreams of becoming a contestant on “The Price is Right” were all but dashed, especially since he was facing The Honorable Judge Shawn Ellen LaGrua who sentenced him to prison for violent offenses twice already. The severity of Mason’s charges along with his subsequent priors caused him to be driven and controlled by only one emotion...fear. A cornered animal will do whatever it takes to survive but in this case Mason’s survival instincts caused him more harm than good.

4.

The stories are true while the names have been changed, but I’ll never forget what I saw in there: feces-smearred cell of an inmate needing a higher level of care. Blood-soaked cement floor after someone heavily sedated off a Seroquel and Haledon cocktail rolled off the top bunk where his head met a steel desk. Heroin addict shitting himself while sitting on the stairs creating looks of disgust and anger.

And not to forget my time as trustee where I witnessed a man urinating with another man watching, staring at his penis with eager anticipation of lights out. But there was violence too, which I couldn’t escape as I got jumped by 12 young men for taking a stand against extortion in my dorm. The men were classified as “dubbed out” meaning they’ve brought incredible amounts of shame and embarrassment to their respective gang sets in such a way that they’ve now been excommunicated.

So, they banded together to wreak havoc on the lives of older gentlemen who were just trying to do their time, charging them rent (store items) for sleeping in a cell. They used threats, intimidation and fear to achieve their aims. I was not having it. I’m originally from Chicago, born and raised and one thing I do know is that gang bangers don’t gang bang on civilians. These low down dirty muthafuckers obviously didn’t get the memo and were probably left unsupervised for too long when they were children.

However, I did not know that the three main guys were from the same neighborhood as the

female sergeant who controlled the entire floor. The young men were given free reign over the inmates, terrorizing them with impunity. When the victims couldn't endure any more, the sergeant would ask this question: Do you fear for your life? And their response would be yes! and they would be escorted out the dorm.

This tactic was used to absolve the boys of any wrong doing since the sergeant endorsed their behavior and to get rid of people she deemed...problematic. Sometimes the sergeant would use these youths to punish inmates who defied her authority by placing the inmate in the gym on a "time out" only to have the doors popped and the men rush in to physically assault them. I witnessed these atrocities and the total abuse of police power and I became invested into making a change, although to my detriment.

The sergeant started to become aware of the grievances I filed against her and the noise I was creating surrounding her conduct. Now I was on her radar and threats against my well-being surfaced. A confrontation with three of the men in the dayroom proved to be in my favor because there was too much space and opportunity for me being 6'11 and over 200 pounds. One fun fact is that only hard-core drug addicts gain weight in prison and non-addicted people tend to lose or maintain their weight while incarcerated. I drop 40 pounds or more instantly every time I'm locked up a month or more. Just not enough calories in that place.

The sergeant began to get more and more heat from my pen by her superiors until one day, as the doors popped, 12 young men rushed into my cell stating that I had to leave because I was a rat.

First off, a rat is someone who does crime with a person then tells on that person to save his own skin. I was not in a situation of that nature but, I digress. Once it was established that I wasn't leaving quietly, the fighting started. I was outmanned in a small cell. One guy even had a ring on, undoubtedly given to him by the sergeant, and while I was down, covered in bodies, he punched me in the lip, bursting it. I was bleeding and needed two stitches but I fought for something bigger than myself.

My store items remained untouched. The Sergeant didn't get to ask me if I feared for my life because it was obvious I didn't. But fighting isn't tolerated in GDC and it's off to the hole I

went. However, the tyranny on floor five stopped and I was lauded as a real ass muthafucker for taking on a whole dorm to ensure that a few civilians could do their time in peace. What happened was that the bad guys got lengthy prison sentences and shipped off while the good guys went home...eventually. One of the leaders of the mob that jumped me was locked up because he refused to give up the names of his gang banger buddies who borrowed his car, running over and killing someone. Talk about mis-placed loyalty. The car was in his name so he took the fall and by the time he gets out they'll be at least nine more movies added to the Fast and The Furious franchise.

The sergeant remarked with disdain that I was a jailhouse lawyer when the appropriate term is civilian paralegal. It's like calling a flight attendant a stewardess, which is outdated, rude, and flagrantly irresponsible. The sergeant herself ended up getting reprimanded and permanently transferred to the women's floor where she most likely began recruiting for a similar racket. It's just the way the prison system is. Some rule by justice, others rule by force and coercion. Totally different than the correctional institutions of California where the inmates run the show, Georgia's DOC is run by the sheriffs, many of which are gang affiliated and belong to fraternal special interest groups. Whatever they say goes.

What I've always wondered is, who watches the people hired to do the watching? Your guess is as good as mine.

The effects of incarceration-based trauma can be disturbing to the point of debilitating. I've lived through a period of incarceration where there were four deaths in a twelve-month span consisting of inmates getting thrown from the top tier or hanging themselves in the cell. The most chilling fact perhaps is that these events led to a facility-wide lock down where the local media were barred access, normally suggesting a cover-up.

One winter there was no heat and inmates were living in a winter wonderland where you could see your breath with every exhale and I had all of my three prison uniforms on. Another time, over a week-long period, we came out our cells approximately five hours and this was in general population. Sometimes the din is so loud in the dorms that you can still hear it in your ears hours after it has subsided. An inmate with a colostomy bag, who clearly should have been on

the medical floor, was ushered into my cell forced to dump his bag of toxic waste into our toilet, igniting the cell with an odor akin to raw sewage, Because of my spiritual beliefs I was told by prison officials to love thy neighbor.

I will never truly be able to forget the lights, sounds and smells of my five-year incarceration stint with half of that time being served consecutively. Yet, if you ever met me, you'd be hard-pressed to tell that I've served a substantial amount of time at all. This is due in part to spiritual practice, but most of all to dissociation. People in the grips of continuous trauma sometimes disassociate as a defense mechanism against the madness. I was surrounded by chaos but simply took the emotion out of it, choosing to remain numb and indifferent to it all. The only time I ever showed any emotion was when it came time to physically defend myself or if there was some other safety threat, because if I let everything that happened while incarcerated affect me, I most likely wouldn't have made it, sitting here writing this piece for your consideration.

Jessica Leeth Young

Dear Juvenile Hall

Did you know by locking me away you were hurting me or was this a way of throwing me out like trash on the side of the street? I know I was just a criminal in your eyes, not a helpless child who needed guidance because her father was a drunken speed freak who used to beat her like a rag doll. Maybe you would have helped me if I told you he punched me with his closed fists and grabbed his shotgun afterwards and blew a hole in the stereo and the wall behind it.

Maybe, just maybe, you would have helped me if I told you that my mom said she was coming back but then just disappeared with no trace. She left me wondering for years what I did wrong to make her not want m. I was a scared little girl needing her mommy and daddy. Maybe then you wouldn't have locked me away. Yes, you shackled me with your silver bracelets but your chains could not break me. You tried so hard to change me and to make me conform into what you wanted me to be. A worthless criminal.

I was on my way to county jail and off to the joint I went. Your thoughts of wisdom hung heavy like a dark cloud waiting to let the rain fall out. I was hit over the head with a clipboard and dragged like a stray dog to the ground and had my 13 year old head banged into the cold hard concrete over and over again. Maybe you thought it was going to hurt me or scare me? Too bad I was already used to the beatings.

Why would grown men watch little girls shower? You thought I was the criminal.

Thank you for the lifetime of therapy.

How dare you! You may have thought you won. You may think you broke me, but you will never break my will.

I am not that scared little 13 year old girl anymore. I am grown now. I am free from your torment and bondage.

I am a mother.

I am a wife.

I am a student.

I am fearless.

You were never able to break me.

I am a survivor.

Jessica Leeth Young

The Woman I Was

Today I introduced myself

To the woman I once was

The woman I once was

Did not recognize me

This excitement in me only gave me the power

That I needed

To then meet up with the woman who I will eventually become



About C.O.R.E.

Community Overcoming Recidivism through Education (CORE)

CORE provides support services to formerly incarcerated and system impacted students enrolling at Pasadena City College. CORE focuses on students’ reentry into their communities in order for them to succeed through the development of job skills, attaining Associates degree and/or certificate, and/or the ability to transfer to a four-year college or university.

The primary goal of CORE is to develop a holistic approach to empowering students to succeed in higher education and beyond. The program focuses on building community, on and off-campus, that will serve as social, emotional, and academic support for our students.

Services Provided By CORE

- Assistance with college enrollment and services
- Guidance in applying for financial aid and scholarships
- Academic tutoring
- Student-peer mentorship
- Transfer preparation
- Expungement workshops
- Access to community resources
- Assistance with job readiness

Eligibility

- Currently enrolled at PCC
- Enrolled in at least three units
- Identify as a student who has been affected by incarceration

To find out how you can support the continuation of the CORE program at PCC, please reach out to core@pasadena.edu.

Instagram: [@corepcc](#)

Facebook: [.facebook.com/corepcc/](#)

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Erica Carter
Advocate for Equity and Justice

About F.I.R.S.T.

Formerly Incarcerated Radical Scholars Team (FIRST):

PCC student organization dedicated to helping those affected by the Prison Industrial Complex.

Instagram: @firstpcc

About Our Editors

Fiction and Non-Fiction Editor **JESSICA LEETH YOUNG** is a student at Pasadena City College and is a part of the CORE. Jessica has been able to become a CEL Community engagement leader through this program that helps formerly incarcerated students, as well as system-impacted students on campus. Jessica is transferring to Chico State University in the fall for a BA in Sociology. She then plans to pursue her master's at Pepperdine University for Clinical Psychology with an emphasis on Marriage and Family Therapy. She is a certified Grief and Loss Facilitator and chooses to use this certification to help her community. While organizing the healing arts CORE/INSCAPE magazine project, she was able to bridge the formerly incarcerated community with PCC's long-running *Inscape Magazine*.

Art and Photography Editor **CONSUELO RIOS** is a PCC student, a F.I.R.S.T board member, and a Community Engagement Leader for CORE, an amazing program that provides support to formerly incarcerated and system-impacted students. She will be graduating this year with an AA in Sociology, and is transferring to UCR to get her BA in sociology. She plans to continue on to a Masters program and become a school counselor. Being system-impacted, and having experienced the negative stereotypes that come with it, Consuelo hopes to continue to empower students that have been affected by the prison system in any way. Working on the Healing Arts/Inscape partnership and the Healing Arts day at PCC has been a great experience for her. She loves art herself, as it has helped her get through her healing process throughout the years.

Poetry Editor **JOCELYN CHAU-GOH** is a nontraditional student and a mother of three. She is a first year student at Pasadena City College who will be transferring to Cal State Los Angeles to pursue a Bachelors of Science in Public Health. She has found renewed purpose in her life to create awareness to address the negative impact of mass incarceration and work to implement programs in the carceral system that will break the vicious cycle of recidivism, specifically through education. As someone who has been impacted by incarceration, Jocelyn is very interested in making headway to create second chances for those impacted by incarceration. Jocelyn is a Community Engagement Leader and proud member of CORE.

Poetry Reader **ANTHONY MONDRAGON** is a student at PCC and a Core Engagement leader who loves poetry and has been formerly incarcerated throughout his teen years. He is a first generation college student in his family and he has found a path to success while working on himself over the past years. Pasadena City College is his temple of faith and has guaranteed him a way out of poverty, gang violence, and police brutality. Here at PCC Core has allowed him to experience his true potential and to inspire other individuals at PCC and at Homeboy Industries to pursue a higher education. His goal is to become a lawyer and help to create political reform. Anthony wants to spread equity throughout the world. He will be transferring in the Fall 2022 with an AA in Political Science.

Managing Editor **JASMIN LOPEZ** is a PCC Student and Community Engagement Leader. She became involved with the FIRST (Formerly Incarcerated Radical Scholars Team) student organization before the inception of the CORE (Community Overcoming Recidivism through Education) program in 2019. As a first-gen Chicana, her passion for education started upon her discovery of a culturally relevant curriculum. CORE has played a critical role in her leadership development. She has utilized her voice as a tool for building radical communities and collective healing, specifically for black and brown people impacted by mass incarceration. Jasmin's goal is to transfer to UCLA and pursue Chicanx studies with an emphasis on trauma-informed care.

**ADDITIONAL ART, WRITING, AND CONTRIBUTOR BIOS ARE IN
OUR ONLINE COMPANION ISSUE AT PCCInscape.com**

The Creative Writing Program at Pasadena City College

The Creative Writing program at Pasadena City College

Enroll in Creative Writing classes taught by award-winning and published Creative Writing Faculty, including Brian Adler, Akilah Brown, Emily Fernandez, Brian Kennedy, E. Kathy Kottaras, Genesis Montalvo, K.E. Ogden, Elsie Rivas-Gomez, John Tyberg, Kristen Kaz, Simona Supekar, and more!

Students have opportunity to serve as staff on *PCC Inscape Magazine* every year, and our Creative Writing program boasts an outstanding Writer-in-Residence program each Fall funded with a generous partnership with the Pasadena Festival of Women Authors (PFWA). We also host a Public Humanities Artists & Scholars series each year, and a Visiting Writer’s Series co-funded with the PFWA by the PCC Student Services Fund and your generous donations that features nationally-recognized, award-winning poets and writers!

Past visiting writers and poets include: Jimmy Santiago Baca, Nabila Lovelace, Arisa White, Samantha N. Simpson, W. David Hall, Donika Kelley, Shelley Wong, Adrian Ernesto Cepeda, Mike “The Poet” Sonksen, Steph Cha, Morgan Parker, Natasha Deon, Angela Morris, Devi S. Laskar, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Cory “Bess Kepp” Cofer, Dan Kwong, Brandon Cesmat, Javier Zamora, Mel Donalson, Urith Walker, Luivette Resto, Brian Turner, and more!

ATTENTION ALUMNI

Want a chance to serve on our Editorial Board?!

Want to be featured on our website?

If you are an alumni of PCC English courses, Creative Writing courses, or Inscape Staff, we want YOU! We are in the process of setting up an Alumni page on the PCC Inscape site and we are also looking for Alumni interested in serving on the PCC Inscape Editorial Board.

Please email our Chair of the Creative Writing Committee, Dr. Ogden, at: keogden@pasadena.edu with your photo, a brief bio in 3rd person that includes your PCC experience, and what you're up to now. Feel free to include your personal website and/or links to publications. Please also let us know if you are interested in being on the Inscape Editorial Board as an Emissary, an Editor-at-Large, a fund-raiser or a Contributing Editor!

Let's stay connected!

Awards

Thanks to generous donations from Faculty, Classified Staff, Administrators, Alumni, and Readers like you, we are able to offer the following awards:

The AWP Intro Journals Project

PCC's Creative Writing Program is a member of the Associated Writing Programs for two-year colleges. Each year students are invited to submit their work for the AWP Intro Journals Prizes in Fiction, Creative Non Fiction, and Poetry. Look for announcements from the Creative Writing Program.

The Handley Creative Writing Scholarship Award

Awarded to 1 or more current PCC students each spring who have published work in an issue of Inscape Magazine during that academic year. The Editorial Staff reads through and develops a list of finalists, and the Creative Writing Faculty and CW Committee Chair at Pasadena City College selects the winning entries. This is a cash prize. Past winners can be found at www.pccinscape.com

The Inscape Magazine Editor's Prize

Pending funding, the Editor's Prize is awarded on an occasional basis to the best writing published in an issue of Inscape Magazine in the current Academic Year or work published on our website. This prize is open to students and community members! Students select the award winners in consultation with the Faculty Advisor. This prize can be awarded to any genre and any medium. This is a cash prize.

The Octavia Butler Student Fiction Prize

Awarded to an outstanding short fiction story submitted by students at PCC and selected by the faculty of PCC and guest judge. Inaugural Year Fall 2022.

Please Donate - we need you now more than ever.

Consider donating to these prizes! Please make checks payable to Inscape Magazine - PCC English Department.

Mail to:

Attn: Inscape Magazine Faculty Advisor, C-245
1570 East Colorado Blvd.
Pasadena, CA 91106

Course Offerings and Concentrations

All students are invited to concentrate their AA-T in English in Creative Writing by enrolling in the following courses for their electives in the AA-T. The following courses are offered every Fall and Spring and some summers in rotation as online and on-ground courses. Contact Creative Writing Committee Chair keogden@pasadena.edu for more information or visit our PCC Website!

ENGLISH 5A Introduction to Creative Writing

The craft of creative writing through the study and analysis of a diverse representation of established writers as well as peer writers. Practice of writing in a variety of traditional, modern, and contemporary genres and forms (including prose and poetry). Introduction to the workshop method.

ENGLISH 6 Writing Short Story

Theory and practice in composing and analyzing short stories including classic, contemporary, and experimental forms throughout the development of the genre.

ENGLISH 7 Inscape Magazine Production

Critical evaluation, review and selection of creative material for the content of a literary journal and magazine. Students participate in editing, design, layout, and publication processes, complete a significant editorial project, and contribute critical and creative content.

ENGLISH 8 Writing Poetry

Theory and practice in composing and analyzing poetry including classic, contemporary, and experimental forms by a diverse representation of writers throughout the development of the genre.

ENGLISH 9 Writing Creative NonFiction

Compose creative nonfiction including classic, contemporary, and experimental forms and analyze a variety of creative nonfiction texts by diverse writers in various forms such as personal narrative, memoir, nature and travel writing, literary journalism, lyric essay.

ENGLISH 20 – 1 unit of Independent Study

You may consult with an instructor and work on a special project in creative writing or on Inscape Magazine projects.

Your PCC Foundation Donation Matters to our Creative Writing students!

Please be a part of nurturing future writers and artists and expanding a love for literature and the humanities by donating to the PCC Foundation Creative Writing Fund. The Creative Writing Program is at the start of a 5-year initiative to secure institutional funding for Inscape Magazine and its other projects. The program now has a PCC Foundation Account Growth Fund. In order to secure this fund, we must raise \$10,000 over a period of 5 years, and we need your support!

Students from our Creative Writing program have gone on to win awards, attend BA and MFA Programs in Creative Writing, and to publish their work to critical acclaim. Yet, sadly, Two-Year Creative Writing programs are regularly underfunded.

The PCC Creative Writing Program faculty work hard to provide student scholarships, internships with small presses and publishers like Red Hen Press, sustain visibility for student writing, offer personal experiences with professional writers and scholars, subsidize field trips to readings, theater presentations, Open Mics and conferences that focus on creative writing, and we offer real-world applicable training as writers, editors, interviewers and artists. Some of our students have gone on to jobs as:

- Video Game Writers
- Corporate Writers and Editors
- Grant Writers & Non-profit arts organization workers
- And more!

*We can only continue this work with your support.
Please consider donating now to
the Creative Writing Growth Fund – PCC Foundation.*

- Mail your check made out to the PCC Foundation – Creative Writing Growth Fund to Pasadena City College, attn: PCC Foundation, 1570 East Colorado Blvd., Pasadena CA 91106

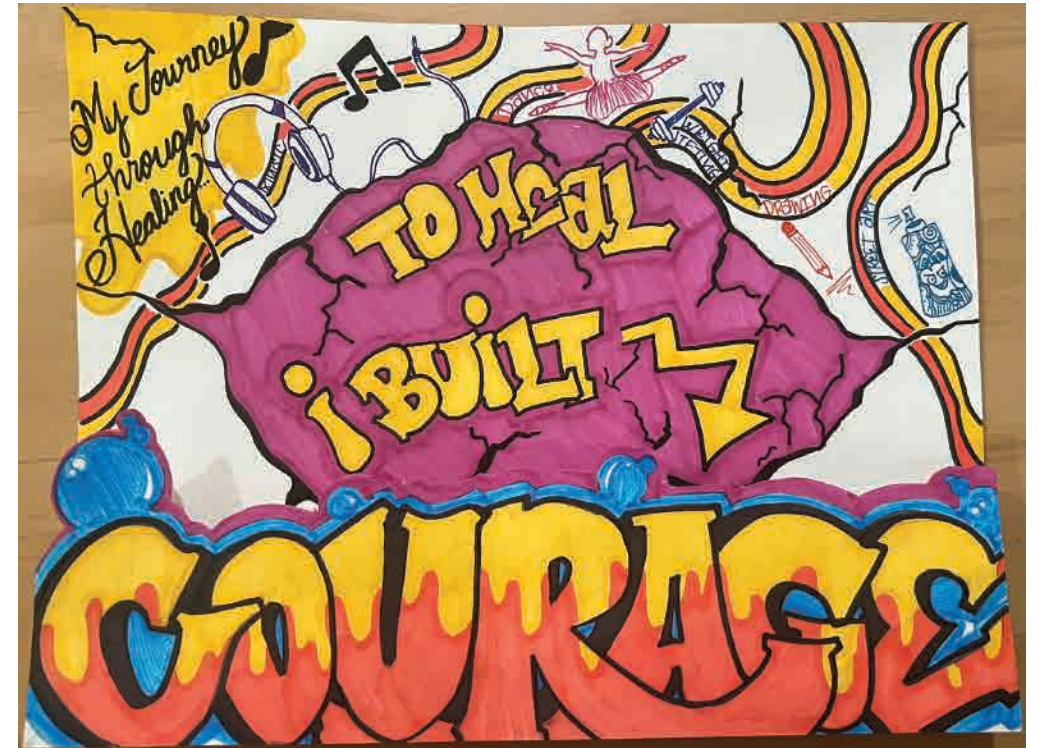
- Visit the PCC Website for Foundation Donations at <https://10933.thankyou4caring.org/> and choose “Designation: Other” and type in CREATIVE WRITING.

- Share our information on your social media page! We thank you.

Thank you to our generous donors!

CIRCLE DONORS

Gail Brady
Sharon Browning
Akilah Brown
Emily Fernandez
K. E. Ogden



My Journey to Healing / Consuelo Rios



Hummingbird / Kevin Gonzales

PCC's CORE program (Community Overcoming Recidivism through Education) provides support services to formerly incarcerated and system impacted students enrolling at PCC. CORE focuses on students' reentry into their communities in order for them to succeed through the development of job skills, attaining an Associates degree and/or certificate, and/or the ability to transfer to a four-year college or university. The primary goal of CORE is to develop a holistic approach empowering students to succeed in higher education and beyond. The program focuses on building community, on and off campus, that will serve as social, emotional and academic support for our students.



Special Thanks to FIRST/CORE Students for their editorial work on this issue:
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