

The writings and drawings contained here are written by youth who are either currently incarcerated or who have been incarcerated as juveniles in Louisiana. It will be shared with youth who have been caught up in the juvenile justice system as well as other youth and adults who value the voice of young people.

We encourage any incarcerated youth to submit their original writings and drawings to YA HEARD ME.

If you are a young person who is currently incarcerated and you would like to submit your writing or drawing to *Ya Heard Me*, please send them to:

Shannon Wight
1600 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd.
New Orleans, LA 70113

Telephone (504) 522-5437
Fax (504) 522-5430
Email: swight@jjpl.org

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YA HEARD ME

NO ORDINARY LIFE

A Celebration of Extraordinary Young Women



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Often times in our Saturday morning Creative Writing class, we do more talking and reflecting than we do writing. Some Saturdays we may not have pens, other Saturday's we may not have paper, but each Saturday we meet, we always have stories. Whether happy, sad, funny, or angry, they are our stories. And we claim them as ours. We gather strength from each other's experiences, and hope you do the same when reading this booklet.

Our theme (which Trinidad came up with) is "No Ordinary Life." And I can say these girls are far beyond ordinary. Their youthful wisdom twirls between each word, and somehow invites you in to sit down and get to know them, not only as individuals, but also as sisters in the struggle to claim womanhood and femininity (two things that, according to Nakeia, are hard to hold on to, when "prison life" is the focus instead of "women life").

I am honored to have been both a teacher and a student in the class. All of the girls are inspirations to me as a writer and an educator, but more importantly, as a Woman. We share a common bond. We are Women-hostesses and guardians of the Earth, keepers of the gates, and sisters in the Struggle. We are connected through our stories, and our experiences, and our personal life lessons. Let us never cease to share our stories, because they are ours. Collectively and individually.

Sunni Patterson

This issue is the result of a collaboration between the Students at the Center (SAC) writing program and Ya Heard Me. Sunni Patterson, a teacher with SAC, conducted 8 writing workshops for girls at the Jetson Correctional Center for Youth (JCCY). Fifteen girls started the class but by the time of it's completion most of them had gone home. The works in this volume were written by the girls still at the facility. Each of these works was presented at an assembly at JCCY on November 21, 2002, for all the girls incarcerated there. Other works by the girls in the class can be found in Volume 3 of Ya Heard Me.

PRISON LIFE AND WOMAN LIFE

By Nakeia

It's hard letting others know that we are letting prison life take over our womanhood. Even though we are incarcerated, we are still women. We have all been through trials and tribulations in our life-times, but now is the time to turn our lives around and look outside of prison walls. We have the power, the courage, and the faith to do it.

When I wake up in the morning, I see girls who want to be thugs, girls who have men mentalities. We are all women, and we should live our lives in a more feminine way. Being locked up is not the life a woman should live.

We must stand our feet on solid ground, and never let anyone take over our womanhood, especially prison life. We are all strong sistas. If only we could build ourselves up as one in womanhood, not only could we change prison life and woman life, but life itself.

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TO BE FREE

By Sheala

Free like the birds, I fly
 Free like the tears that used to run down my face
 when I cry,
 Free, so free, outside and in,
 I don't never want to lose my freedom again.
 Free to do whatever I please,
 So light, so free, thank you Lord, I'm on my knees.
 Freedom, I hear the angels rejoice.
 Now, whether I stay free is my own choice.
 Free! Free! Do you know what I mean?
 Free! As in the morning when the birds sing.
 Freedom! I see it, I feel it, I taste it.
 Freedom, I vouch I'll never again waste it.
 So free, like a fish in the sea,
 I'm free to let loose and just be me.
 Freedom, it's what I knew I would need,
 Freedom to no longer follow, yet to lead.
 Freedom to do the things I want.
 Freedom to say "no" when I feel I don't.
 I have the freedom to succeed.
 I do what I want since I have been freed.
 I'm an example, just look at me.

I'm free, so free

LISTEN LADIES!!!

By Nekeia

Listen ladies, it's hard to face the world alone. We
 all think we're living an easy life, but the truth is, we
 are all scared to face the real world. Though we've
 been through many ups and downs, pick ups and
 turn arounds, we can face the world as strong sis-
 tas. Don't let incarceration take over. Stand and live
 life as real women.

BLACK AMERICAN

By Starray

Black American, that's what I am.
 Black.
 Black people had to slave for a long time.
 Now they are free in my eyes.
 Black people had it hard back in the slavery days.
 Now they listen and watching to see what
 everybody else says.
 Black people had to work like dogs in the field on
 their knees,
 People telling them how and when to eat.

Slavery is not a good thang.
 Black people were going insane.
 Civil rights showed me many things,
 How whites and blacks used to sing.
 It was sad how Blacks and Whites had to drink out
 of different fountains,
 We bleed the same blood, we're just different
 colors.
 So, why can't we all just get along?
 This is the point of writing this poem.
 To the Black and the White I'm glad we are one.

WOMAN

By Sheala

Every month it's the same things
 I bleed, I cramp, nature brings,
 The pain and trouble to conceive
 And I think it's all because of Eve.
 I hurt and catch mood swings, it drives me crazy.
 Just look at what we go through to have a baby.
 To carry on what God began,
 Though I complain, I'm oh so glad to say
 I'm the woman I am.

LIFE & PAIN

By Sheala

Everyday life is hard to get through,
No matter what I say, doesn't matter what I do.
Words and actions expressed, full of pain.
The tears running down my face like an endless
rain.
Emptiness inside, that needs to be filled.
Earlier in life the love I had was killed.
It's amazing, the things that we survive
Especially when all alone and no one seems to
notice you're alive.
Living, hoping of the fantasies them unenforced
dreams.
When do we, as loners realize that nothing is at it
seems?

LIFE

By Starray

Life is nothing to play with,
You got to watch who you hang around with.
Life is something you never forget,
Like when you put on make up or lipstick.
Life can be changed if you're doing the right
things.
Life is the most special thang I ever had.
Special like the love from my mom and my dad.
My mom told me to slow down, but I didn't listen
and wanted to hang around.
I guess JCCY is a change to my life, cause now I
know how to read and write.
When I was out there in that world, I wasn't going
to school.
I was just a fool.
Then I entered JCCY's gates, my mind started to
clear up everyday.
I had to learn from my mistakes,
But no one is perfect, and my life is that way.

SADNESS

By Starray

You can be sad and also be glad.

Sadness is not a thang to be,
But you have to stay on your Q's and P's.

Sadness, you feel down, lonely, stressed out, and
all about,
I guess they don't know what this world is about.

It's hard to let go, and it's easy to complain,
Everybody's feelings are not the same.

Sadness can drive some people insane .

Sadness is something you will learn one day,
So don't play with people anyway.

YOUNG & CHANGING

By Sheala

I came to jail at a young age.
My mind filled with trouble, my heart filled with rage.
So much confusion and hate in the air.
No one to love you or show you that they care.
Trying to grow up and learn on ya own.
If you're not in the game you feel all alone.
No one to help you or ease your mind.
The only thing you think of is all that time.
Experiencing things like never before.
Getting older and expected to be more mature.
But I'm surrounded by children, I don't know how to act.
Then they look at repeat offenders and wonder how
they come back.

Simple Answer:
It's of a place of corruption and confusion, not
correction.

PROBLEM WITH PEOPLE

By Sheala

Life and death
 Just another thang
 We always complain,
 But we're the ones that bring,
 Bring the hurt,
 Bring the pain,
 Try to hide the tears
 Using the falling rain.
 We do what we want
 And continue to do.
 What we know is false
 Yet claim to be true,
 What are we doing?
 Scared to walk down the street.
 Then men look at women
 Like they're a piece of meat.
 If it's all against all
 And everyone for themselves,
 When will we have time
 To help someone else?
 When will it end?
 Where did it start?
 Hatred overcomes the mind,
 And blocks the love in the heart...

I AM SOMEBODY

By Starray

I am somebody.
 I am Starray.
 I am sixteen years old.
 I am a Black African American child who has been
 through so much,
 who needs God's touch.

I am somebody.

I am one of those children who been on the
 streets living a thug life.
 I am one of God's children, sitting behind bars
 over little or nothing.

I am somebody.

I am somebody that you can't see, but I know I got
 better in me.
 I am something like a white piece of paper, you've
 got to color me just to see.

I am somebody.

I am that person who knows better now,
 I made up my mind and I can tell you how.

DRAMA

By Tamara

Growing up going through so much drama
At the same time saying, "I get it from my mama!"

Drama is not just a word,
So let's take it back to when women were chosen
third.

We never had a right,
All we did was fight.

Though it felt like trauma,
It was nothing but drama.

Cursing and screaming,
Swearing on yourself,
Pretending you are dead
To avoid everything else.
Looking at the books,
But never take 'em off the shelf.

Life is filled with drama,
And only God can help.

A WOMAN'S WORTH

By Ansley

A woman is worth so many things,
More than diamonds or Golden rings.

Women go through so much hell,
So much that it drives them to sell,
Sell themselves to sin with both women and men.

A woman's worth doesn't cause anyone to hurt.
And sometimes we're treated worse than dirt.
If people just listen and take the time,
They'll notice that a woman is worth more than a dime.

As stated before, we are worth more than gold,
And our bodies, hearts, and souls should never be
sold.

PROCRASTINATION

By Ansley

We all procrastinate,
Women for sure.
We say what we gon' do,
But we never do what we say

That's what you call procrastinate.

We say we gon' leave our "dog ass nigga,"
But never take action
Just say, "Go figure."
Cause as soon as that nigga pull out his stash,
You say to yourself, "Damn, I can't leave the cash!"

It's all called procrastination.

Procrastination has much meaning,
It's all about say and DO
Instead of the fending.

Women procrastinate most of the time,
Cause that's all we're strong enough to do.

But if we all get it together and help each other do
what we say,
We'll do away with the stuntin'
And stop all the procrastinating.

THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD

By Tamara

The people of the world that kill each other
Are the people of the world that hurt one another.

So many people hurt for so many years,
When will they stop crying, and wash away their
tears.

The people of the world who make this place hell,
Are the people of the world who came up with the
word JAIL.

This world is filled with so much danger.
Everyone looking like a bunch of strangers.

We should all start using more of our minds,
Because in this world we don't have much time.

HOME

By Tamara

Home sweet home
It's not so very long.

Home sweet home
I will never be alone.

Home sweet home
I will be there very soon.

Home sweet home
I sit back and watch the moon.

The sky is blue
And the world is, too

Therefore, let's get together and form a truce.

All the games and people that bang,
Stop hanging around making this world lame.

Home sweet home
Is the place to be,

It's where I find peace
And where I can be free

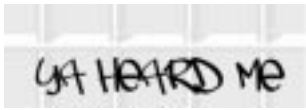
BLESSINGS FROM GOD

By Tamara

For the blessings You bring,
To the lives You touch.
For all the care You put into Your work.

This comes to tell You,
You're loved so very much.
And all the great and joyous things don't happen just
by luck.

There is nothing in this world that is not a blessing
from You.
So, God I just thank you for the great things You do.



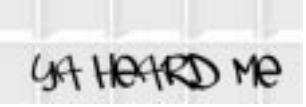
SO MUCH PAIN

By Tamara

So much pain many people bring.
So much pain that make children want to bang.
Like the numbers
60, 59, 19, 52 and others,
More ways to hurt and kill one another.

We're losing too many people, and they're going
through hell,
All the teenagers going back and forth to jail.

PAIN, PAIN, PAIN
It's not a game.
PAIN, PAIN, PAIN
Is something you can sing.
PAIN, PAIN, PAIN
Was away with the rain.



The Earth

By Tamara

The Earth is filled with so much pain,
Looking at everyday like it's a rice grain.

The children that cry,
The people that die,

Tell me why, oh, why do so many cry?
Tell me why, oh, why do so many die?

Cry because they lost a loved one.
Cry because a mother lost a daughter or a son.

Have to bring people together day by day.
This is our earth, so why don't we pray?

We are all the things that we are worth.
So let's get together and save our Earth.

