

# PERCEPTIONS REIMAGINED

*Spring*  
2025

Welcome to the Spring 2025 Issue!

This issue of *Perceptions Reimagined* we're tackling the subjects of Mental Health and Substance Abuse. These are not only hot topics in the world but right here in our facility. Everyone here is affected by one if not both of these issues, whether it be yourself who struggles or a family member or someone close to you. As women we are challenged with a variety of obstacles, faced with the adversity of prison and personal struggles but we come out on the other side – stronger than ever.

We, as the editors are tasked with exemplifying the diversity but the common thread that ties us all together unifying us in ways, with our shared experiences. Some women have dealt with Mental Health and or Substance Abuse first hand. Others have been indirectly impacted by these from those around them. This Issue includes first-hand accounts of women and their stories and how they have coped throughout the years and continue to do so within the prison environment. The women of the facility continue to use their voices and artistic abilities to contribute to the changes within our



## MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Criminal Justice system as well as within EMCF. Our sisterhood perseveres and grows together and as one we become more trauma informed and bonds are built that cannot be broken, just like us-The Women of EMCF!

### Special points of interest:

- Strength in Sisterhood
  - The Facts of Life : Trauma
  - Lucky Girl Syndrome
  - Embracing the Moment
  - Advocacy : Second chances
- Stigma and Stereotypes
- Healing Through Helping Others

## VOLUME 4

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## THE TORTURED MIND: THE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

In 2025, having a mental illness is becoming much more normalized and speaking about it is less taboo. Society is much more open to accepting the legitimacy of these illnesses, and its members admit to suffering from these conditions far more often. Unfortunately, there are some places today that do not value mental healthcare sufficiently, or lack the ability to provide the appropriate resources.

The closure of long term mental health facilities across the State in the late 1990's and early 2000's has resulted in even more people ending up in prison when they might have been better served by one of these facilities. What facilities do still exist are overtaxed, so they become less about long term care and more about crisis intervention. It's sad to see that places where substantial care and education about this subject are imperative to an individual's daily living often neglect these very needs. While *CF v. Terhune* resulted in a federal mandate for mental healthcare in our correctional system, most prison facilities lack the staffing to provide adequate care the incarcerated population need. People who suffer from certain mental health conditions and do not receive the

proper care while incarcerated could encounter hindrances to their reintegration into society and even potentially impact recidivism rates. Effective mental healthcare enables an individual to live a productive life.

This sounding alarm for mental health reform within our facilities. Medication isn't always the answer. Many forms of mental illness require medication therapy and counseling, helping the person learn positive coping mechanisms. Every individual is different- their response to treatment will be different too. We call our facilities "rehabilitative" - we need to equip them to be able to do just that. We need to fully staff them so everyone can receive the appropriate care. Even in 2025, mental health continues to be a crisis. We need to listen when someone is asking for help, and do everything in our power to enlist that help, whether that involves hiring more staff, and /or creating peer led groups. We need services that will benefit us and prevent us from becoming another statistic and help us become a success story, armed with strategies and coping skills prepared to face any situation we are presented.

**BY PAIGE PFEFFERLE**



## *The Season of Grace and Miracles*

BY MELANIE SLATE



The holiday season is behind us, but the ultimate gift has been granted to three of our EMCF ladies. Each had their sentence commuted under Governor Murphy's Clemency Project. The Governor himself spoke with these serving applicants and, just before the holidays, gave them a miraculous gift. Governor Murphy has stressed to the rest of the population that he is just getting started, and by the time this goes print, there may have been more.

We've all received the JPay blasts about the ACLU, and their criteria for representation. We've also received the Governor's criteria in order to have an application expedited. According to the Governor's Advisors, there are literally hundreds of applications before them, and Governor Murphy will be reviewing them over his last year in office. For people with long sentences, this is something that can literally make the difference between being released and dying in prison, and while there are no guarantees, the stakes couldn't be higher.

We can never adequately express our gratitude to the Governor and his staff, as well as Commissioner Kuhn. That said, there can and will be a number of emotions associated with commutations and releases. I can say that, overall, seeing these first three la-

dies go instilled incredible hope I those of us who were left behind. However, we need to acknowledge that no everyone will be so fortunate. Even for those who are, the stress of waiting for an answer- especially one so significant- is bound to affect us. That's human nature- you don't begrudge someone else their miracle- you just wonder if yours will come too, and when. We need to be gentle with ourselves during this time, and gentle with each other. We need to avail ourselves of support services during this time as well.

As for how we're coping- I can only speak for myself. After almost decades of repeated losses in the Courts, on every possible level, it feels almost too dangerous to hope. To hope for myself, for my family, and my friends. It makes me feel...vulnerable. Nevertheless, I keep telling myself to be brave, to open myself to that hope anyway. It's easier to think negatively, or what some people will call "realistically".

But thanks to Governor Murphy, and his commitment to depopulate our prisons, I remind myself and everyone else, thinking "realistically" finally does include that hope. The possibility of receiving that grace- for some, an absolute miracle- is at least now a real one, one that is deserving of hope.

## ***STRENGTH IN SISTERHOOD:*** *Seeking Help Within The Incarcerated Community*

BY ANTIONETTE STEPHEN

Despite significant discourse on the depth and scope of mental health illnesses prevalent not only among general society but also within institutions like prisons and jails, the ability to address and aid those suffering from them is still limited for myriad reasons. Putting aside economical, institutional, social and infrastructure barriers to formulating significant mental health programs or groups to address the broad range of mental health issues common among the incarcerated, there still exists a vacuum where those seeking mental health aid are left unaddressed. Too often, substance abuse becomes the go-to remedy to dealing with mental health issues. Negative experiences with authority or fear from past experiences will often stop those requiring aid from seeking it.

Additionally, feeling vulnerable and wanting help is often considered a sign of weakness within the incarcerated environment and IP's actively stifle the need to seek help for what they consider are collateral consequences of being locked up: e.g. depression and anxiety. Since depression and anxiety do not fall under a clinical diagnosis of mental health and because it is a common issue both inside and outside prisons, institutions cannot feasibly address every individual in need of mental health aid, even when some instances are exacerbated by personal traumas or traumatic incidents. Realistically, those suffering clinically diagnosed mental health

issues are given priority because of high risk scenarios in order to prevent any untoward incidents. What then, for those suffering in silence behind these barbed wire walls? Chronic depression and anxiety leads to long term physical and mental harm. Suppressed mental health issues tend to build up and destroy the internal ability of any individual to produce rational thoughts and behaviors if nearing the point of one's endurance. Also, for those not used to reaching out for help due to cultural and gender norms, the struggle becomes all too real and can have devastating consequences that will play out much farther down the line.

For those IP's suffering in such situations, there exists an alternative to staying in silence or seeking other routes to numb the pain. Truth is, almost every individual within the carceral environment is experiencing some form of painful metal and emotional distress that can lead to either internally or externally self-destructive behaviors. In my experience, reaching out to other female IP's who have experienced and overcome mental health issues and substance disorders has led to a significant breakthrough in alleviating my mental health issues in the past and in learning to effectively combat them. Understandably, reaching out for help among the volatile environment within the prison can be difficult for those unable to trust easily. It is a common fear and one that calls for caution in who

we approach, why and when. There are among us, however, true mentors capable of listening to vulnerabilities without exploiting them. Sisters willing to raise a hurt individual's morale and draw them out of their pain and anxiety. There are also others willing to teach and open up about their past experiences if it will help others. For too long, this general idea that all incarcerated IP's are catty, selfish, self-involved and exploitative has led the narrative, sowing discord where there can be harmony. Finding the group or mentor that suits you can be a daunting task and requires patient observation and by listening to other's suggestions. I know firsthand the value of Sisters who gather around to support and raise you up when the going gets tough. Some pour spiritual healing while others listen and encourage gently. More than the self-help books and affirmations on paper, I have realized that wise words from a battle-hardened and experienced sister has helped me get back on my feet stronger than before. There is wisdom among us. We have Warriors walking with us. There is Strength is Sisterhood for those who genuinely seek it.

The following pages contain the wisdom of some of the brave sisters willing to help others struggling the way they did.



## **WISDOM WARRIORS**

By Carline Inginac

Admitting one's weaknesses and vulnerabilities is not an easy thing to do. More so in the high pressure, tense environment within a carceral institution where the exploitation of weaknesses is an all too realistic fear.

Sharing about pain and past failures takes courage and a strong conviction to help others from making the same mistakes. We, the editors of the newsletter and the news team at Edna applaud these wisdom warriors for their dedication to furthering the discourse on mental health and substance abuse. We hope that their words would bring encouragement and hope for those experiencing the same or similar issues and to reinforce the fact that mentors exist within the facility who can lead and uplift others who are willing and ready.

Remember there is Strength in Sisterhood – Antionette Stephen

### **Jessica Bell–Tulloch, age– 25**

- ◆ How long have you been dealing with mental health/substance abuse prior to your incarceration?  
I have been dealing with alcohol exposure since the age of 14. Family members dealing with alcohol were my first exposure. Being left alone at home I experimented all day. My cousin introduced me to marijuana. The first time I felt nothing. The second time I was light headed.
- ◆ How are you dealing with your mental health/substance abuse issues while incarcerated?  
As far as my mental health issues, I did not want to face it. I chose to stay in bed rather. I isolated and refused to eat. As far as substance abuse goes, I had ample access to drugs and alcohol in the first county jail I was in but when I transferred to another county jail the drug use decreased but dependency on alcohol increased.
- ◆ If you could advise IP's your age on changes or suggestions about dealing with mental health/substance abuse, what would it be?  
Keep reaching out for help. Don't stay stuck in your head, don't suppress emotions and isolate, and talk to somebody. I would like to advise African American IP's especially that mental health is just as important as physical health.
- ◆ Do you have anything else to encourage them with?  
Stand on your own decisions. Don't let others peer pressure you into doing things you don't want to do.



### **Sky–Lyn Reed, age– 34**

- ◆ How long have you been dealing with mental health/substance abuse prior to your incarceration?  
I have been dealing with mental health issues since I was 4 or 5 years old and substance abuse issues since the age of 12.
- ◆ How are you dealing with your mental health/substance abuse issues while incarcerated?  
In the beginning I would either self-mutilate or try repeatedly to end my life. Then I used to abuse medications from someone else or my own. Now, I utilize my Gateway Drug Program counselors/counselors/groups to help me cope/learn different coping mechanisms and I go to mental health IOP groups. I take only my psych medications that I'm prescribed. I also stay away from certain people even if care about them. In order to have a healthier mental health state and sobriety, you need to.
- ◆ If you could advise IP's your age on changes or suggestions about dealing with mental health/substance abuse, what would it be?  
They should reach out and make use of the groups available to talk about their issues honestly. There should also be more groups and programs to help addicts and patients of mental health.
- ◆ Do you have anything else to add?  
Staff should have additional training to respond to mental health individuals in crisis with empathy and not indifference or hostility.

**Ashley Beams, age- 33**

- ◆ How long have you been dealing with mental health/substance abuse prior to your incarceration?  
I was sexually assaulted at the age of 12 which caused my mental health issues. My exposure to substance abuse began since I was 15 years old.
- ◆ How are you dealing with your mental health/substance abuse issues while incarcerated?  
Before, coping meant using and abusing drugs but now I draw, read, and talk to my father and my best friend from home to keep me stable.
- ◆ If you could advise IP's your age on changes or suggestions about dealing with mental health/ substance abuse, what would it be?  
Stop bottling everything up and cry when you need to cry. I suggest others should try to do the same as far as talking issues out with trusted people, crying and doing anything positive and not self-destructive.
- ◆ Do you have anything else to encourage them with?  
Mental Health has always been stigmatized. I feel that the more people talk about their issues openly and honestly especially their struggle, people will realize that the issue are more common than they think. I would bring people together more if they realized they shared the same problems.

**Cason Abdul-Khaleef Kamile, age- 41**

- ◆ How long have you been dealing with mental health/ substance abuse prior to your incarceration?  
I never did prior to my incarceration.
- ◆ How are you dealing with your mental health/ substance abuse issues while incarcerated?  
I do not recall the first three days of my incarceration because I was detoxing from alcohol that was offered to me in county jail after my arrest. During the entirety of my bid (incarceration) from the very beginning I was exposed to substance abuse as way to cope.
- ◆ If you could advise IP's your age on changes or suggestions about dealing with mental health/ substance abuse, what would it be?  
Utilize mental health programs and every opportunity and advantages they have to offer. Talk to people and advocate for change and more therapy especially for Trans gender through therapists who specialize in gender transitions and the mental health challenges they pose.
- ◆ Do you have anything else to encourage them with?  
Go into programming and therapy with an open mind and limit your biases. Because talking to a therapy specialist about your issues helps more when you are not closed in. Vulnerable community members like Trans genders should seek therapy especially in order to help and heal the community more.

**Theresa McElvarr, age- 60**

- ◆ How long have you been dealing with mental health/substance abuse prior to your incarceration?  
I was given coke at the age of 17 after which I was introduced to meth. I have been dealing with exposure to substance abuse for the past 25 years.
- ◆ How are you dealing with your mental health/ substance abuse issues while incarcerated?  
In the beginning , I slept a lot... after a month of being in the SUD program, I decided to go to groups and enable myself to one on one drug counseling. It has to be a conscious and voluntary choice to succeed at an older. It is easy to give up.
- ◆ If you could advise IP's your age on changes or suggestions about dealing with mental health/ substance abuse, what would it be?  
For me, this is the first time I have looked at myself internally instead of looking outward to my family's mental health issues and their problems. My advice would be to look at yourself internally from the beginning and seek help. Your problem is your problem and it is not selfish to seek help just because you think there are others whose need is greater. Look for counseling and help early.
- ◆ Do you have anything else to encourage them with?  
Do not be ashamed. Your addiction is not something to be ashamed about. Stop hiding from what is a part of you. Acknowledge it first then deal with it. No matter how great or small you think it is.

**Lisa Tucker, age – 51**

- ◆ How long have you been dealing with mental health/substance abuse prior to your incarceration?  
I started drinking since the age of 11 because of problems within my family. I have suffered all forms of domestic violence and it was a way to cope.
- ◆ How are you dealing with your mental health/substance abuse issues while incarcerated?  
By reaching out for classes that deal with mental health recovery. It was beneficial because I chose to sit still and look at my life as a whole reflecting on things without the distractions of being out in the world.
- ◆ If you could advise IP's your age on changes or suggestions about dealing with mental health/substance abuse, what would it be?  
I would advise them to look at everything as a whole mentally and physically. I feel women my age could deteriorate quicker if they do not advocate and fight for themselves. Many women give up at this age because of culture and stigma. As you grow older the responsibility is on you to stabilize your life. It would also help if people gave more compassion to their elderly population.
- ◆ Do you have anything else to add?  
Mental health issues tend to increase due to exposure to others with different conditions and at different stages in their mental health journey. Older or the elderly population deal with issues in a different way from young demographics. Mixing populations can result in adverse consequences. Since I suffer from PTSD, severe anxiety and depression, the constant exposure with younger populations unaware of elder issues can be extremely difficult and painful.

**Yvonne Walker, age– 59**

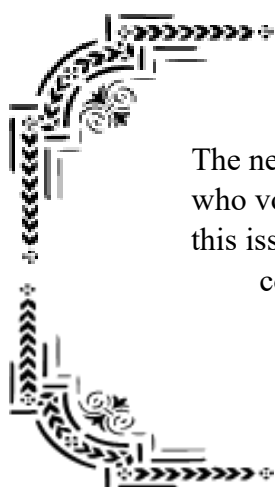
- ◆ Have you experienced any form of trauma in your life? How did you cope?  
I have been dealing with violent physical, mental and verbal abuse since the age of 4. The physical violence was inflicted by my aunt, cousin and stepfather and I coped with it by being numb and staying silent as most other women of African American Jamaican heritage.
- ◆ Have you been diagnosed with any mental health issues or family history? How did it affect you?  
I was diagnosed with clinical schizophrenia and something else in county jail and by the mental health department in the institution here. I am the only one in my family other than my grandson who recently underwent a mental health crisis.
- ◆ Did you ever turn to drugs or alcohol to cope with any of the trauma? How did it affect your daily life?  
I was introduced to crack cocaine by an intimate partner who suggested I use it to feel better. It was like a money on my back I could not shake once I had started. Even though I was a functioning addict and went to work, the drugs played a heavy part in my path to prison. I began caring less for my family and focused more on my addiction and my behavior and habits changed to fuel the addiction.
- ◆ Did you have a rock bottom moment or lowest point where you felt compelled to change?  
I was already trying to wean myself off when my grown nephew cried openly begging me to stop the drugs. No one in my family did drugs and the cultural stigma in the Jamaican culture meant nobody talked about it but they frowned upon anyone who used it.

**Yvonne Walker, age – 59 cont'd.**

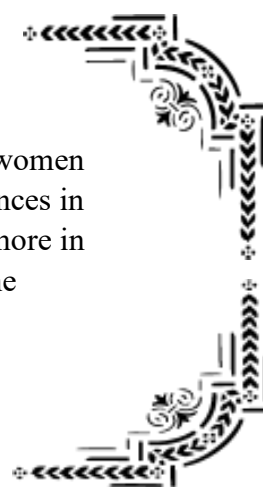
- ◆ How did you overcome your struggles and get back on your path to recovery?  
Initially, I tried the mental health department but back then their help was sporadic. Unless there was an actual mental health crisis incident, you did not get much attention. I felt alone when I needed help the most. In reality I still have difficulty dealing with my mental health so I cry and then pray to God. I got off drugs for the sake of my family after seeing how much it hurt them. It was difficult time for all of us.
- ◆ What have you learned from your experience and what advice do you have for anyone suffering from mental health issues and struggling with addiction?  
I learnt that drugs will cause you to lose family members by making you feel invincible and not in need of anyone. I want people to understand that drugs are 'whack'. It tears your family apart especially those who love you. It takes you places you never want to go like prison. The only advice I can give is to seek help. If you can't get institutional help, look to others, maybe even seek pastoral counselling but talk. Talk to family even though it is hard. You cannot do it on your own even though you think you can. That, is the drugs talking. I needed my family even though I would not show it. Pray to God and ask for help. Just put your pride aside and seek help.

**KEY POINTS TO BE AWARE OF:**

- Significant percentage of the population suffer from mental health issues and substance abuse that stem from early childhood abuse which suggests a causal link.
- Across age groups, the common rhetoric as the need for discourse and seeking help. The women across all age groups advised women to seek help honestly and with an open mind earlier than later.
- Older age groups called for internal reflection, self-assessment and physical health awareness due to aging with an eye to long term goals as opposed to the younger demographic whose major focus was on avoiding peer pressure.



The newsroom team thanks the brave women who volunteered to share their experiences in this issue of the newsletter. We share more in common with one another than the differences that separate us.







## HEALING THROUGH HELPING OTHERS



Interview of Carline Inginac: By Tina Lunney

- \* How did you feel when interviewing your peers and the impact it took on your mental health if any?  
I enjoyed the interview process. I was able to learn something new about them while realizing we share common ground in the area of mental health. Instead of negatively impacting me while hearing their pain, it has led me to sympathize with my peers while reevaluating my own mental health journey.
- \* At what age did you realize you were suffering from depression? What was your reaction toward it? Did you understand those emotions and feelings?  
I have suffered depression from the age of 15. When my father passed away, the emotional toll led me to a dependency on drugs, sex and more. I did not understand nor process anything back then. I just reacted to the pain.
- \* What type of coping skills did you use to help the depression?  
At the time, I had no coping skills and neither was I looking for one. That's the truth. What I did was the easiest distraction from my pain.
- \* How are you dealing with depression currently?  
I deal with things positively now. I write, walk, do yoga and talk through my problems with mental health Dr.Jones. I rely on my mental health counselors for the opportunity to address my issues – OSAPAS Ms.Wagner or Ms.Graham. The year 2024 was especially difficult for me and they have been a tremendous help. Additionally I have a great support system of friends here at Edna.
- \* If you can tell your past self about your depression what would it be?  
I would tell myself that depression is harder if I choose to go through it alone and to seek help early. I would tell myself not to be in the dark for so long as there are people who can help.
- \* Does anyone in your family suffer from depression? If not, do they understand your feelings?  
I have family members who are currently dealing with their own metal health issues but my culture prohibits us from revealing our own struggles to one another. I believe I am the first to speak up about it in my family.
- \* Have you ever considered taking your life because of this illness?  
When I was 15, I attempted suicide twice because I desperately wanted to stop feeling that way. Both attempts failed because God had other plans for me and I am here, sharing what wisdom I have so others can gain courage.
- \* Please give me a statement or quote you would like say to someone suffering from depression that would help them understand or accept their feelings.  
Tanisha Murden once said "Pain is my comfort Zone"  
**I choose to say to myself and others like me, "Don't allow pain to block your healing"**

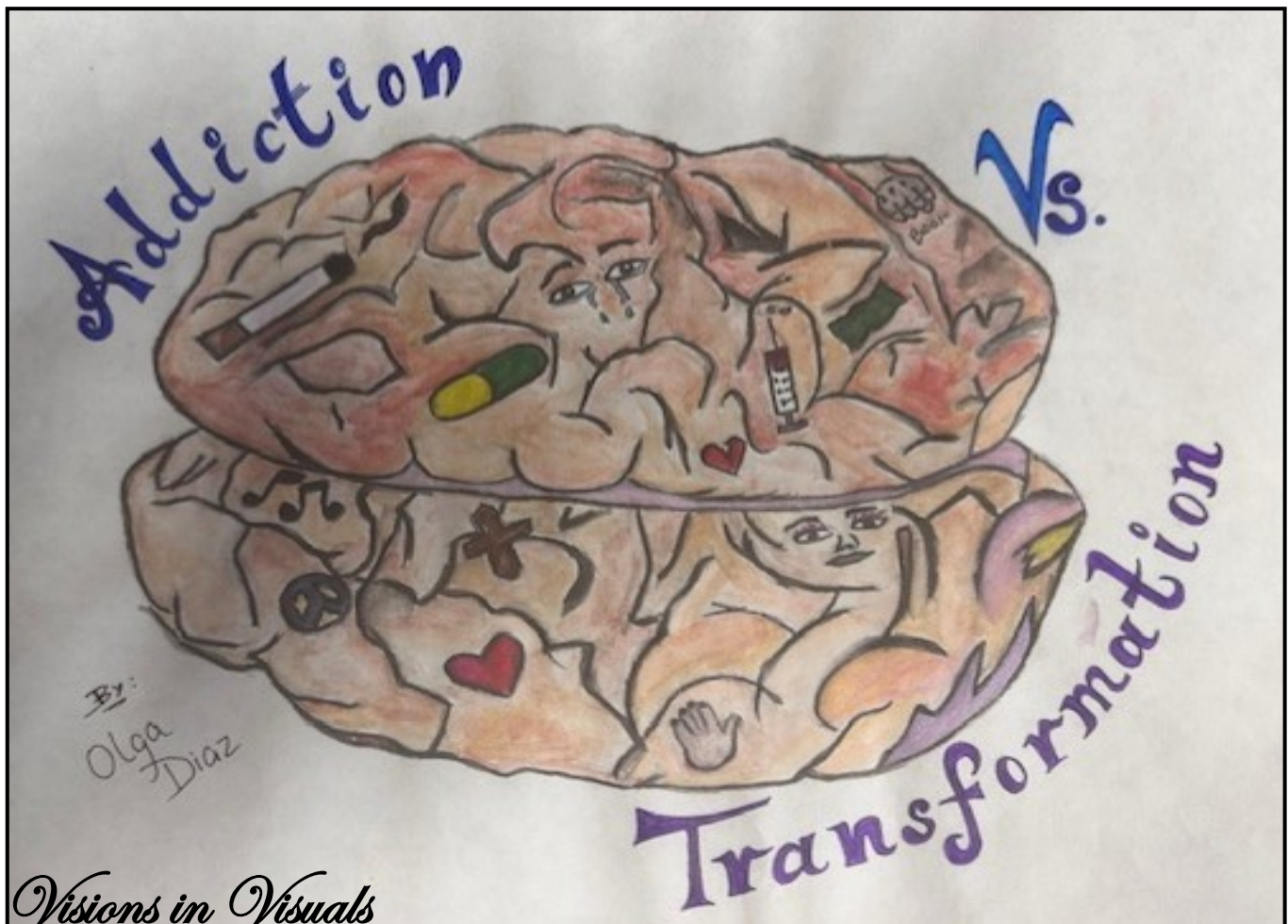
### "Freedom"

I am free from the shackles of my addiction. My faith is my victory over my failures. I took back my life and no longer believe I deserve to live in the darkness of despair. Sobriety my Sovereign Savior. In losing myself I found love for myself so long ago lost. It is terrifying to be controlled by an addiction. But it is gratifying to find you have the courage to fight to be free.

- Rachel Atkinson

"I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it."

- Maya Angelou



Do you have an artistic vision you would like to share? Submit your piece and any blurb about your art to the unit ILC for collection and you may be featured in upcoming newsletters! Remember, no art is wrong or bad! You never know who you may inspire or uplift!!



# THE PULSE

**Eminem** - Eminem's addiction battles have begun in the early 2000's. He has been very open about his drug use often intertwining this within his Grammy-winning music. Eminem told *Rolling Stone* "It didn't really start until my career took off. The bigger the shows got, the bigger the after-parties; drugs were always around." His abuse of prescription pills went from getting high to taking them to feel normal. He said that at the height of his addiction, he was taking anywhere from 40 to 60 Valium and 20 to 30 Vicodin a day, relying on Ambien at night to sleep. With the loss of his close friend in 2006 sent him into a downward spiral. He had a multitude of drug dealers at one time and credits his sobriety to his daughter and family.

**Jelly Roll** - The country singer who has spent time in prison has shamelessly spoke about his time incarcerated and his addiction battles. "There was a long time where I just assumed, when people told me they drank without doing cocaine, I was like, 'I though we only drank to do cocaine, I though [drinking] was to make us not feel like drug addicts. Nobody wants to snort cocaine sober, then you're a drug addict.'" The CMA winner has now taken a different view of how he sees his relationship with alcohol. His oldest child was born while he was born in prison so now he has sought out help for his issues. He attends AA meetings and support groups frequently and continues to work on his battle.

**Kerry Washington** - The actress began going to therapy in 2015, speaking publicly to take stigma away from mental health. She told *Glamour*, "My brain and my heart are really important to me. I don't know why I wouldn't seek help to have those things be as healthy as my teeth. I go to the dentist. So why wouldn't I go to a shrink?"

**Chrissy Teigan** - Former model suffered postpartum depression, stated feeling guilty for it when she had everything to be happy in a personal essay for *Glamour* in 2017

**P!NK** - Since her early 20's the singer has suffered from debilitating panic attacks which often lead her to the emergency room. She spoke about panic attacks and having anxiety describing them as feeling akin to having a "stroke". She credits speaking about her issues and seeking therapy as a way of coping and has created P!NK With Purpose, a mental health platform that provides resources on how to reach out for help.

**Lane Johnson** - The All-Pro Philadelphia Eagles offensive tackle has tremendous success on the football field. However, even on the field he struggles with anxiety disorder. Years ago he expressed his need for help allowing other NFL players who previously resisted the need for counseling the courage to seek it. Johnson was struggling so bad he walked out prior to a game starting. Now in his 11<sup>th</sup> season with the Eagles he focuses on taking it one day at a time and giving back to the community. Johnson said "Excellence is a term thrown around a great deal these days, but for me, it's all about focusing on one play at a time, executing in the pass game, executing in the run game, listening to adjustments on the sideline at the bench and doing that each game, that's what you try to do in the community as well-show excellence and find as many ways as you can to help other."

**Demi Lovato** - The singer and former Disney star has been very open about her struggles which include: Bipolar disorder, Substance use disorder which included battles with alcohol, drugs and eating disorders. She has also been open about her Depression and suicidal thoughts and her Anxiety. Lovato has sought help and has been hospitalized for these issues. She shares her story to raise awareness and to encourage others to seek help during their times of despair and need. Although her journey has been challenging, she shows her resilience and strength and is an advocate for mental health and wishes to "normalize" conversations

**Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson** - The former wrestler turned actor expresses experiencing depression when he was 18. He told *People* magazine in 2021, "The first time I experienced depression, I was 18 years old, and I had no idea what depression was, asking for help when you're down or when you're feeling wobbly or when you're depressed is actually the most powerful thing you can do. Men, especially us, we fall into this trap of being really averse to vulnerability because we always want to be strong and feel like we can take on the world. [But you have to] learn to embrace vulnerability."

**Selena Gomez** - She uses her platform to spread awareness about-and-reduce the stigma around-mental health disorders. She has been unapologetically transparent about her own struggles with mental health, and by doing so, hopes to create space for open and honest conversations about mental illness. Her 2022 documentary, "My Mind & Me" explores her dark experiences in the limelight, the unexpected turn her life took after being diagnosed with Lupus, and most recently, her grapple with bipolar disorder and anxiety. Gomez said "I wanted there to be a conversation started. I wasn't ashamed, and I wanted it to lead to something healing."

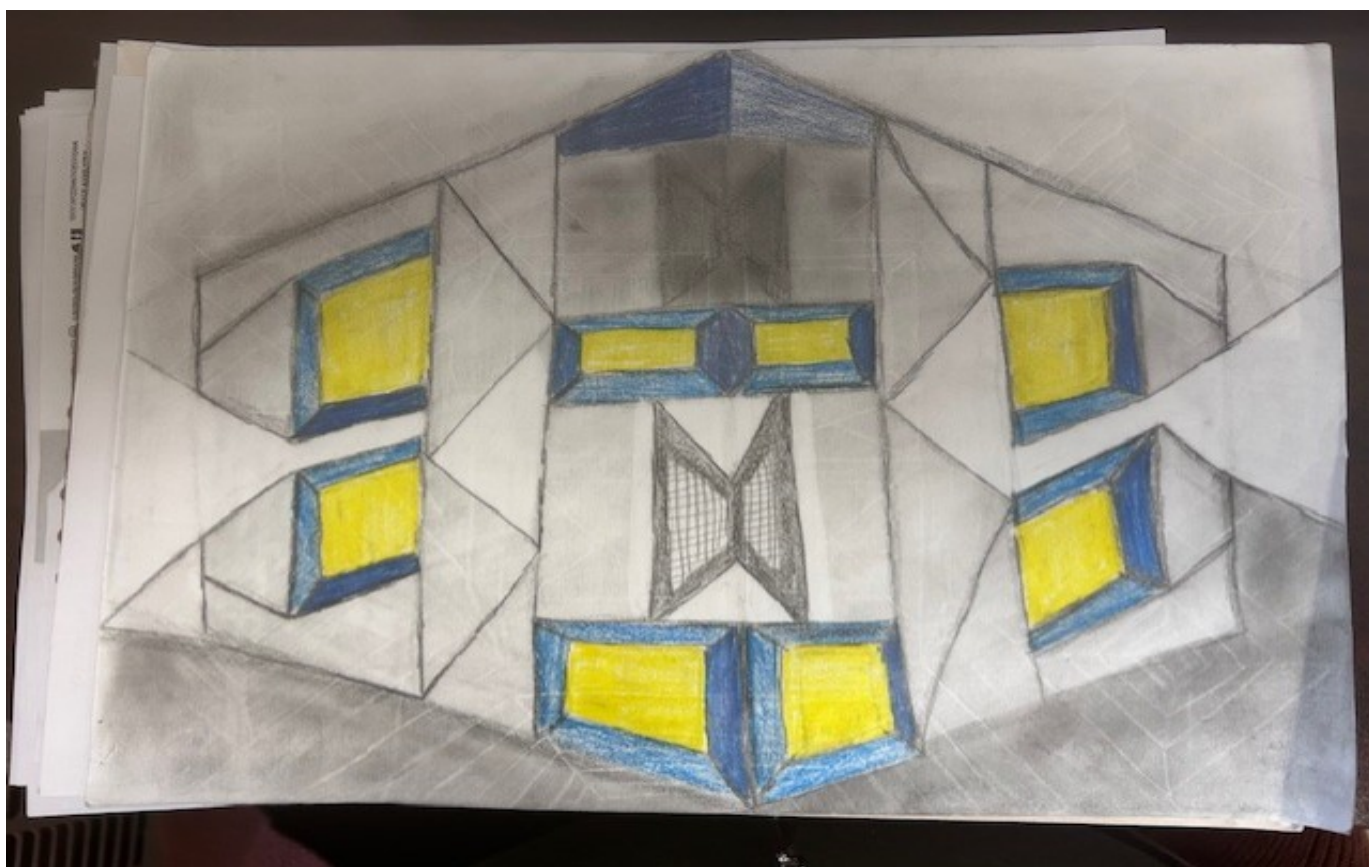




## *Visions in Visuals*

I can honestly say that over the time that I was an active addict...Art was how I could lose and express myself and to be able to find peace even though my world was so out of CONTROL and DARK so much of the time. At the time I was in my addiction, ART helped me to stay out of the street at the wrong times of the night. The reason I say that is because if a woman was out after hours, she was considered to be on the street to pick up men. Now that I have found a better sense of WHO I AM, my art shows me that I have talent I NEVER thought I would ever have. Art for me is a way for me to deal with my addiction and mental health in a positive and healthy way. The question I would like to ask you is...What do you see in the picture?

By Kandis Stout (formerly Dixey)



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## ***Health, Yeah!***

by Melanie Slate

In previous issues, I have focused on wellness and prevention. That said, I wanted to approach things a little differently. Mental health and substance abuse are some pretty broad topics, so I thought it could be helpful to share some of my own experiences in the hopes that they might speak to or assist others. (For those who know me, you know my candor is never in short supply.)

I wouldn't say there was a resistance to mental health treatment in my family, not for other people anyway – it just wasn't something *we* needed. (Ahem.) Now, to be even handed, I'm talking about decades ago, and the stigma surrounding mental illness was ubiquitous. I was never on psychiatric medication prior to my husband's death in 2004. Whether or not I should have been is debatable, but I wasn't, nor was anyone in the house I was raised in. Over the next few years leading up to my trial and incarceration, stresses only mounted, and I can say I would not have been able to survive all that happened had I *not* been on an antidepressant. That's facts, no exaggeration.

Over the course of the next decade, I would try to stop my antidepressant more than once. My diagnosis was "situational depression" after all, and the acuity of the situation had stabilized. For some reason, I felt like I should be able to function without it, and I was angry at myself because I couldn't. I felt weak and dependent.

I had to get away from the word "situational" in my diagnosis. Let's say someone smokes for fifty years and contracts lung cancer. Even if they quit smoking then and there, the disease process they acquired is still present. The situation of smoking is no longer, but both the short and long term effects of that situation persist. The aftermath still needs to be addressed, even if its catalyst is gone.

The irony is, of course, that I used to work in healthcare. I counseled patients in one form or another, every single day, and would handily refer them out for more help if they needed it. I *never* considered any of my patients weak. So why was I holding myself to a different standard than I would anyone else? Why was I requiring so much more of myself than I would of another person? I couldn't come up with a good answer.

Mental health isn't different. You live in whatever your situation is long enough, and it evolves. It becomes a part of you – your reality. It's typical to think back to how we may have dealt with our issues before. It's also fair to say, given where we've ended up, that however we dealt before probably wasn't healthy or optimal. While medication might not be right for everyone, it can be a lifesaving tool for others, something that allows you to focus and work through whatever you might need to, in order to create a better reality – one of your own making.

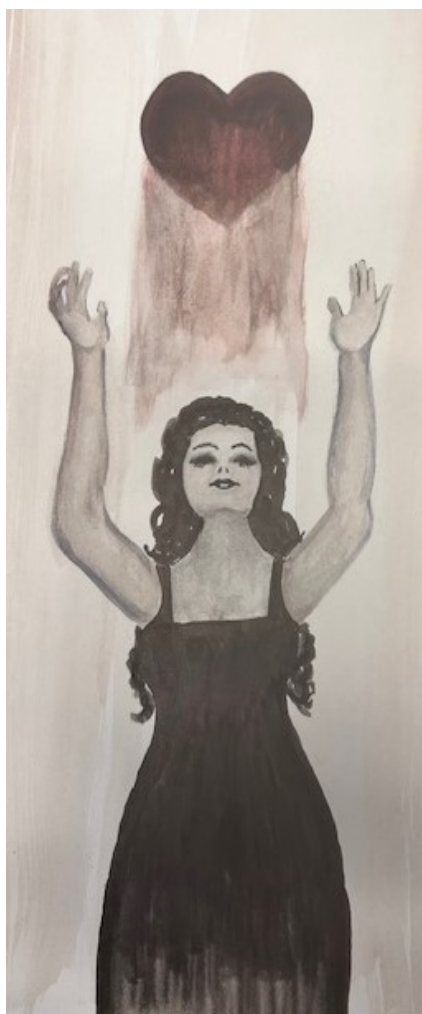


## THE FACTS OF LIFE

BY HEATHER REYNOLDS

**T**rauma is an unfortunate fact of life, Abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, the sudden loss of a loved one - such events can inflict suffering that can last a lifetime. Thankfully, with the proper treatment approach, recovery from trauma is possible. For over fifteen years I was a licensed therapist fortunate enough to help hundreds of people to heal from their own tragic experiences, and then suddenly, my world collapsed and I couldn't even help myself. Tragedy changed my life literally overnight and I would never be the same again.

Trauma changes people, it literally interferes with the functioning of the brain by rewiring the circuitry and releasing certain chemicals and hormones that reorganize the way the mind works. Stressful events also become encoded into bodily systems like the nervous system, which can get stuck in "fight-or-flight" mode. When this happens a person may experience rage, impulsivity, and/or anxiety as well as auto-immune disorders such as fibromyalgia.



"Draught" By Melanie Slate

There is a well-known book about trauma that I found helpful as both a provider and a survivor, called *The Body Keeps the Score* by Dr. Bessel van der Kolk. The book beautifully illustrates the neuroscience behind trauma's altering of the mind, the brain, and the body. It also tells us how early childhood experiences shape our ability to cope with stress later in life and how abuse and neglect at an early age can severely hinder emotional development and self-regulation. The book ends with detailed descriptions of proven treatment methods for PTSD and other trauma related symptoms, including:

- ◆ Guided yoga and meditation
- ◆ Neurofeedback- changes brain connectivity patterns, the mind follows by creating new patterns of engagement
- ◆ EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) allows people to access traumatic memories and integrate them without fear or shame in to the past
- ◆ Therapeutic drama programs- use theater to help people embody their emotions and become rhythmically engaged.

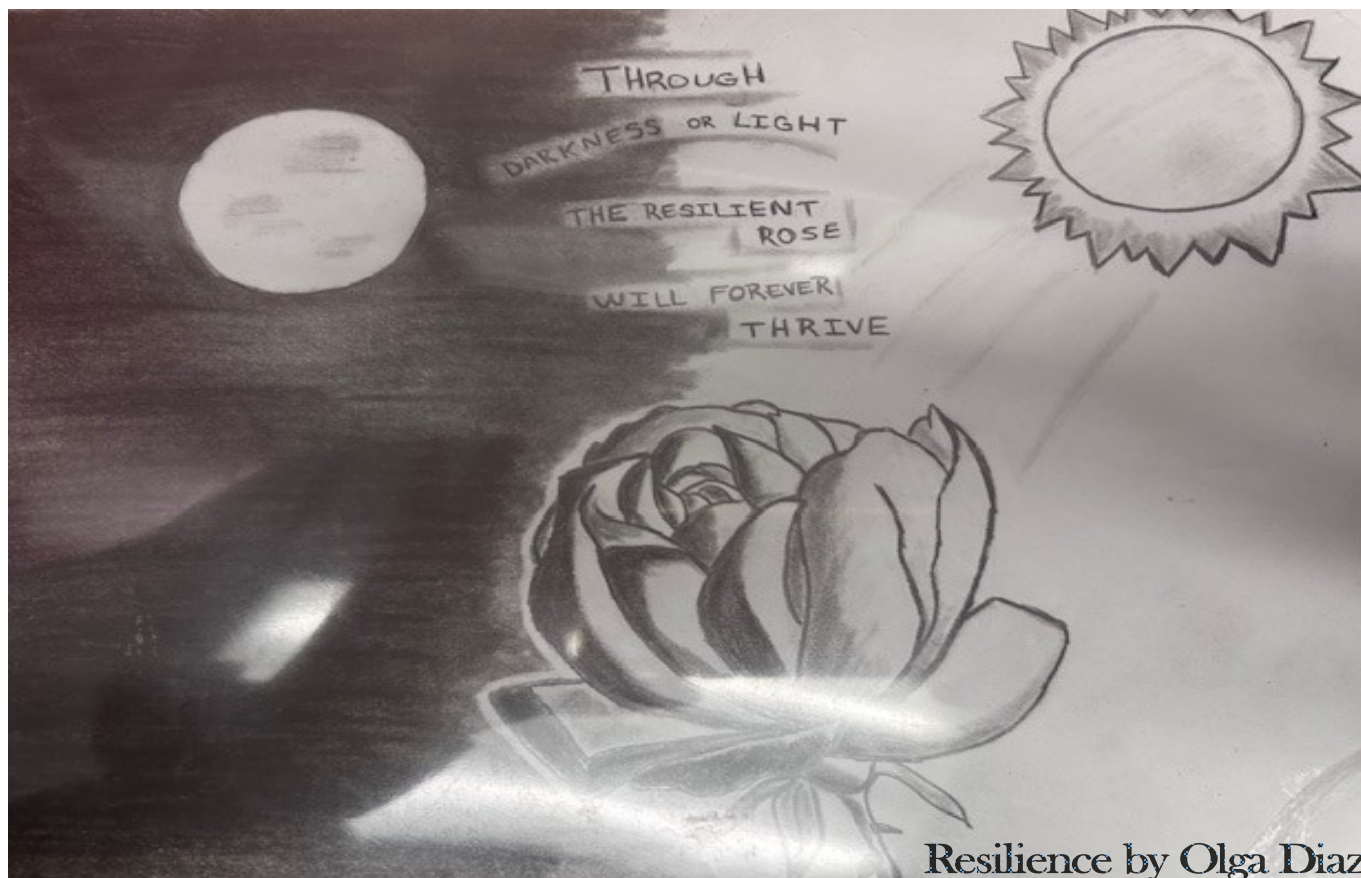
Of course it is important to consult with a professional to determine the most appropriate individual recovery approach, but the good news is, there is hope. Hope in healing from traumatic experiences, and if there is anything I've learned from my professional and personal experiences with trauma, it's that sometimes hope can make all the difference!

# DEPRESSION

By Karla Freeman

Depression does not discriminate in regard to race, class, gender, or age. According to the diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 4th Ed. (DSM-IV), Major Depressive Episode is often described by the person as depressed, sad, hopeless, discouraged, or down in the dumps. Consequently, once depression hits its target, it effectively deprives individuals of fully functioning or having a good quality of life. Within the last four years, I've lost my mother, father, cousin, niece, and sister. I was devastated by each loss. My bereavement compounded with an already impaired functioning from my incarceration and separation from my son created a deep sense of hopelessness and despair.

Critically, if not for "Talk Therapy" with an individual from the psychiatric department and access to religious services and my willpower to seek help, my mental health and emotional state might have worsened. At its extreme, Major Depression can lead to suicide and therefore should not be taken for granted or treated with nonchalance. However, there is help. Once I realized that depression was preventing me from being a better mother, supportive wife, thorough grandmother and an understanding sister/ friend. I took the initiative to work on my fragile internal self. Working on protecting preserving our inner selves is vital to overcoming the endless negative effects of incarceration as well as being a productive member of society. I've heard many people quote "hurt people hurt people"/ I counter it with what a wise woman once said to me: "It's time for healed people to heal people". Recognize, regain and restore those parts of you that prevents you from being the best individual for you and the world. It's never too late....



Resilience by Olga Diaz

## IYKYK...IF YOU KNOW YOU KNOW

What are you listening to: Cardi B  
What are you watching: Law & Order SVU (with Stabler)  
What are you Reading: The Notebook  
Favorite Quote: "The most beautiful things in this world are things you cannot see but can feel."  
 Helen Keller  
Recommendations: Queen Naija, Yellowstone, The Last Song  
**Cynthia Rivera**

What are you listening to: Lil Baby  
What are you watching: Sports  
What are you Reading: Colleen Hoover  
Favorite Quote: "Those who make you angry control you."  
Recommendations: Variety-Colleen Hoover, The Notebook, Lil Baby  
**Jess Gonzalez**

What are you listening to: Lil Baby  
What are you watching: Sistas/Average Joe/Love & Hip-hop  
What are you Reading: How to Start your Own Business & How to Be a Millionaire in Prison  
Favorite Quote: "Move on. It's just a chapter in the past, but don't close the book, just turn the page."  
Recommendations: COCO Jones, Law and Order  
**Shatara Carter**

What are you listening to: Giveon/Friday/Toosii- "Keeper"  
What are you watching: Yellowstone  
Favorite Quote: "You never know what the next person is going through."  
Recommendations: J I The Prince of New York, Yellowstone  
**Heather Lewis**

What are you listening to: Est-Gee/Lil Durk/ MoneyBagg Yo  
What are you watching: 1000lb Sisters/Love After Lock Up/First 48  
What are you Reading: Books by Kwan and James Patterson  
Favorite Quote: "Live life, don't let it live you."  
 "Don't run through life, take it one step at a time."  
Recommendations: 90 Day Fiancé, Lil Kee, YG Tetk  
**Malani Miller**

What are you listening to: GLORilla/Nicki Minaj  
What are you watching: Sistas/Love & Hip-hop  
What are you Reading: The Qu' ran  
Favorite Quote: The Serenity Prayer  
Recommendations: Ice Spice, Beyoncé, James Patterson, Power

What are you listening to: Queen Naija/Summer Walker  
What are you watching: Love & HipHop, The Impact  
What are you Reading: Butterfly  
Favorite Quote: "For those who have counted me out, cannot count at all."  
Recommendations: Basketball Wives, Ethics, Tems- "Love me Je Je"  
**Jessica Bryant**

What are you listening to: 21 Savage "Prove It"  
What are you watching: Ancient Aliens  
What are you Reading: The Mastery of Love by Dom Miguel Ruiz  
Favorite Quote: "The truth is everything will be ok as soon as you are ok with everything and that's the only time everything will be ok."-Sylvester McNutt III  
Recommendations: Sleepy Hollow/Hippie Sabotage/ Burna Boy, The Proof is Out There/Ancient Aliens/ What We Do In The Shadows, "Warriors of the Light" & "The Alchemist"- Paulo Coelho  
**Asia Jones**



## IYKYK...IF YOU KNOW YOU KNOW

What are you listening to: Vedo-"I Got You"/Tink-"Switch"/Beyoncé-"One plus one"

What are you watching: Martin/The Neighborhood

What are you Reading: "Feeding the Soul"-Tabatha Brown/"Exceptional You!"-Victoria Osteen/The Qu'ran

Favorite Quote: "Stop letting people who do so little for you, control so much of your mind, feelings and emotions!" "In life...It's important to know when to stop arguing with people and simply let them be wrong."

Recommendations: Read more self help books  
**Iyeshea Harris**

What are you listening to: 90's hip hop& R&B/All Eras of R&B/Mary J Blige/Alicia Keys

What are you watching: Yellowstone/1923/Grotesquerie/Dateline/Lost/911/Law&Order SVU/20/20/Murder in a Small Town/Accused/Love After Lockup/Family Guy

What are you Reading: Midnight Series  
Favorite Quote: "There is no Earthly sorrow that Heaven can't heal." "Fear made me stay too long." "The only time you should be looking down on someone is when you're helping them up."

Recommendations: "The 5 Smoother Stones" Queenie"-Alex Haley Colleen Hoover, Grotesquerie/Yellowstone/1923  
**Hillcrest IP**

What are you listening to: Paz en la Formenta (Peace in the Storm)/Yo Tengo un Nuevo Amor (I have a New Love)-Roberto Orellana

What are you watching: La Familia/Sev de Venganza/Juana la Virgen/Steven Furtick

What are you Reading: The Holy Bible Brown/"Exceptional You!"-Victoria Osteen/The Qu'ran

Favorite Quote: "No hagas lo que no te gusta que te hagan a ti" (Don't do what you don't like done to you)

Recommendations: Steven Furtick-TBN  
**Esmeralda Bernard**

What are you listening to: Marvin Sapp "Thank You For it All"

What are you watching: Lifetime Christmas Movies

What are you Reading: "The Body Keeps the Score" by Bessel Van Der Kolk M.D.

Favorite Quote: "Nothing is changed until it is faced and nothing is faced until it is changed."; "Nothing is changed until it is faced and nothing is faced until it is changed."; "We cannot control any event that may happen to us, but it is our choice on how we allow that particular event to define, affect and shape us."

**Latonia Bellamy**

What are you listening to: Maverick City Music "Skillet and Fresh Fire"

What are you watching: Yellowstone/Murder in a Small Town/Scarry Tactics/Scifi

What are you Reading: Royal Elite Academy Series

Favorite Quote: "Practice What you Preach..."

Recommendations: The Housemaid

**Veronica Aguilar**



## "MUSIC IS THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART AND MIND"

By Tina Lunney

I have the privilege to participate in Music Therapy through our mental health department facilitated by Ms. Melendez our music therapist. Ms. Melendez's extraordinary talents as a therapist has the ability to create an atmosphere of peace and tranquility which allows you feel comfortable to express your feelings and emotions. Everyone understands and processes feelings and emotions differently. That is the purpose of music therapy which offers many different forms of therapy. During a music therapy session it offers myriad of ways to express your feelings with guided imagery, expressive drawing and using musical instruments such as guitars and keyboard as a release of emotions.

Ms. Melendez uses the Bonnie Method of Guided Imagery and music, which is the music-oriented exploration of consciousness. It offers an individual the opportunity to integrate mental, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects towards growth and healing. The session usually lasts a ½ hour to 2 hours of their choice which resonates with your particular mood or feelings. Once she selects the music selection of your choice she guides you through relaxation exercises and your mind creates a focus image in your mind once the music starts. The music allows you to enhance visual, emotional, and physical images during the music portion of the session. Music therapy is a powerful way to improve reality testing and problem-solving skills for daily living. There are many goals and aspirations to achieve while taking music therapy in a forensic or correctional setting such as:

- Improve respect for others including peers and authority figures
- Develop healthy verbal and non-verbal communication skills

- Decrease impulsivity through practical techniques
- Accept responsibility for thoughts and feelings  
Learn relaxation and coping skills
- Explore feelings and make positive changes in mood states

Music is a personal experience and a universal language. Singing and sharing empowers the individual through a musical experience through another light. Stress management can also help people connect and strengthen relationships. Music therapy helps with stress management and relaxing meditation while normalizing therapy in an institutional setting through many hard times and struggles.

Allow me to share my personal experience during my sessions, my music genre consist of mass array of music but during my session the choices are harps and sometimes violins. At the beginning of a session I complete an emotional gauge chart then Ms. Melendez will ask if I would like to engage in expressive drawing I usually don't participate in that form of therapy. Once my music selection is chosen my focused image is being on the beach watching the ocean or another image that creates a relaxation and peace for me is the sky I visualize sunsets and sunrises. These images create a sense of peace and calmness throughout my session.

During a session not only does your mind create a sense of relaxation but your mind has the ability to release any stress you may be carrying that you may not even realize your body is sustaining. This method enables me to release and process my present or past emotions that may be encumbering my growth and well-being.

I want to extend a warm thank you to Ms. Melendez for her time, talents, patience and graciousness for being a part of the women's growth and rehabilitation journey at Edna Mahan.

## HEALING THROUGH CROCHET

By Iyeshea Harris

Since the start of the crochet program at FMU, I found that the more I learned and spent time making projects for my loved ones, the therapy I found inside this quality time has helped me to relax in the prison environment where there are different emotions and personalities. Crochet eases my mind from long nights of number systems (my college class) LOL!! Crocheting also keeps me grounded on so many levels and I am thankful.

Hey, if anyone knows of me, then they know what I mean about my uneasy attitude; perhaps stemming from my abusive childhood, and socially learning how not to trust people. As a child, I should have been nurtured, loved and protected. I was never really given the opportunity to have a normal childhood. I was stripped of this. Considering my long-term abuse, over time my attitude worsened, spiraling into my adulthood.

When I sit back and crochet, it's like despite everything I had ever been through, my mind automatically depletes those bad memories, inviting me to a place of comfort. The best part of crocheting was the beginning. I learned how to hold a crochet hook and yarn with my fingers for the very first time. Crocheting is like learning how to live without all the pain, hurt and distrust; issues which I had been living with my entire life.

Crocheting allows me to express my unending love for my grandchildren, enjoying my self-quality time, making them hats, scarfs, gloves etc... I am so thankful to administration for allowing the crochet program to exist here. Though I am not a person who freely expresses her story. Thanks to crocheting, it helps me feel free to open up, allowing me to do just that.

I know you are all excited that crochet items have been added to the craft incentive list giving us the opportunity to keep calm with crochet. So I have a few tips for beginners or those who are more advanced. Many of us learned how to crochet here as Edna and that means we didn't use a book or read a pattern but were taught one on one by someone more experienced, even if it was only by a day or two. So I thought I might share with everyone a few of the most commonly used terms in the patterns you will find in books or shared with you from a friend.

### Basic Scarf Pattern (for those cold winter days)

Row 1 : ch 20

Row 2 : sc in 2nd ch from the hook (you should have 19sc)

Row 3 : ch 1 sc in each stitch across (19sc)

Row 4: ch 3, dc in each sc across (19sc) (the ch 3 at the beginning counts as a dc here and throughout)

Repeat Rows 2 & 3 until desired length

Enjoy your yarn and remember you can always come to crochet club for help or to learn how to make a wonderful gifts to send to your family and friends.

- Katy Dorsett

## Crochet Today

By Katy Dorsett

### Crochet Terminology:

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1.Chain - ch         | 10. Derease—dec(s)   |
| 2.Slipstitch— slst   | 11.Skip—sk           |
| 3.Single crochet—sc  | 12.Back loop -bl     |
| 4.Double crochet—hdc | 13.Front loop - fl   |
| 5.Treble crochet—tr  | 14.Round - rnd(s)    |
| 6.Space— sp          | 15.Repeat - rep(s)   |
| 7.Yarn over—yo       | 16.Increase - inc(s) |
| 8.Right side—rs      |                      |
| 9.Wrong side - ws    |                      |



**By Melanie Slate**



Do you have an artistic vision you would like to share? Submit your piece and any blurb about your art to the unit ILC for collection and you may be featured in upcoming newsletters! Remember, no art is wrong or bad! You never know who you may inspire or uplift!!



## ***Stigma, Stereotypes and Strength***

by Melanie Slate

Most of us remember (or, in the case of you young ones, have at least heard of) the HBO series *The Sopranos*, which ran through the early 00's. Set in New Jersey, the show depicted a mob boss and his family, as well as his business associates. An organized crime drama at heart, the show began with a very unusual pretense. Tony Soprano was in therapy and was on medication as well. This wasn't the center of the story, but it was always a backdrop - along with his concern that his mental health diagnosis/treatment would be discovered by other members of his organization. Beyond the stigma he would have endured, the stereotype of "weakness" someone like Tony in treatment would have left him exposed to potential attacks on his position and would have undermined his power. It may sound fairly commonplace now, two decades later, but the idea of a man, and one in power, seeking mental health treatment was all but unheard of at that time. The judgment would be too much for most people, especially men, in most cultures (including that of Italian Americans).

Stereotypes and stigma about people who seek therapy and/or take psychiatric medication still exist in many cultures including, unfortunately, our own. Two decades after *The Sopranos*, it is no longer anathema in Western culture to hear of a man in therapy or on medication. (A tremendous number of our veterans coming home with trauma disorders has also contributed to what now seems to be, if not a positive thing, at least a less negative thing.) However, the perception of someone seeking treatment as *strong* for doing so is still evolving in American and other Western cultures, and sometimes doing so along political lines. For instance, Democratic Senator John Fetterman of Pennsylvania was openly ridiculed

and labeled by more conservative members of our government and media for seeking help for his mental health issues. He was characterized by those people as being unfit to help govern his state. Would he have faced similar characterizations and criticisms if he had sought care for a physical malady? Or was this merely a handy tool with which to undermine a political opponent? Either way, there are still negative assumptions associated with the field of mental health that have yet to be eradicated, even in our ostensibly more enlightened and evolved society. In Asiatic cultures, there is even stronger negativity bias that complicates and contributes to the stain of mental illness on someone's reputation. There are no provisions for depression or anxiety - if someone requires medication, they are basically deemed weak at best, and a "mental patient" at worst. For those that require inpatient treatment, they are assumed to be lunatics that require restraint and are literally shackled to their bedframe. Caribbean or Central American cultures tend to treat people with mental health needs similarly, and they are not alone. Eastern European cultures fall into the same category. In all, when it comes to mental health treatment, it might be fair to say that more cultures embrace the notion of the stereotype of weakness over the perception of strength in seeking support.

There is a fear associated with disease - that fear is amplified by a disease that does not originate physically. Subsections of Western culture that perceive the need for mental health support as a fundamental weakness in a person's character still, and may always, exist. What will change this way of thinking? Time? Education? It's hard to say for sure. As with any stigma or stereotype, the first step must always be awareness - not merely in our own culture, but in those around us as well. After all, we do not exist merely within our own culture. We exist within a worldwide culture, and the experiences of illness that we all experience should help to unite us rather



I recently read about Marchell Taylor who is a 46 year old man who spent nearly half his life in and out of prison. His story captured my attention because of his self-awareness regarding his need for mental health therapy. It made me think about how many of us take responsibility for our actions, seek, and accept help through therapy. Marchell is candid and admits he was a monster. He was the guy you were afraid of. His childhood consisted of trauma, his father seemed to suffer from PTSD, beat his mother which resulted in Marchell drinking alcohol from the age of nine. Later he was in a car accident with his mom and suffered a brain injury which contributed to his traumatic behavior changes growing up. At the age of twelve he made inroads in the criminal justice system with the influence of his father. In 2016 while awaiting trial for robbery Marchell entered into a pilot program run by a neuropsychologist and University of Denver professor. Taking responsibility for ones actions was the first step for healing and rehabilitation. Once his TBI was identified Marchell started dialectical and cognitive behavioral therapy and learned mediation techniques to control impulsivity. Recognizing a biological element in behavior can change your whole life which needs mental health attention.

*Less than 10 percent of the general public have experienced a brain injury, but its estimated that about 50 percent of those in the criminal justice system suffer from a traumatic brain injury University of Denver professor and neuropsychologist Kim Gorgens says the figure is even higher for certain incarcerated population her studies show that 80 percent of those in Colorado County jails up to 97 percent of women repeat offenders have a traumatic brain injury (FBI). Its' not that brain injury causes incarceration but for people with vulnerable brains-people who may have undergone childhood abuse or neglect-"if they sustain a brain injury the risk is much higher*

*for poor outcomes including incarceration" targeted therapy lowers that an individual will re-offend says Professor Gorgens".*

Taylor is now thriving in society. He is a peer counselor for a mental health center. He learned the tools to deal with his trauma and is now giving back through his lived experience. Another aspect of Marchell's story that stood out was his traumatized brain development and how a damaged brain plays a role towards actions that may lead someone towards incarceration.

It is not a well-known fact that our behavior can be influenced by brain injuries, disease, genetics, and other abnormalities. Through continuing studies about brain science, brain development, age and trauma, criminologists, scientists, and mental health professionals are constantly researching how these factors contribute to an individual's bade decisions which could lead to incarceration. These studies and finding do not conclusively testify their bearing on criminal acts and are specifically not "get out of jail free" strategies but support an explanation for the rationale behind many criminal acts beyond deliberate choice. Marchell's story is an example of how mental health research, therapy, rehabilitation, and counseling will give affected individuals the tools, coping mechanisms and mental health support needed to attain a functioning healthy life despite traumatic brain injuries, abuse, neglect or other vulnerabilities.

## BIOLOGICAL FACTORS IN MENTAL HEALTH

by Tina Lunney

**Being self-aware and asking for help is the key to a healthy productive life**

\*Please note that this article's content has not been verified by an outside healthcare provider\*

Hannah Ramsey shares her story and her struggles with ADHD. While in college she felt like multiple radio stations were playing in her head. Imagine what that must have been like; having constant noise replaying in your head with no relief and not understanding why this is happening. Learning through social media Hannah realized she's not the only one suffering and experiencing these symptoms. From 2020 to 2022 new diagnoses in women ages 23 to 49 roughly doubled towards epic research data. Prescriptions have skyrocketed for women in their 20s and 30s. After reading these statistics it makes you wonder why these numbers are rising but in actuality, women are overcoming the stigma that is attached to mental health challenges. Engaging in conversations and sharing stories allows us to know others have similar struggles. I truly commend these individuals as they come together sharing their struggles through their own mental health challenges as it is never easy to be vulnerable. But remember you are stronger than you realize! Centuries ago, our great grandparents and parents did not know what mental illness was or even the definition of ADHD. More and more data is being compiled regarding factors that contribute to ADHD that was previously undiagnosed or misdiagnosed.

*Please keep in mind as I use the word data I am not saying we are merely numbers and statistics, we are people who are learning ways to accept and process our mental health challenges. Sharing our experiences help each and every one of us to know we're in this together and that you're never alone.*

We need to keep in mind that proper diagnosis is the key factor to determining one's proper treatment plan. In the past, studies were done mostly

on young white boys whose symptoms consisted of difficulty focusing, sitting and struggling to remain quiet but there are more prominent symptoms displayed with ADHD. In Hannah's case: being a woman and black with a misdiagnosis, lead to serious consequences. Marginalized communities lack the proper resources to diagnose mental health issues which result in black women being largely overlooked. We must rally to continue to shed light and advocate for marginalized communities.

*Let's Have a  
Conversation  
By Tina Lunney*

Even self-diagnosing ourselves is harmful countless times we hear symptoms and we think to ourselves "I have those symptoms I must have.....", or sometimes we actually believe we have those symptoms but self-diagnosing ourselves is not the accurate answer. When you have a chest pain you know something is wrong you go directly to the hospital similar goes for your mental health when you recognize mentally or emotionally you're not sensing something is out of the ordinary seek professional help for a proper diagnosis. Proper diagnosis, treatment with medication or therapy is the way any illness ought to be treated. Going undiagnosed can allow someone to suffer chronic frustration, low self-esteem and feeling inadequate. Never neglect your mental health. Shout to Hannah for her transparency and bravery !!!

**YOU'RE NEVER ALONE**

# *Lucky Girl Syndrome*

By Paige Pfefferle and Melanie Slate

**“First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do.”**

**Epictetus, Greek Philosopher C.50-135CE Affirmations, manifestations, and meditations, all ways of reaching and achieving our goals. This all now known as “Lucky Girl Syndrome” it’s all the rage, but does this actually work? Or is it delusion by another name?**

I may not always be lucky but I personally believe and practice this latest trend. I surround myself with affirmations, whether it be affirmations that were available on the kiosk for download, uplifting words I have written down, quotes from those I admire and mantras I keep for myself. I have manifestation journals that I write in everyday for the things that I want to achieve in my life. I have books on manifestation that have taught me specific ways to manifest exactly what you’re looking for. I admit sometimes I feel completely delusional when I write something in my journal and the exact opposite happens, but it’s like your faith, your spirituality you keep on believing you deserve everything you’re trying to manifest.

Meditation comes in different forms, for someone it may look like sitting in lotus position, channeling all of your energy, and being present with your thoughts. They have meditations you can download from the kiosk as well. It can also be done in the form of exercise or yoga-whatever it is that centers you and brings you peace. People will be surprised to hear that I practice (a form of) this as well. I even sleep with affirmations on my player. So here’s an exercise:

- ♣ Find a calm space (easier to do in a cell than in a dorm setting for sure, but it’s still possible.) If you have a player put your ear bud or headphones on. You can find rain, nature sounds, pink noise, white noise-whatever will keep you insulated from the activity around you.

- ♣ Get into a comfortable spot. People think you have to sit a certain way to meditate-not so. It’s perfectly acceptable to sit in a chair if you need to. You don’t have to twist your body into half lotus pose or any other uncomfortable position.

- ♣ Close your eyes gently. \*Think of a goal you have, anything you’d like to work toward. Be specific.\* Place one hand on your belly, and the other right over it, focus on the in breath; out breath\* When you feel ready, imagine a light surrounding you. When you feel ready, imagine a light surrounding you. When you breathe in, you take that light into your body. Let it fill you- Let it raise your vibration. This will make it easier for you to recognize an opportunity, or something that is along the path toward your goal.



♣ When you breathe out, the light remains within you. What you exhale is the darkness. Low vibrations & doubt leave your body on the exhale and are carried away. Continue-each time, let the light travel further and further into you-until it reaches the top of your head and the tips of your toes. Slowly open your eyes.

♣ This may not be the immediate segue to your goal, but your vibration is raised and your mind is cleared. You are receptive and open; at the very least, you are relaxed and focused. Repeat as often as needed, or at least once each day in addition to any other spiritual exercises you might do.

I'm also a huge believe in vision boards-since we can't necessarily have or make those, I've scaled it down and have created vision books! I use composition notebooks purchased from commissary and I fill them with every dream, wish and desire I may have. They contain quotes I love, poems by my favorite authors, inspirations for the perfect wedding-anything that I believe in I put in those books. I now have 4 books and I truly treasure them, especially because we are constant creatures of evolutions and I can look back and see how my dreams may have shifted and redefined throughout the years.

**“Fortune favors the bold”, get creative! It's your life, it's your dreams! No dream is to big or too small-NEVER QUIT DAY DREAMING!!**





# BILINGUAL CORNER: HEALING THROUGH MEDITATION

By Mayra Gavilanez-Alectus and Antionette Stephen

Meditacion es una forma facil de calmar tu mente, Dirigir tu enfoque para moverte en caminos positivos. Hoy en dia, en este mundo tan ocupado no es cosa facil hacerlo. Tratar de calmar tu mente cuando hay tanta distracciones a tu alrededor, es como tratar de pasar hilo en una aguja montado en un bus en un camino rocoso. Meditacion significa muchas cosas diferente para diferente personas. Para algunas personas es la musica, para otros yoga y todavia aun mas es en el centro del silencio, y para otros un cuarto callado. Meditacion ayuda a individuos a reducir la ansiedad y calmar los pensamientos negativos con pensamientos positivos. Meditacion es cura para la depression y tambien para el enojo.

Mis Cuqui Rivera, coordinadora del programa Latino Action Network Foundation, toda su vida a defendido a la minoria he introdujo a la poblacion de encarceladas de EMCF a la idea de UBUNTU- Un ideal que se tralada dentro de su trabajo activando a la comunidad conel apoyo de SUMMIT 2025, un movimiento dedicado para la creatividad significativa de cambios en las reformas de la prision. UBUNTU es un concepto tradicional africano que viene de lenguaje Zulu y Zhosa. La traduccion es "Humanidad con apoyo a otros". Los valores morales del UBUNTU incluyen: el respeto a otros, ayuda, compartir, comunidad, caridad, confianza y no egoismo.

Mis Cuqui trajo musica que resonaba suave en el lugar grande, el cual ayudo a las mujeres solamente a enfocarse en calmar la vision de sus mentes. Cuqui guiaba verbalmente nuestros pensamientos en ese momento para imaginar un espacio santuario. Casi como la guia de un espiritu, ella gentilmente nos decia que abramos nuestras mentes para poder intentar ligar con nuestros ancestros, parientes, o cualquiera que nosotras sintieramos una fuerte conexion mental. Una experiencia unica que me dio una nueva perspectiva del poder de la meditacion.

Meditation is an easy way to calm your mind, and direct your focus to other more positive roads. It is not an easy thing to do in a busy world today. Trying to calm your mind when a bundle of distractions surround you is like trying to thread a needle in a moving bus on a rocky road. Meditation means a lot of different things to different people. For some it is music, others yoga, still more it is a centering silence and a quiet room. Meditation has helped individuals reduce anxiety and negative thoughts to positive feedback. It also offers healing for depression and anger as well.

Ms.Cuqui Rivera, Programs Coordinator of the Latino Action Network Foundation, and a lifelong advocate of minorities and the incarcerated introduced the EMCF population to the idea of UBUNTU – an ideal that has translated into her work activating the community towards SUMMIT 2025: a movement dedicated to creating meaningful change in prison reform. UBUNTU is a traditional African concept that comes from the Zulu and Zhosa language. Roughly translated as “humanity towards others”, the ethical values of UBUNTU include “respect for others, helpfulness, community, sharing, caring, trust and unselfishness.”

Cuqui brought music that was soothing and echoed in the large hall which helped the women focus solely on the calming vision in their minds. She verbally guided our thoughts in that moment to imagine a sanctuary space. Almost like a spirit guide she gently taught us to open our minds to attempt to link with ancestors, relatives or anyone we felt strongly connected to mentally. A unique experience that gave us a new perspective on the power of meditation.

**At Summit 2025, the advocates sought to address racial disparity in the justice system, amend law enforcement and sentencing laws, re-examine incarceration services and rehabilitation to reduce recidivism and community involvement in hiring and aiding post incarceration reentry services.**



## **LEGAL NOTES: Female Incarcerated Person's Rights Protection Act** By Natasha White



Introduced on June 28, 2024, the Bill; not passed in entirety as yet, outlines a comprehensive piece of legislation aimed at creating a gender responsive environment of safety, respect and dignity for the female incarcerated. Currently DOC policies in programming availability, vocational training, officer training, classification protocol, re-entry services and more are geared toward the male incarcerated larger population. The bill primarily focuses on acknowledging the fact that gender makes a difference, especially in the carceral environment, allowing the Commissioner of Corrections the ability to establish policies, programs and services to address the needs of the female incarcerated. Some of which include pregnancy assistance during labor and childbirth via doula services, parenting classes and family reunification programs. Studies have shown that the predominant source of strain and mental health issues for the female incarcerated stem from anxiety and stress over their children and family outside the prison.

Keeping this in mind, the bill also outlines meaningful gender responsive training for officers in de-escalating tense situations and navigating interactions

with the female population which vary completely in approach and response to a male prison environment. The bill also introduces a pathway for structured incentives, recreational and group activities that encourage positive development among female incarcerated. Even the establishment of a Division of Women's Services to oversee and implement the mandate within the legislation sparks a progressive and informed response to the often overlooked women in the penal system. Specific and specialized needs of the female incarcerated such as treatment for physical, sexual abuse or trauma, methods to report and protection against sexual abuse and harassment through victim centered investigations are meaningfully outlined in the Bill. The significance of this legislation is that it marks a progressive shift in reform and rehabilitation of female offenders by taking into consideration traditional gender disparities which previously meant that women behind bars were not afforded the same programs or opportunities to change their future as the larger male incarcerated population. Our support and hope for the future rests behind the brave senators, DOC officials and advocates of bold legislation aimed at uplifting the lives of broken women in a meaningful way.

## **New Jersey Works Towards Meaningful Resolutions** By Tina Lunney

Across the nation mental health and substance abuse has become a national crisis in our communities. New Jersey reached a momentous day towards victory on January 12, 2024 in public health and racial justice when New Jersey Governor Murphy signed into law the "Seabrook-Washington Community-Led Crisis Response Act". This bill was named after Najee Seabrook a black crisis responder killed by law enforcement during a mental health crisis, and Andrew Washington killed under the same circumstances. We honor them and many others whose lives were taken during a behavioral crisis that could have been resolved without violence.

The nation has been experiencing a rise in police killings of unarmed individuals both vulnerable and from minorities. Research shows how most 911 calls do not require a police response and their presence on the scene of a substance abuse or mental health crisis is often unnecessary, inappropriate and increases the probability of police violence. Governor Murphy invested \$12 million to establish community-led crisis response teams as an alternative to police for nonviolent, substance abuse and behavioral

health calls across the state. The bill requires the Attorney General to establish a pilot program in Camden, Essex, Hudson, Mercer and Passaic County. Under the bill a community crisis response team is defined as a team that provides professional, on-site community-based intervention such as outreach, de-escalation, stabilization, resource connection and follow up support for individuals who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis including certified peer counselors as best practice to the extent the incident is predictable.



Law Enforcement officers risk their lives every day serving our communities and they never know what situations they are encountering when a 911 call is placed. The Seabrook-Washington Act signifies a shift away from increased policing to a public health response led by neighbors and trusted community members. This act is a victory for those who believe in community-controlled public safety by supporting the community-led public crisis response teams and reducing the likelihood of police violence in New Jersey.

Salvation and Social Justice advocate policy expert Racquel Romans Henry spoke at the Women's Empowering Series at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women with her insight and experience towards social justice. Racquel Romans-Henry serves as a Policy Director of Salvation and Social Justice in a non-partisan black faith rooted public policy organization based in Trenton, N.J. She works with individual organizations and communities that amplify the voices and those who have historically relegated to the margins of society to ensure that their voices and lived experiences are heard throughout the state. Throughout the state of New Jersey Racquel and everyone at Salvation of Social Justice has been advocating for the Second Chance Rehabilitation Act to pass through legislation.

The establishment of a rehabilitation release program recommendation would permit incarcerated persons who reach the age of 60 (62 in case of first degree) and who have 20 years in prison (or 30 years in the case of first degree) to apply to a court for resentencing. The incarcerated persons who receive a certificate would get a second chance to petition for resentencing at a hearing before the Superior Court. This will reduce the elderly population in prison. Salvation and Social Justice and all our many advocates are advocating for justice for the elderly that are justice impacted. But they cannot do it alone they need family and friends to have their voices heard as well they cannot do it alone.

Help the fight for a Second Chance by contacting Salvation and Social Justice and tell your story they need everyone fighting for justice through our lived experiences and how it has impacted our friends and families.

## EVERYONE NEEDS A SECOND CHANCE SO SPEAK OUT

*Advocacy*

BY TINA LUNNEY

Address:

Salvation and Social Justice

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Art by Olga Diaz

### “Stockholm Syndrome”

My Savior, so I thought he was  
 I trusted him as the man of God  
 At my lowest point, there he was  
     He was my hero  
 He can do no wrong in my eyes  
 Even though he kept me isolated  
 No contact with family or friends  
     Had to drop out of school  
     Gave up on my dreams  
 I became a servant of God  
 Well, his servant hands and feet  
     I had to dress the part  
     And act the part  
     According to his rules  
 He taught us about unit and love  
     But, never practiced it himself  
 On May 22, 2011 was arrested  
     He was nowhere to be found  
 In handcuffs, I still protected him  
 Asking my co-defendant to please  
     Don't say anything about him  
     Six months later I realized  
     How much of a fraud he was  
 From his statement to the detectives  
     So many lies and cover ups  
 There's no way he was a man of God  
     Still, I did not hate him  
 People used to tell me that I was in a cult  
     It was too difficult to believe  
     I was in a cult  
 So, I would correct them and say  
     I was in a ministry  
     Thirteen years later in therapy  
 I can admit that I was indeed in a cult  
     Thirteen years later I am finally free  
     Mentally and spiritually

## WARRIORS OUTSTANDING MOTHERS EXTRAORDINARY NURTURERS

In a world where women are devalued  
 We still hold our peace and that speaks volumes.

Without any effort, we are seen as a threat  
 For doing our part without breaking a sweat

We cook, we clean, we birth human beings  
 Not only that, we bring life meaning

Without women what would this world be like  
 Hmm, I wonder if anything would be right

Poems By Myriam Janvier



Stockholm Syndrome: It is a mental phenomenon where a victim sides with their abuser or captor... believing that the abuser or captor is somehow right and justified in what they did or doing to the victim. In some cases, the victim feels the need to accept blame for their abuser or captor.



I can't change the situation but I can control how I respond to it. I can learn from the past to solve present and future problems.

I choose to focus my attention on my goals and things that are uplifting.

I've dealt with difficulties before and I can deal with this.

I can handle it even if I don't get what I want or need.

I can cope with this. I am stronger than I think.



If I let myself down by slipping back into old habits, I can gently correct my course without feeling guilty.

### EMBRACING THE MOMENT

Coping Statements  
in Hard Times

By Tina Lunney

It doesn't matter what the struggle is. There is always room for hope.



I have learned to treat myself gently because with a few exceptions, I am doing my best. I will not be hard on myself today.

One step at a time. That is how I will get where I am going. I can only control myself and my own actions.



I will not wait to have a good day. I will make one.

Its OK:

- to feel this way
- to want or need something from someone else
- to feel anxious/upset/mad. I can still deal with this effectively

When thinking about life,  
Remember this: no amount  
of guilt can change the past,  
And no amount of anxiety  
can change the future  
- Unknown

Don't be ashamed of  
your story  
It will inspire others.  
- Unknown

### On Forgiveness

Forgiveness is not the misguided act of condoning irresponsible, hurtful behavior. Nor is it a superficial turning of the other cheek that leaves us feeling victimized and martyred. Rather it is the finishing of old business that allows us to experience the present, free of contamination from the past.

### RECOVERY

Don't feel disillusioned by where you are now  
Your progress is good enough  
It's meaningful it's on time  
Though everything may go unacknowledged every silent step is movement  
in the right direction  
When it feels as though everyone is going forward  
and you're being pulled back by your own demons or your past  
Remember that every moment in this journey will play its part in the greater narrative - what  
a beautiful story to share one day written just by living your life

By KL



## I AM A SURVIVOR

Things are not what they used to be  
 I am feeling alone in a crowded room  
 So, I isolate myself as much as possible  
 thinking isolation would make me feel better  
 But in reality it makes me think of how life  
 is not right compared to my friends on  
 Facebook,  
 So I contemplate on how to fix the problems  
 I reflect,  
 I feel socially awkward  
 I feel like people at work look down on me  
 Nobody will understand my plight  
 I decide that if I am not around,  
 things would be better  
 Plus, it is an easy escape from the depression  
 I am feeling  
 So I ATTEMPTED Suicide  
 Not realizing how selfish it was  
 How much people love me  
 And if I just would have asked for help  
 I would not have been in that hospital bed  
 Funny, how God works  
 My nurse for the night was my neighbor  
 Or should I say an Angel  
 We talked and I realized things were not that  
 bad  
 It was all in my head  
 Everything I thought was wrong  
 could have been fixed  
 God spared my life and I am beyond grateful  
 Every day is a blessing from above  
 So, I make sure to recognize/pray  
 to God every day  
 in the wee hours, on my knees  
 because I am a Survivor.



Poems By Regina Wallace

## Take a Drink

One drink won't hurt  
 As a matter of fact, I don't feel anything  
 from that  
 So, I have a few more drinks  
 Wait, I'm feeling it now  
 All problems seem so minor now  
 Wait hours later the buzz was wearing  
 off  
 Back to reality and my problems were  
 back  
 In full effect  
 Wait, let's get a drink  
  
*Drinking and doing drugs does not  
 solve problems nor cure mental illness.  
 They just mask the pain and create  
 more problems. That is a proven  
 fact...Just Ask?*



## THE BLACK HOLE

A dark void beyond endurance calls,  
Hope, Joy and Will falls,  
Slowly the light begins to dim,  
Colors turn grey, the world becomes grim.

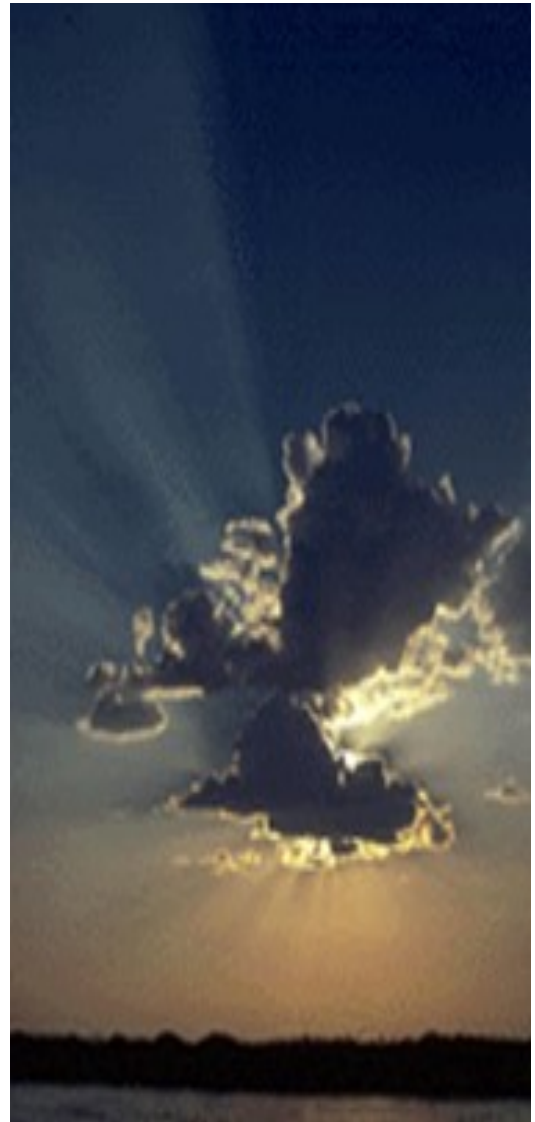
A pressure bearing down your chest  
The mind whispers 'Give up', it's for the best  
Shoulders bowed by the pressing weight  
Guilt and shame forever, a cursed fate

Daily tasks become an ordeal  
Waking up, a shower or even eating a meal  
Lying awake, numb and dead  
No energy for people or food, just stay in bed

Memories are painful, thinking is torture  
Your useless and worthless, your reality a scorcher  
Strength waning, this dread you cannot shake Mask's  
up but how long can you fake

Days become dreary, darkness surrounds  
The void is calling, despair abounds  
The black hole of oblivion is inviting, just end it all  
Someone please save me, before I fall

By Antionette Stephen



Chronic depression in an incarcerated environment takes a whole new meaning when coupled with guilt, shame and a sense of failure. Undiagnosed mental health disorders are a common collateral of the incarcerated experience. Those without foreknowledge of a clinical mental health issue or are as yet undiagnosed do not know to seek help and suffer needlessly with scant avenues of relief. Let us call to mind a prayer for those still struggling in such darkness.





## TRAPPED

I'm trapped in a faraway place  
A place with no escape.  
Forgetting what it's like to be free  
I have no life, only a guilty plea.

I got lost in a life of hustle  
Trying to survive the daily struggles  
I made a bad choice or two  
But I did what I had to do.

I'm now a prisoner bound by chains  
No one but myself to place the blame  
In here all we have is time  
It's much too late to try and rewind

As I sit waiting in this dreadful  
place This place of no escape  
As I lay here and begin to waste time  
I realize - I'm a prisoner trapped  
In my own mind...

*By Tara Buckner*



## Pensive Thoughts.....



### Dear Diary,

There are not angels where I fly,  
I see no future just dark skies  
I fear drowning in the sea of clouds needle in hand  
Falling from Heaven under loyal command

On Earth my world is black, bleak, and gray one foot in a  
once shallow grave

It grows deeper by the day I exist in the murky shadows, I  
am struck I can hear the moans and whispers before me,  
but I give zero fucks

In a poor man's paradise, I am not whole I am selfish, un-  
stable, grasping to keep my soul, I am fractures, broken,  
lonely, lost.

Once a pure lively person, nothing left to bare I have no  
sanctity, I am unholy  
Burnt and bruised, you don't even care  
Imagination no longer plays in Technicolor

A love war between heroes and villains  
Neither one will take me  
My body is not my own  
I listen for the gentle calling of my name  
I know no better, I am seduced into your game  
I have no courage, no more fight left,  
But I would die for you

It's all too much, no longer myself this I know is true  
Every waking moment I plea on my knees  
Drawn in by my favorite drug, my fatal disease  
Dairy this entry could be the end, my last  
My final words written on these pages, my past,  
I don't know for who or for why, but I continue on  
Might my dark secrets show an addict's life  
Long after I am gone

By Shonette St. Clair

## Anxiety

By Latonia Bellamy

An outcry for help but no one hears me  
My hearts burning  
Heads spinning and palms are sweaty

Tears are fallen down my face but I don't  
See them nor feel them

The taste of these salty tears lingers but  
I still don't see them nor feel them

My heart aches, its bleeding for  
Freedom, family, peace and joy

The gates , these four walls  
How much did they destroy?

How much did this destroy relationships  
With family, friends, parents and children?

I'm screaming but no one hears me  
Tears are fallen down my face but  
I don't see them nor feel them

The taste of these salty tears still lingers on  
My taste buds, but I still don't see them nor feel them.

I 'm aching and shaking on the inside  
Screaming **ANXIETY**

## Navigation

By Latonia Bellamy

For years mental health had a negative stigma  
Until the #MeToo movement ignited a trigger  
Women came forward and their voices were heard

Hidden assaults reflected, a mirror image  
The ones who were speaking was looking right at me seeking out the untold that remains.

Hidden from all to see  
But, to be honest with only me  
The reflection in the mirror is mine I see  
Shouting out to free me!

Free me from the one who torments my soul  
from the misery of counting years, months, and days until freedom arise.

Free me from the stress of today,  
Anxiety, PTSD, and disassociation has become my friends.

Free me from becoming remote, immobilized ,  
and allowing patterns and routines to keep me complacent in life.

Free me from the power dynamics that degrade one of originality and try to script one of dignity.



## The Cooking Corner

### No Bake Peanut Butter Oatmeal Cookies

Butter = (4 pats)

Oatmeal = (4 pkgs)

Frosted flakes or raisin bran = 1/2 bag

Honey or syrup = 5 spoon syrups or 5 spoon of honey

Peanut Butter = 2 huge spoons

Nuts = 1/2 bag or less

Get a big bowl melt 4 pats of butter. Prepare the Oatmeal. Crunch up the cereal so there no big flakes. Do the same with the nuts.

The nuts have be crunched up really good some big pieces are okay but if there are too many they won't ball-up right. If you get a plastic bag it's easier to mix it all together.

After everything is crushed up mixed all the dry ingredients together. Then mix all the dry ingredients together.

Then mix the honey and peanut Butter together and out it the mic 1 ½ minute just till it gets melted and easy to stir. You don't want it too hot or it will bum your hands.

If your dry stuff is in a plastic bag spreads it out as much as you can so you can pour the melted syrup/peanut butter over it.

Then you just keep moshing it together your hands are the easiest way. Until the honey/ peanut butter coats all the dry stuff.

Then you start making little balls If your balls aren't sticking like they should wet your hands a little with water and they should ball right up.

If it's still dry just add a little more Peanut Butter

Eat and enjoy !!



### Twix Cake

1 spoon of Nutella

1 box of graham crackers

1 sleeve of butter

5 spoons of sugar or syrup

10 creamers

2 Hersey bars

2 big bowl or pans

1 small bowl

In a big bowl, place 5 spoons of sugar or syrup and 5 creamers in microwave safe bowl and warm for 2 minutes and stir.

Repeat until you have a caramel sauce. Keep an eye on the sauce as it can boil and burn, so reduce the microwave time to 30 seconds after the first 2 minutes.

Crush the graham crackers– you can use your hands or any equipment that will help with you crush the graham crackers.

Melt the sleeve of butter in a small bowl. Gradually pour butter onto the graham crackers enough t saturate but not drown (wet sand texture). Press the mixture down into the bowl or pan evenly.

Pour the caramel on top of the crushed graham cracker mixture and rotate the pan/bowl so the caramel is evenly coats the graham cracker.

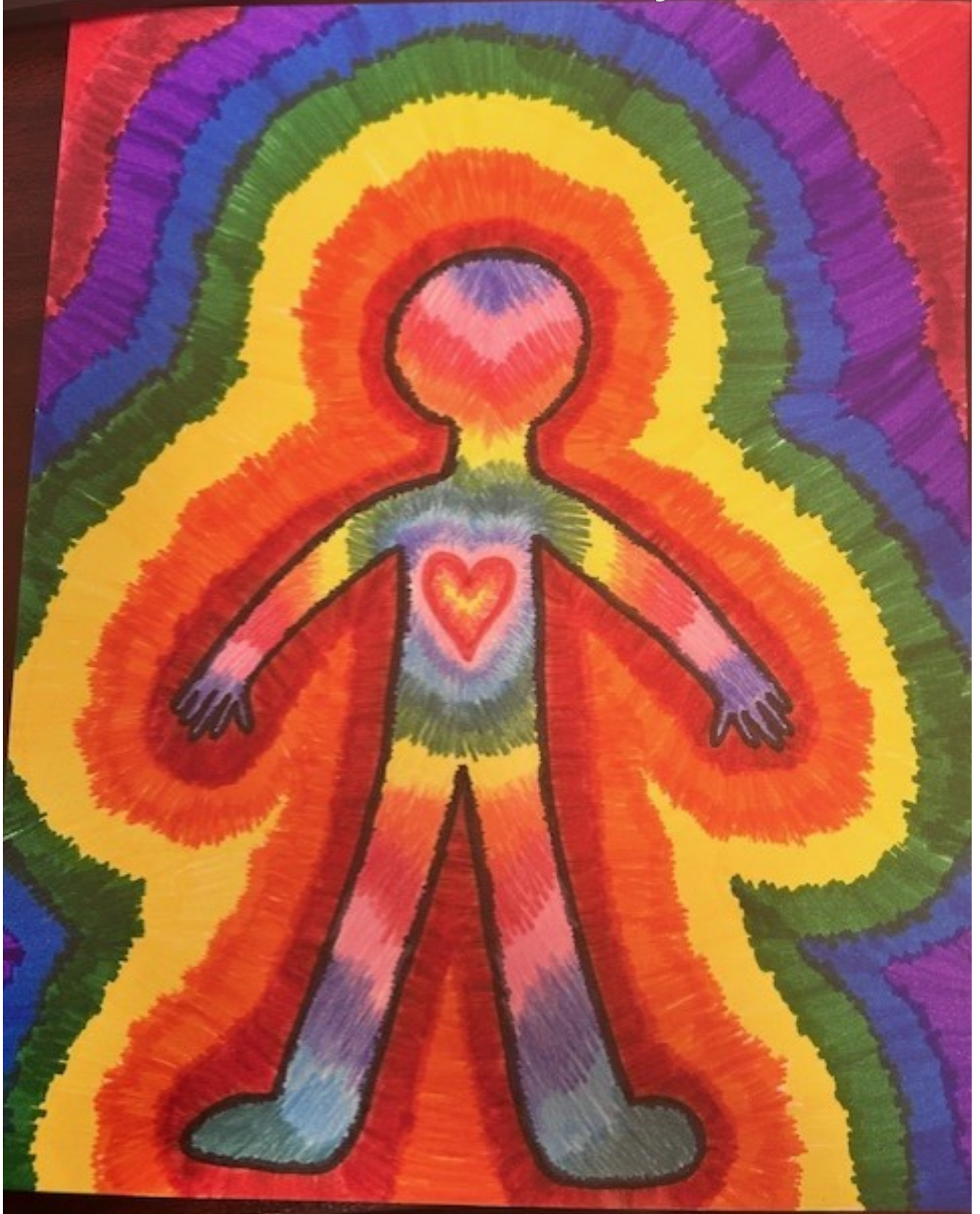
Place 2 Hershey bars, 5 creamers , and 1 spoonful of Nutella in the bowl with 2 syrup packets. Heat in the microwave for 45 seconds and stir.

Repeat it one more time. The ingredients should be melted and thick creamy so it is pourable on top of the caramel.

Place in the fridge for 30 minutes to 1 hours. Then Serve!!



**Art by Kameelah Kareem**





Coming in next issue . . . .

**New Initiatives.....**

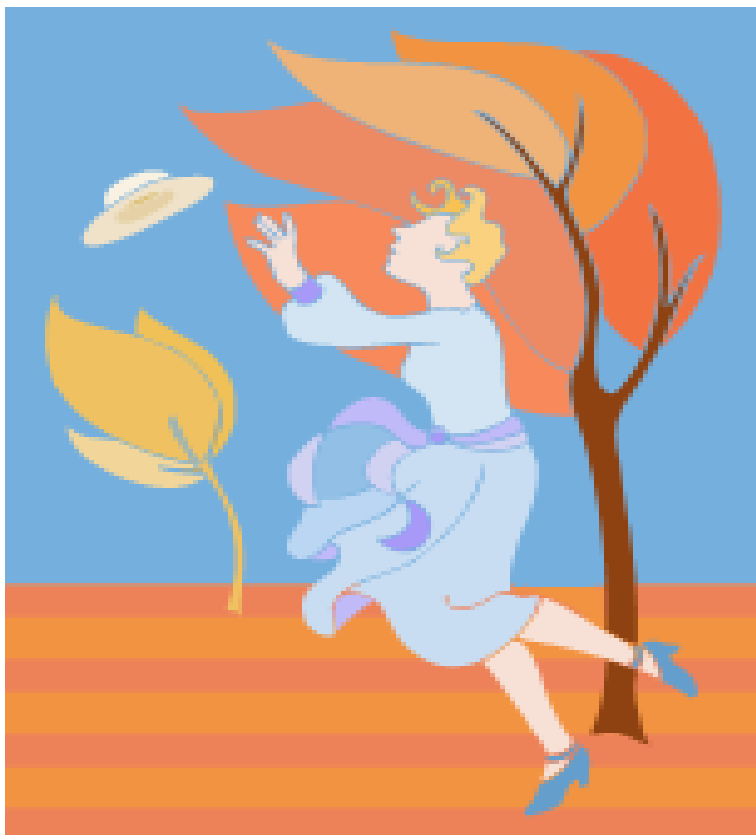
**New Ideas.....**

**And even more impacting and insightful articles. IP's, start brainstorming and writing! All our artistic geniuses start sketching and drawing! We look forward to receiving new submissions for the next issue !!!!**

One's dignity may be assaulted, vandalized and cruelly mocked, but it can never be taken away unless it is surrendered.

- Michael J.Fox

From the book: THINK POSSIBLE, Chicken Soup for the Soul



## BY EMCF FOR EMCF



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Thank you to all our contributors and friends who assisted in the making of this issue. We look forward to collaborating with you again.