

Rebuilding Families

The New York State Literary Center
<http://www.nyslc.org/>

In Partnership with

Rochester Broadway Theater League

Office of the Sheriff, County of Monroe
Monroe Correctional Facility

February Writing

I am a father, a husband, a truck driver.
I am a person with feelings.
Please don't think I am just passing by.

What I want to tell you my child, Kevin, is that life is like a roller coaster. There are a lot of ups and a lot of downs, and I want you to know that every human being on earth experiences some sense of depression and these are the downs. I want you to know the difference between highs and the false highs of drugs and alcohol that only cause pain and heartbreak.

Kevin, I want to warn you about peer pressure. Kids can be so cruel, and peer pressure is a devastating trial if you don't give in to your peers. I want you know, as your father, that any friends who give you peer pressure are really not your friends anyway.

Kevin, there is so much more to life than false highs and peer pressure, and I want to spend time with you and share what I have learned with you.

Love,
Dad

Eric

Today I am a father, a brother, a son, a friend, a partner,
an inmate number, a court docket.
Today I am man who is waiting to matter again.

Donny

Today I am moving forward.
Today I let go of my past.

Jonathan

The word never is a very strong word.
I will never
get back
the six months back that I lost with my son,
never.

Cliff

Life is a gift.
I was like a radio
unplugged to any outlet.
There was no life in me.
Hope now turns me from that lifeless past towards a future.
Hope plugs me back into life
through understanding
that a wise man fears and turns away from badness.
Once again I am alive.

Elie

Today I have a new understanding.
Today is my next step to tomorrow.

Anonymous

Today I am a life. I am not just passing by.
Today I breathe, I see,
today I am,
and I think of what might be.

James

Today I am grateful for a future.
Today I am preparing for tomorrow.

Anonymous

To My Mother

Can you forgive me for the things I have done,
like hiding my emotions and going on the run?
Can you forgive me for all of the pain?
There's a lot of stress, am I the one to blame?
Can you forgive me for all my mistakes?
As long as you forgive me I will do what it takes.
Can you forgive me for being mad?
Since God took you away I became so sad.
Can you forgive me?
I miss you.
Ma, ever since you left anger became my biggest issue.
I am sorry Mom.
Here is my goodbye.
Can you forgive me because I want to cry.

Tyreek

In broken English, nothing is as it seems.
Is it a foreign curse to me that I dream to make believe?
I see you picking at your threads, pulling at your seams.

I woke up bright, my eyes still green,
the ground still here beneath my feet,
but I still hear this broken English.
Am I just in disrepair, upon my once over I don't feel broken,
and I don't look it in the mirror.
But something's changed or not the same,
something is gone I can't replace.
I am still sort of hoping
to hear something that is true
or something I can use
besides this broken English.
I.J.

Today
I am a rose that grew from concrete.
Today I am free,
Today I remember me.
LaQuinta

I am the present
of my ancestors.
I am the fingerprints
of the thorns from slavery.
I am the steps of their footprints
and the hope of their glory.
LaQuinta

I am sitting here
taking in the information that I received
about Black History Month.

I am very intrigued by Langston Hughes,
and the world
really reading his work.
It has been a long time coming,
and I am glad it has arrived.

I think about how fortunate I am to know this.
As a child I was privileged to be part of one of his plays.
This had a very profound affect on me.
Priscilla

I would like my children to know that I love them and that I believe in them. I know I have made a lot of mistakes, but they were not one of them.

I would like my children to know that my goal is to write a book about our family so that I can share the experiences with my mother's and my father's families and how this influenced my way of thinking because regardless of the mistakes I have made I come from a very strict religious background. I think this should be told.

Priscilla

Today I sit back and reflect
on some of the most painful things in my life.
The whole of me begins to ache
because the pain I feel has been self-inflicted for a long time.
For a long time
I refused to take responsibility for the pain.
I always blamed others
for my self sabotaging ways.
But today I love myself.
Today I see myself as a miracle.
Today I no longer walk around hating myself.
Today I can taste the good things in my life.
Today I feel the touch of God,
and it chills me to the bone.

Priscilla

Today my head is clear.
I am ready to learn new things.
I am one day closer to my dreams.

Dontaya Kyles

I am free in my writing.
I am a poet.
I am a woman
writing my dreams.

Dontaya Kyles

Yesterday I was #354382. Today I am an empowered woman, a mother, a survivor, a teacher, a helper, a friend, a shoulder to cry on. I cannot change today's circumstances, but I can choose the best decisions available to me and embrace the modicum of control I do have. I am determined to break away from #354382 and become Kelly Ann Edwards Ferriera. I am me. I am a life.

Kelly Ann Edwards Ferriera

After today's discussion my entire foundation is shaking. I am angry about the way Black people were treated historically. I was raised in a racially biased family, and I as aware at a young age that everything I was taught was morally wrong. As the mother of bi-racial children I am very outspoken about injustice. I simply cannot imagine the horrors people experienced a mere fifty years ago. It hurts me to realize that my children now attend, out of necessity and subsequent to my current incarceration, one of the most racist high schools in upstate New York. This is earth shattering to me as I sit here today. I cannot adequately wrap my mind around the depths of emotion mothers endure as their children were lynched. We need to teach and learn history and tolerance.

Kelly Ann Edwards Ferriera

Today I have taken my power and my voice back. I am thirty years of age, and I have decided to shine light into the darkness of my soul. It will no longer be me who screams alone in the darkness.

Jennifer Taylor