

Rebuilding Families

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

In Partnership with

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The Writing

"Echoes of Incarceration" made me think of my daughter and the ways my being incarcerated are affecting her daily activity. I was really touched by what those young kids had to say they went through from their parents being in jail. The echoes the film left inside me are not to come back here and leave my daughter to feel and go through what those kids had to go through. My daughter thinks I am in school and I like it that way because jail is no place I want her to think it's okay to be.

J. H.

What captivated me about "Echoes of Incarceration" is how the kids felt about their parents being in prison. I thought of my own kids and what they must have felt when I came to jail. The film made me think of my choices and how they affect my kids.

My Children,

*As I lie in my bunk and look at the ceiling,
I miss you, I
miss you.
I can't shake this feeling.
I long to hug you and kiss your faces.
The distant memories seem to be from another
place. Just because I am locked in a cage longing for
your company, I feel rage.
I wish I could break these walls down.
I want to feel your arms around me.
When my time is done*

*I will have to prove to you that we can
be together and I break the chains of
incarceration. I can be your mother and
you will have my total concentration.*

N. H.

"Echoes of Incarceration" is incredible. Thank you for allowing us to become aware of this type of documentary. I am an incarcerated parent. I am the parent of 6 children, 3 girls and 3 boys. I am now pregnant with twins while I am incarcerated. My children do know I am incarcerated. My oldest is 20, my youngest 3. When my children come to visit me, they tell me every time that home is not the same. They could not imagine losing me. My son who is twelve wrote me a letter and wrote, "Mom, with you gone it's like something is missing like furniture." I thought it was funny because I buy furniture every 6 months.

*Roses are red, violets are blue,
I have six children, and I am behind bars.*

My children, I truly miss you.

*Roses are red, violets are blue,
I put my self in a situation to be taken away from you.*

*Roses are red, violets are blue,
I had another nightmare last night about not seeing you.*

*Roses are red, violets are blue, My
children you are in my heart.
I cannot forget you.*

T. L.

"Echoes of Incarceration" made me think about how my children feel about me being away. I, also, remembered going to see my uncle at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. The film brought back all of the things I tried to forget. I hated not being able to touch him because they thought somebody was going to sneak stuff in. It is bad enough to think about how inmates get treated but to treat families and friends the way they are treated is terrible. I think people should be able to hold their babies so they can bond with them. Seeing my uncle when he was at Sing Sing Correctional Facility made me cry every time and seeing him cry made things worse.

My Children,

*I am sorry I am unable to be there for you right now.
I just can imagine how you all are feeling about me being in jail.*

*I pray at night that when I return home all of you will never have to feel again
what you are feeling now.
I cry at night because of all of the pain I have caused you with
my not being there for you.
Don't for a split second ever think that I don't love you all.
My being in jail is the consequence I have to pay for the poor
choices I have made in my life. I love you all, and I will be home
with you where I belong soon.*

A. P.

What touched me was the boy describing his mother's release. The echoes the film left inside me are the feelings and emotions I think I will feel with my daughter when I am released on December 11, 2014.

"Echoes of Incarceration" made me shed tears because my baby had to do without me. She is so ready for me to come home. She asks me, "Mommy, can you tell the police to let you come home now." I have to say no I can't, and it hurts. When I walk out of this door in 50 days I don't ever want to come back and be separated from my daughter again.

I told my daughter I was in jail instead of lying to her. I told her because I don't want her to think lying is okay. I want her to know so we can grow from this when I get out and grow through this while I'm in here.

To My Daughter,

*There is so much I want to say to you, but
I am not sure if you will understand.
I know you miss me not being there to clean your
face or to hold your hand. I never planned to leave
you. Through these past months you were my
inspiration to stay strong, to stay focused, to move
along.
I know you love me beyond emotions and you
do not see any wrong in me. Most days get the
best of me because I have been away from you
for so long.
My heart cries for you.
I know you are safe where you are, but I just hate that
I missed your first day of Head Start. Every time I see
you you bring so much more to my life.
You don't care about all of the new shoes, clothes, you
just want me by your side.
My daughter, I am so sorry it took me so long to realize that
what's on the outside does not compare to what's inside.
You are everything to me.*

*I could never understand why God gave you to me
until I looked into your eyes and
saw me.*

C. P.

"Echoes of Incarceration" made me think about my situation. I am incarcerated. My mom was incarcerated, and as of now my father is incarcerated. The film leaves me to think about the way kids are treated when they come to visit their parents. I, also, believe that when you are a parent incarcerated when your child knows the child starts to act up and that leads the child on a path to incarceration.

To My Baby Boys,

Please never think I forgot about you. Stay strong and don't let my not being with you cause you to act up. I went wrong and used my mom's, your grandma's, and my dad's, your grandfather's, mistakes as reason to act out. As of right now I want to break this generational curse. I want you to learn from my mistakes. I don't want you to make the same mistakes as I did. I love you and please remember you have a purpose.

Desiree Walker

I am an incarcerated mother.

*My son does not know where I am. I
feel his pain in my chest when he asks
, "Where is my mommy?" I wonder if
he misses me.
I cannot talk to him to tell him that I miss him.
I am an incarcerated mother.*

*I kiss your picture every night, my son.
I pray to the Lord to protect you, my prince.
Are you mad at me?
I am so sorry my son.
Mommy loves you.*

I am an incarcerated mother.

K. W.

I can relate to "Echoes of Incarceration." My son was 18 when I went to jail. He and his friends decided to join a gang. I am so glad he got out within a couple of months. He misses me dearly, as does my 10-year-old daughter and my 30-year-old son. We are very close. I am all they have, and

through the grace of God they are together with the help of my sister. They saw me get arrested and were hurt and scared. I write letters to them and send colored pictures. I pray for them. It hurts me dearly when I hear the sadness in their voices and knowing that I cannot control what goes on outside.

Dear precious Teaha, Tommy, and Eddie,

I miss you so. I really wish I could be home, so I would not feel so all alone. You mean the world to me. Every night I get down on my knees and pray for you to be strong. I don't want to do wrong anymore. I love you. I just want you to know I miss you and love you with my whole heart and soul.

I W.

As a mother myself "Echoes of Incarceration" opened my eyes to the way our children are affected when parents are incarcerated. They go through mental abuse. They need to heal the loss of not being nurtured. Our children learn from us. What they learn from us they will teach their children. I think it is best not to hide anything from them no matter how bad it is. They need to hear the truth so they can know the truth.

*I am sorry I wasn't the mother you wanted me to be.
I always found the time
for the things that were ruining me.
Now I am getting myself together,
hoping and praying that I stay in your life.
I'd like to turn back the clock of time
to let you understand the fight within me.
The love I have for you is real
I just want to be a mother again
with your blessings in mine.*

N. W.