

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**

October 2014

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The Writing

"Echoes of Incarceration" made me think about how my 10 year old daughter feels while I am in jail and how she feels when people ask her where her dad is and how the whole family does time not just the person doing the time. Those of us doing the time need to be honest about what is going on.

*My daughter,
I am tired of being in jail.
I am so afraid I have failed at being a father
who you don't want to bother with.
I am so afraid to cry.
The next time I look in your eye
I want you to know I
am your dad,
and I am tired of being in jail*

B. C.

"Echoes of Incarceration" made me feel ashamed for being here, and until today I didn't know that my 9-year-old son is also doing time. Me, he, she, everyone I love is suffering. The months I will spend in here are time I will never be able to get back. It's gone. This is the first and last time I will be unavailable to my son. My sister did 4 years in prison, and it destroyed her kids' lives and my mother's relationship with her. When I get out I want to be the best father I can be.

Dear Son,

I am sorry I missed the last half of your football season. In order for us to take trips and move forward Daddy had to go away for a while. I promise I will never be away from you again as long as I live.

My son, I love you. You are all I have,

C. C.

"Echoes of Incarceration" really got me thinking about my kids. I thought about how my being incarcerated hurts them and leaves a void in their lives. I thought about my actions, and no matter how small, they can make a big impact on my kids' lives. It just kills me to know that my being in here could lead to destructive behavior by my kids.

As I watched the documentary, the words of the children of incarcerated parents echoed encouragement, and love, unconditional love. Seeing how much these kids still love their parents, unconditionally after their parents' missteps, and never turning their backs on their parents encouraged me that I can reconnect with my children, that it's not too late, and there is always hope.

*I didn't know how to tell you,
so I tried to hide it deep, deep down inside.
I was so ashamed to tell you,
so I figured it was better to lie.
When the truth came to light, I wish you had heard it from me.
That bond that was so strong between us
started to get weak.
I know I hurt you in ways I could not imagine.
As I sit back and think,
I could have prevented this from happening.
When you visit
even though you sit across from me,
not being able to hold you and kiss you,
I want to say I'm sorry.
Daddy loves you and misses you.
I promise you Honey,
the man that comes out will be better than the man who came in.*

T. D.

"Echoes of Incarceration" made me think about being a parent and being there for my kids and my loved ones. I am a parent, and I am in jail and my kids come to see me. They tell me they miss me and always wish that I am home. I never had a parent who was locked up. I am experiencing the same loss and feelings the kids in the film did because of my own kids.

D. E.

"Echoes of Incarceration" made me feel the burden I have left on my children. I have come to realize that my actions directly effect my children. I can't keep having these head-on collisions and expect to have no damage to my children.

*I sit in jail,
a shell of a man,
wondering what to say
for you to understand.
If only I could turn back ime,
My life would be different.
My actions were not those of a father.*

*Is it too late? Should I even bother?
You need to understand my child I love you.
I swear if my heart had eyes it would cry.*

D. G.

I think about my kids, about how I only get to see 2 of them regularly. I have 6 in all. The problem is during school hours the other 4 are at school. Not only that, most of the time I just want to touch my kids and my wife at times during the visit, and I am not allowed to. The system is unstable. It is bad to be an absent parent, yet if your kid comes to visit you, what are the chances he/she will follow in your footsteps? Worst is most of the parents who go to jail are in here because they committed some crime to take care of their family. I believe it is the poor who suffer the most, the ones whose income doesn't even take care of their needs. In the end the kids are the ones who are always in the middle.

*I've never been the type to quickly say I'm
sorry. I usually don't feel the need to.*

*My children,
I am sorry.
I am sorry for coming to jail.
Coming to jail is nothing new.
I've done a lot of things in my past.
Every time I say the same thing,
let this time be my last.*

*My children,
I am sorry.
What I did I did.*

I am sorry my children.

J. P.

As I watched "Echoes of Incarceration" my thoughts drifted to my son of course. I thought of not only what he is going through now, the loneliness and embarrassment I have caused him, but how this will effect him in the future if I continue along this path. I listened to the children in the film speak of their pain and anger while their parents were locked up. I just don't want my son to have

to go through that. I want my son to be able to be proud of me. I have been a single father for eight years now, since he was 1 year old. My son needs to see a good example of what a "man" is.

*My son as I look into your eyes
the pain start to come out.*

*The anger makes me cry,
and I have to hold in the shouts.*

*You have been pulled into Hell
through no fault of your own.*

*It was my job to protect you.
My failings show.*

Remember Daddy loves you.

*This isn't the first time,
but I want it to be the last.*

*I know you heard this last time,
and it may seem to you I am lying out of my ass.*

*I want you to believe in me,
and I know I need to build your trust.*

*I know I need to learn to believe in myself,
so that this isn't another bluff.*

Remember Daddy loves you,

*Remember you are my focus.
You are all that matters to me.
You deserve some peace
instead of a life in tatters.*

D. T.