

INSIDE OUT

A JOURNAL OF INCARCERATED THOUGHT

Change

By Zara the Great Mind

I am a Peer Facilitator here in the facility I am in right now. I work as an Inmate Program Aide, where my duties include assisting the counselors, so we say teacher's assistant. But on some "How High" shit, I always say I'm an assistant pimp.

Anyhow, going back too my facilitation work, I teach classes like A.R.T. (Aggression Replacement Training) and we be building, kicking some real shit, and I swear every time I tell someone "I ain't tryna sell no drugs when I go home," niggas always look at me crazy. Dudes really be angry with me, like I said "Colin Kapernick should cut his hair to get a job" or "All Lives Matter" or that stupid shit. I ain't on that type of time.

Why does my not wanting to live that life anymore offend you so much? I always get the

sellout vibe, but you have no problem with me selling out my family, leaving my woman and son out there to fend for themselves, and coming here to debate with you about stupidity. Shouldn't you be happy I don't want to sell drugs no more? More drugs for you to sell cause I ain't selling any.

I ain't trying to contribute to the destruction of my community anymore. Through my studies, I learned that drugs are designed to completely annihilate who-

2.3 million people in prison. I ain't trying to add onto those staggering numbers.

sever hands they fall upon. The "War on Drugs" conspiracy plays a major role in the Prison-Industrial Complex booming to the astronomical numbers they

hold now. 2.3 million people in prison. I ain't trying to add onto those staggering numbers.

A brother I associate with had so much time, he could lend everybody in your room a year and still have decades before he went home, calendars-they-ain't-even-make-yet time! The brother told me that when he got his time back on appeal, he was going to get a bunch of dudes to hustle for him. Not really give a fuck how they turn out, but just making sure he was good. Then he was gone.

After I endured the nonsense he was preaching, I asked him, "what about the kids you influencing to sell drugs, shoot niggas, probably lose their life defending the drug sales, for a boss who didn't tie their future in his endgame?" They weren't even a part of his master plan.

Continued on page 1.

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“Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”

-Leo Tolstoy

Written and Edited By:

Slice Billy, Rasaun Bullock, Keith Clarke,
Tyrone D. Douglas, K., Bruno Mamwalee,
Tyrone Massey, Cesar Rivera, Drako Sullivan,
Yohan Perez, Zara the Great Mind

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Inside Out welcomes correspondence from our readers. We reserve the right to edit all letters and submissions for clarity and length. Please direct all correspondence to:

**450 Lexington Avenue, P.O. Box 2517
New York, NY 10163**

LiveWriteNYC@gmail.com

www.livewrite.org

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He didn't respond, and he didn't have to. All that time he got and he didn't learn his lesson. He never learned. Therefore, he will not change.

In 2007, I knew this dude named H.O. who was selling bundles of heroin that he bought for \$50 cash to an elite group of white businessmen for \$450. 800% profit, too good to be true, right? I know! That same elite group of white men happened to be special agents for the Drug Enforcement Agency.

H.O.'s whole family got indicted over federal racketeering charges. When whoever wasn't swept up by the United States government went by H.O.'s home to see if he was okay, they discovered his apartment was completely untouched. He took nothing with him, only the clothes he had on his back.

His loved ones thought he vanished into thin air, but they'd soon find out that he signed a major deal with the D.E.A. They even threw in free housing in Ohio, witness protection. All he had to do was give up his whole family, his brothers and sisters to the prison system, and their kids to the foster care system.

I think about H.O., and then I think about the drug lord. The kingpin who rules his neighborhood with an iron fist, terrorizing the community, get down or lay down mentally. Selling poison to people in my society, people that Look. Just. Like. Me.

What you think our brothers from Little Africa in the 1920s would say about me? Our same brothers from Black Wall Street who practiced nepotism with black folk because at that time, “We were all we had.”

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Becoming Me

By Violet Bonner

“I’m going to need you to count down from 10 and take deep, slow breaths” was the last thing I heard before my entire world became pitch black. Have you ever had a dream so vivid that it was like a memory of a past experience? It was like it was happening right before my eyes. Like some weird episode of Twilight or something.

There I was at the tender age of 10, standing on top of my grandmother’s chest, where she stored all of her winter sweaters and my sister’s gown. I’m not sure what she had it for, but in my head, the dress was tailored for me. Atop my head was the most immaculate set of cluster curls I have ever seen, just one of many

of my grandmother’s signature hair pieces.

I had just touched up my make up, which only consisted of Bobbi Brown lip gloss and some QVC blush that no one found the time to use. As I grabbed the remote and turned the TV up to its maximum volume, as Beyoncé declared she was crazy in love, I knew from that point on that this is who I was.

I felt comfortable this way. I felt attractive this way. Nut I knew that it wasn’t realistic for me to go outside this way. Nobody was going to see me as “that girl” that I felt that I was.

From that day, I promised myself that I was going to live in my truth. I promised myself that no matter what name I

was being called, I would not answer if it wasn’t the preferred gender pronoun that I decided to use.

As my world became blank, I sat in darkness and envisioned the woman who I wanted to be. The minor surgery wasn’t a major factor in my mental state, but it was something to help me feel more secure in my skin.

“Congratulations, everything went beautifully” was the statement that woke me up. As I tried my best to adjust to the pain and the brightness of the recovery room, I felt an overwhelm-

ing feeling of accomplishment. There was a feeling of complete comfortability, and till this day, that is one experience that changed my life for the better. ■

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Echoes for the Soul

By Yohan Perez

Life is what you make it,
The World is ours for the taking.
When ya look around you'll see that most people
don't make it.

We was born with a ladder but usually
stop climbing after a few steps.
If ya right...Then who's Left?

I'm comfortably stuck where I'm at,
with no clue what's next.
Plus I don't even know I'm tripping,
Skates on but you couldn't tell me I was slipping.

In the hood lost, we going nowhere fast.
365 here is like dog years.
No wonder I'm only 30 but the mirror
showing gray hairs.
Most brothers that's 40 got grandkids.

Dudes walk around with 100's of dollars
in clothes and jewels on average.
And to add insult ro injury,
They live with their mom in the same
place they grew up.

How can you spend thousands in a year
and don't own shit.
Don't stack ish, and splurge on this.
Probably why the rich stay rich.

I once was blind and now
I see knowledge is King.

This food for thought, Snack so you know
it's time to eat.

It's 10% of what happens to you and 90%
of how you react.

How do we react to the struggles of poverty.
How do we act in the face of adversity.

The lack of unity in a community is what
makes it a ghetto.

But Together each achieves more.
Teamwork makes the Dream work,
then she twerk.

Money makes the world go round,
And if we ain't in this shit Together
then we all clowns!

So we must dream!
Together Each Achieves More
Homie that means TEAM!

The plantation psychosis we enslave ourselves,
Killa said it was whips and chains
Now I jump out the whip and I glitz in chains.
Mans things gotta change.

If you was born oppressed that's not your
mistake
but if you die oppressed without putting up a
fight, then your life's a waste.

We must take responsibility, we can't change the
circumstances but we can change ourselves.

Mangled Webs Pts. 1 & 2

By Rasaun Bullock

I never knew my dad, but I know me, and if for a second you think you're gonna get one over on me, try it and I'll see to it your next coupla thoughts start wit the phrase, "Dear God, please don't let me die."

And if you ever come to my mom's crib wit that B.S., I mean ever, they won't even find the dogs that'll feed on ya filthy carcass.

And as far as that long lost cousin junk go, you could forget it. All the family I have and need, I got. So if you don't mind, I'm busy.

Slam!—the vibration from da heavy oak door rattled the two-story walk-up and woke Daisean's moms, who was just as polite as her oldest and dearest child. All you could hear from her room was a slew of cuss words only a momma from da dirty south side of Chicago could muster. As usual, her performance brought da house down to a quiet only Helen Keller knows.

Clarence stood on the doorstep and just smiled. The sound of his first cousin Deisha's sweet bar room singing voice was all he could think of. Since he left for his first tour overseas...shoot. He could remember it like it was just last week. He and his day-one Justin had just finished running some cross-town goons outta their bricks over some missing AKs, and—

"I say, I say, Clarence, is that you?"

Clarence spun around and saw the biggest, oldest so-and-so he'd ever seen before. "Charlie, I...I...I mean Mr. Jones."

"Damn right, boy, and I told you I was gonna kill you da next time I see you for what you did to my damn daughter. Right?"

He was Chicago's most feared figurehead. No one ever knew him, but everyone knew about him.

His life was openly secret and he immersed his loved ones in a crowd of tried and true loyal associates. If you weren't a loyal descendent or one of his loyal associates, then you were nowhere near him. His daughter was the most precious thing in his world, and for that reason, he swore to bring pain on the one person he felt was responsible for his little girl's one and only incurable pain, the loss of her one true love. Justin, the child he knew from birth, and watched grow into a man to be reckoned with.

Clarence hesitantly began to inch back when the front door was snatched open and there stood the reigning Queen, cultivated by her dad to secretly rule at the top of the world, yet stay well grounded. Hidden, so to speak.

"Daddy, it's not his fault. My man took matters into his own hands. By himself. There was nothing anyone could have done. Now let's go inside, I'm cold as hell."

Hardcore rap music blaring out da basement's open door was the only noise Clarence heard in what he knew was a hi-tech structure disguised as a plain old regular building.

But we all know Mr. Jones. The first thing he did when he entered the house was to subtly and politely, yet firmly touch his daughter's elbow and ask, "May I speak with you for a moment, young lady?"

"Yes Daddy," was her only response to him as she took her favorite cousin's arm and led him into the dining room nook, the whole time shooting "Q" after "Q" at her cousin just like she always did. And all he could do, as always, was answer, answer, answer. When she took a breath, he looked over at Mr. Jones and said, "Is everything OK?"

To be continued.

Change ct'd.

By Zara the Great Mind

You think they'd call me a sellout for undermining my community? H.O. gave up his family to save his ass; I destroy my people to fatten my pockets. How the fuck are we different?

These are all key points in why I changed. Once I read I began to think, then thinking, I began to learn who I truly was. Mastering myself allowed me to become who I truly was, changing from who I was truly not.

Why do we link changing with going soft? Four years ago, I was placed in a super segregation lockdown cell known as isolation. The situation was bad and my only escape was talking to a brother who was sitting in a cell next to mine through the ventilation. The brother who gave me peace through the vent probably would have given me havoc in person, or

would have been on the receiving end of it.

However, we kicked it. He shared with me how he wanted to leave the Game alone, but he didn't want to be looked at as a square.

Being from the Hunt's Point section of the South Bronx—meaning I seen a thing or two about pimping, playing, and macking—I had to give him the origin of the word "square." All a square is, is some-

one who's not in the Game. Nothing more, nothing less. Pimps would call other men squares to deter their female companions from sparking interest in them. These men weren't in, "they got no fast money, they did-

n't live the fast life," so they were labeled squares.

A square is someone who walks the straight line. Eventually, he'll end up in a square. What do four lines make?

I told him squares are swaggy too. LeBron James, Diddy, a lot of brothers we idolize are squares. Squares are winning! Before we parted ways, he stated that I taught him to see things clearly, and for that, he changed.

Muhammad Ali once said, "The man who views the world at 50 the same as he did at 20 has wasted 30 years of his life." What would make someone stay the same for that long? Only the unlearned shall stay the same while we advance. Change. ■

Why do we link changing with going soft?

The brother who gave me peace through the vent probably would have given me havoc in person.

This is Why I Write By Drako Sullivan

This is why I write; you see, the pen is my medicine, and writing is my therapy. It is the wind beneath my wings, strong enough to set me free. With one stroke, I can travel the globe and with two strokes I can hear stories untold. Writing has done miracles to reveal what my third eye holds. With it I can express my pains or rejoice my happiness. I can note my deepest regrets or record my greatest accomplishments. I can speak my peace or convey my sincere apologies. It has done wonders for me! The pen is my medicine and writing is my therapy!

Eulogy

By Keith Clarke

How many will attend
My farewell ceremony

I'll be dressed
In all my best
Laid back in my box
Cool as a polar cap

As what I don't know
But I'll be back

To my family don't
Mourn me, please
Celebrate even the lows
of my life's story

Because even then
as long as I had paper
and pen
I lived

Thru you sometimes
Thru the hells of a cell
6 minutes on the phone
time.

Momma and Pappy
Don't claim blame
Ever at no time

You raised me right
I went left.
But the fault is
All mine.

Please never doubt
You are the reason
My sun shined.

If you're not here to
Hear this
I tell you face to face
Cause I'm homebound

Freed from the madness
And gloom,
This may sound wrong and
Even off tune

To all else in the room
I hope to see you
Soon.

Quotations

Curated by Slice Billy

"Happiness is good health
and a bad memory."

-Ingrid Bergman

"Friends may come and go,
but enemies accumulate."

-Thomas Jones

"I never miss a chance
to have sex or appear
on television."

-Gore Vidal

"Sanity is madness
put to good uses."

-George Santayana

"Always do right—this
will gratify some and
astonish the rest."

-Mark Twain

"In America, anybody can
be president. That's one
of the risks you take."

-Adlai Stevenson

"Copy from one, it's
plagiarism; copy from
two, it's research."

-Wilson Mizner

"Every day I get up and look
through the Forbes list of the
richest people in America. If
I'm not there, I go to work."

-Robert Orben

Congratulations to our contest winner and finalists!

Winner: "Becoming Me" by Violet Bonner

Finalist: "Mangled Webs" by Rasaun Bullock

Finalist "Can you hear me lord?" by Maurice Best

Finalist: "Eulogy" by Keith Clark

Finalist: "Change" by Zara the Great Mind

Awakening

By Tyrone D. Douglas

When I was a child, I me. My awakening came so fast, I
changed into a teenager. When I didn't know what to do.

When I was a teenager, I changed into an
adult. When I was an adult, I be-
came who I thought I should be.
But as time passed and seasons
went, I found myself awaken.

The adult I was, was then
challenged by one thing. That
adult was challenged by you, you
were the reason for awakening

So I prayed and prayed, I
prayed to God for a simpler an-
swer. I prayed for him to tell me
what I should do to move for-
ward.

God took his patience and
knowledge and love, he then an-
swered my prayers with this—

You must change! ■

Can you hear me lord? By Maurice Best

Can you hear me lord, I been calling on your name.

I need you to come along and take away my pain.

I'm so lonely inside and I hide it every day.

Please Father come ease my pain.

I'm tired of the games, I even try to change.

I don't even gang bang or want money or fame.

When will my time come when you can call me home.

Because I can't live this way, I've become so numb.

Blind to the facts that I used to call you when in need.

I am so sorry for the greed.

But can you hear me lord I am calling your name.