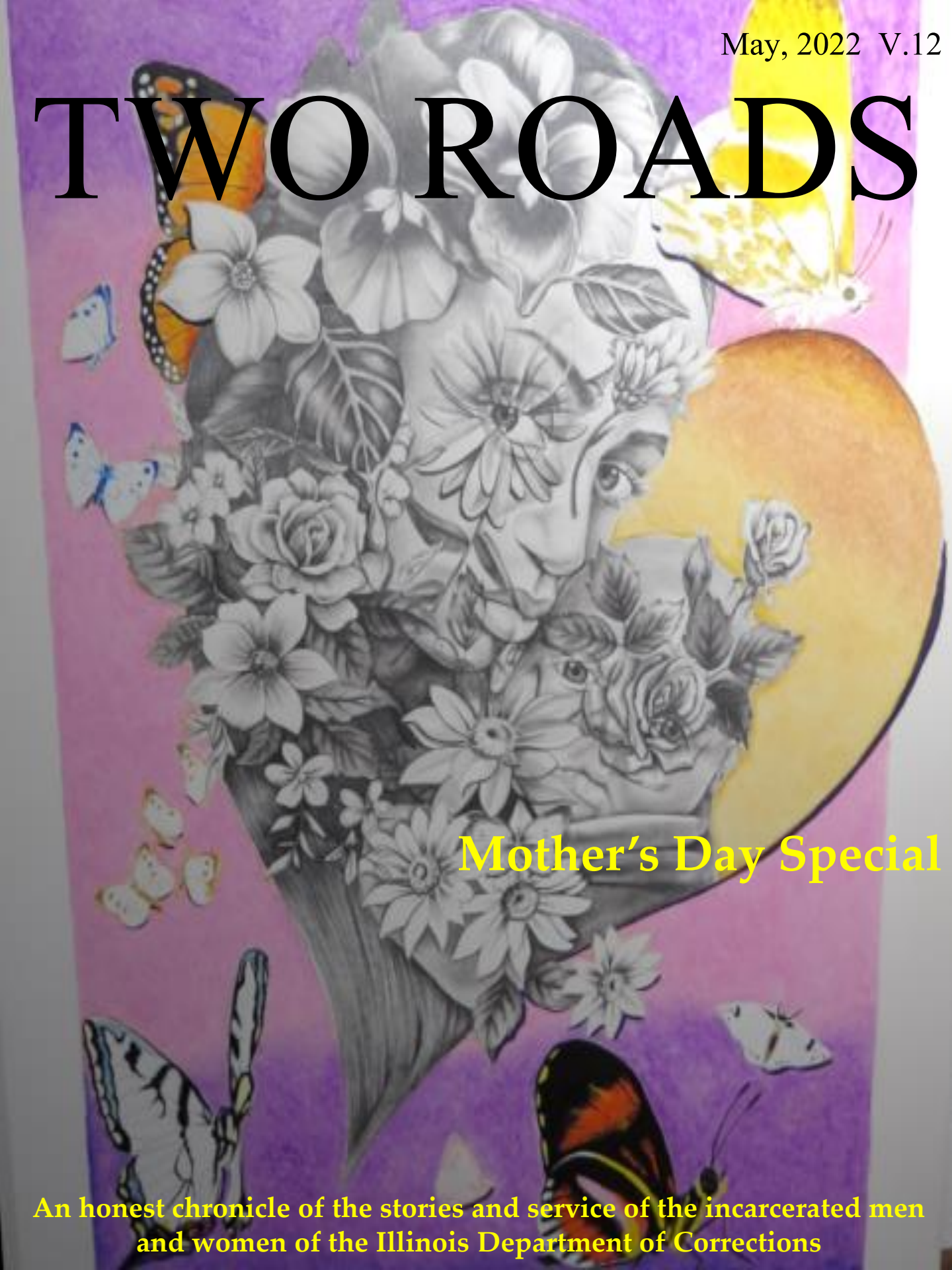
May, 2022 V.12

TWO ROADS



Mother's Day Special

An honest chronicle of the stories and service of the incarcerated men and women of the Illinois Department of Corrections

Two Roads Mission Statement

"We are committed to empowering those most impacted by harmful systems to become servant leaders and agents of change. Using the connecting, restorative power of stories, we hope to do our small part in bringing us all together to overcome societal ills such as violence, poverty and mass incarceration."

TWO ROADS

Mothers Day Special

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TWO ROADS

Two Roads House Artist

Charles Murray

Publisher's Letter

Jim Estes

This magazine, *Two Roads V.12*, and the people who brought it to life are special. I am off work, at home on disability as I receive treatment for leukemia. The fact that *Two Roads* forges on without me, under the guidance of the excellent Penny Rowan, Nicholas Crayton and Leondus Carter has profound meaning for me.

It was never about me or Ricky Hamilton or Two Roads' previous generations of writers and staff. We were just vessels for an idea. Two Roads is about the thoughts and spirit of the incarcerated people of Illinois, about the idea of Restorative Justice. About the fact that this great idea catches us all on fire. This magazine is proof.

Our theme for V.12, "Mothers" is the first theme we've visited twice. This matters. Undeterred by our previous "Mothers Edition", our new Two Roads generation wanted to explore their own take on moms.

Our women writers explore their experience of motherhood and reflect on their own Mothers. We all recognize the primeval power Mothers possess.

Their wisdom, unshakeable love and the fact they are the center of our families, the touchstone and witness of our lives. Our Mother's easy grace feels as if it needs to be explored and honored endlessly."

Letter from the Editor

Nicholas Crayton

I actually wrote this last year for mother's day but I only shared it with a few. I believe that being in this position, it is my responsibility to share this with all mothers, **especially those of you that are incarcerated**. Geography does not take motherhood away from you nor does your crime absolve you of your duties. You have chosen to take on a position that is so profoundly important in this world that those of us on the outside cannot possibly fathom what you all endure. As a mother, you are the one that binds the family together. It is through your love that we are encouraged to go on and face the world that challenges us .

I remember being about 14 years old and I had gotten into trouble at school, my mother came to speak to the Dean and after he showed her the cigarettes that I'd gotten caught with, she looked at him with confidence and said, "My son is going to make mistakes and he will deal with the consequences of his choices, but understand this, my son will be a positive black man if I have to die for him to be so!" I have never forgotten that and my mother vaguely remembers the conversation, but for me it stands **testament** as to just how much that she believed in her son's path. That is one of the reasons why as a man I feel as though it is my duty to represent myself where my mother will be proud to say "That is my son". As sons and daughters, many of us grow up in single mother households and we never take into account the **tremendous responsibility** that our mothers go through just to give us life. They give up so much for us and ask for nothing more than for us to be good children.

Ask yourself this, when was the last time that you simply told your mother, "Thank you", or "I just want you to know that I appreciate you". Seems odd? **Only because we don't normalize this practice**. This is my dedication to Mothers wherever they are.

Letter from the Editor -2

Nicholas Crayton (2)

A Plea to Mothers

As a man who has failed in his duties and responsibilities as a son, brother, nephew, and friend, I stand humbled in realizing the powerful and effluent effect that Mothers hold upon all of us.

You, Dear Mothers, are truly the Creators of everything that makes us men. Not the failed ideas that we attempt to mask as our identity, but the design behind our purpose in this world.

You, Beloved Mothers, clothe us with your love and secure us with your heart. Without you, we cannot be, and without you, we do not exist.

You, Elegant Mothers, give to us when you have nothing to give and you sacrifice for us when we do not deserve it. You only ask that we be good men and share with the world what you have given to us.

The radiant splendor that is Motherhood cannot truly be understood by men, but being a recipient of your care and love, allows us to recognize and appreciate your true value.

Please forgive us for anything that we have done to cause pain, harm, or disrespect.

Now…I hear you.

Now…I understand.

And now…I truly know what it means to love…

…because of you.

Thank you for being who you are.

Unconditional Love

Luis Diaz

It is an honor to have been asked to write for our Mother's Day edition. I feel that we tend to take for granted the impact that Mothers have in this world. Not because we don't care for them, but because a Mother's love for her offspring comes so effortlessly that we don't often take the time to analyze its greatness. My mother has dedicated her entire life to her children, even to a fault at times. My mother's love for me knows no borders, she has always loved me unconditionally and in her eyes I will always be that tiny creature she held in her arms many years ago. We need to do a better job of honoring these great women who shape our lives, who often go to the pits of hell for us. I know that up to now I have failed at reciprocating my mother's unconditional love and dedication to me.

One of the most vivid memories that I have is the terrified look on her face as she finally was able to see me in the Audy Home days after my arrest. I can't imagine what she had been through leading up to that visit, not knowing anything about me other than for the cops telling her that her child had murdered someone.

Something changed in her that day, and she has never been able to recover from it. The day I got locked up a part of her got locked up with me. Twenty-three years later she still carries the burden of my actions on her shoulders. On countless occasions throughout the years while talking with her she cries for no reason, but I know it is because

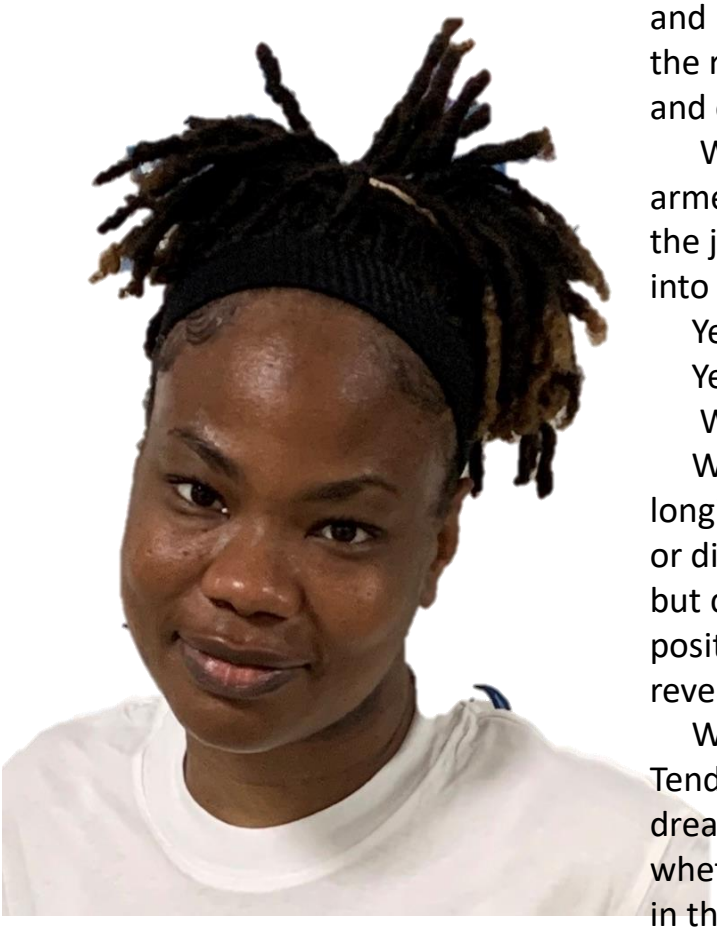
Unconditional Love

Luis Diaz – (2)

of me, because she still hurts for me. Throughout these years many people came and went, and many moved on with their lives, however my mother continues to suffer with me, her unconditional love for me won't allow her to move on. Being close to the door I pray for the opportunity to come home and make her days as bright as possible. If I may offer any of you a piece of advise, don't take those great women in your life for granted. A mother's love knows no limits, and has no expiration date.

To Be a Mother

Erika Ray



To be a mother is to be alive
and unbroken,
the redemption of historical failures
and oppressions of women.
We drape our babies in embryonic fluid
armed with two heart beats,
the joining of two souls ,
into one life force.
Yes! I am Alive!
Yes! I am Alive!
We dare say that
We are the Earth,
longing not for societal norms,
or dividing colors that men see,
but courageously holding our birthing
positions,
revealing the ancient power of women.
We are the Earth, breastfeeding and
Tending to the animations of ancestral
dreams,
whether there is weeping or laughter
in the night, we hear the whispers of our
children,
Mother-Ummi-Madre-Nne-Uwa-Khaw
Khaw-Mother, Mother Earth

To Be a Mother

Erika Ray (2)

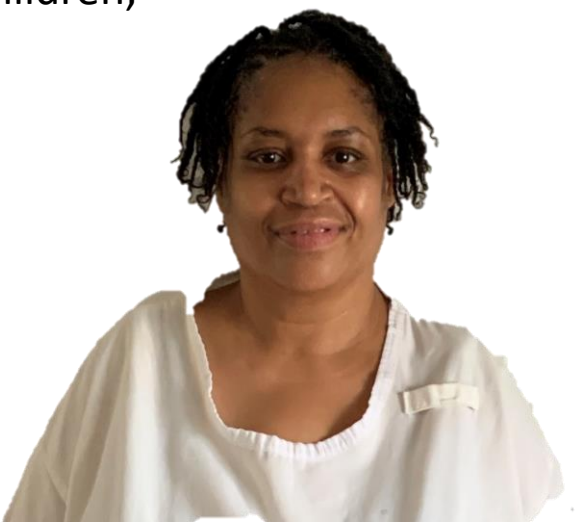
We pull forward the mysteries of unconditional love,
the love that intentionally pushes our young Into the passions that they dream to see,
wiping tears away when they meet the disappointments of this life.
We fearlessly face the tenacity of hate reminding them that they are worthy,
that they hold value,
that they matter,
We are the Earth,
Mother's Earth,
Challenging systemic oppressions that reach for our children.
We are the Earth,
Mother's Earth,
resisting those that would have a new generation of the #MeToo Movement
To be a mother is to be alive.
We are the Earth,
Mother's Earth
Creators of laughter and lifelong memories, We push off the meaning of impossibility.

And march to the rhythm with the Mothers of the movement,
resistant to any abuser,
builders of the revolution,
keepers of the genesis,
the composition of our children,
it starts out a whisper,
then louder they speak.
We need our . . . Mothers
Ummi-Madre-Nne-Uwa-Khaw Khaw-Mothers,
We are the Earth,
giving our love in the name of all good things,
regardless of the pain or things unseen
We are the Earth,
Mother's Earth
unbroken, becauseTo be a mother is to be alive.

Carlos De Santiago

Happy Mothers Day

Andrea Brown



This is to the women who've raised children,
To the women who paved a way,
To the women who are team-builders,
To the women who are flame-throwers.
This is to the women who have risen
Like the phoenix,
Who shine like the sun,
Who speak wisdom to the nation,
The women with patience,
The women of greatness.
This is to the women of the struggle,
The women of success.
This is to the mothers of our nation,
which our lives have been blessed with.
Happy Mother's Day to the mothers who are
also fathers.
Shine bright like a diamond and continue
to shape our nation of women and men into strong
foundations.

Luis Diaz

Mothers Day

Byron Jones

To become the man I am today, no one has encouraged, inspired, influenced, and cared about me more than my mother. Since I was old enough to comprehend the meaning of friendship my mother has always been my best friend. Growing up my mother was a school teacher and eventually retired as one. Education was very important to her so as an adolescent I excelled at school. Whenever, I struggled with a subject or ran into a problem that was perplexing, she taught me how to conquer it with the appropriate solution. But that help and guidance did not stop with school. It was more prevalent as I began my journey into manhood.

While our household was not the best due to a lack of emotional stability the one place behind those doors where we found peace was with each other. My mother instilled all the ethics, morals, and values I possess within me today, not just by her verbally teaching me but more importantly through her actions. I remember one time coming from school with my mom I wanted some pancakes(loved pancakes), and she didn't really have the money to spare, to afford me the luxury of eating at the restaurant. But she bought them anyway and didn't get herself anything. As I ate those pancakes she looked at me with a smile on her face, as I had one plastered on mine as well because ultimately, her goal was to make me happy.

Furthermore, she taught me the true meaning of strength, in which being strong does not mean you cannot have moments of weakness. She treated people the way she wanted to be treated. And with that, stressed to not let what you are going through affect the way you treat others. I saw my mother cry but never saw my mother get angry or raise her voice. Even when she will be going through pain, whether it is health wise, or emotionally she will approach you with a smile. Through her actions she was teaching me integrity, empathy, and compassion. So at a young age she was equipping me with core principles that would come full circle. Her teachings were always present even as I began to indulge in negative behavior.

Mothers Day

Byron Jones (2)

So because of her I treated the people I interacted with, with a great deal of respect, especially women. However I broke my mothers heart when I came to prison because she never envisioned this for my life.

Once incarcerated, my mother did not miss a court date, or visit. I constantly seen the hurt I caused in her face but she smiled through it, continued to give me hope, support, and encouragement that everything will be ok. As a result, I began tapping into that potential she knew I possessed and started understanding who I was at the core; a positive, ambitious Selfless, intelligent man full of compassion. A REFLECTION of her. I started setting goals for myself and obtained my Associates degree, Certification in Construction and Optometry. Every time I accomplished something, whether Big or small, she would say **' I am so Proud of you**', and hearing those words inspired me to continue elevating. I had become the man her heart desired me to be. I finally gave her reason to genuinely smile without any pain involved.

Then the most excruciating pain I could ever experience became my reality. On March 6th, 2018 my Mother became an Angel in Heaven. I had to figure out a way to make it through this loss and respond in a way that would continue to make her proud. I had to mirror my mother with a positive perspective through a bad situation. So today, even though my mother is no longer with me physically, she is the biggest influence I have to keep me motivated. Everyday I wake up with a Purpose. A Purpose to be respectful, honest, kind, and true to myself at all times. Walk out of these gates better than I came in; self-fulfilled with a mission to leave an everlasting imprint on this world by creating a LEGACY that others can follow. Praying my actions motivate, encourage, and inspire others to be the best version of themselves just as my mother did for me her entire life.

A Real Mother

Tamilyn Robertson

A Real Mother

The Oxford New Desk Dictionary and Thesaurus defines mother as:
"1.) female parent
2.) quality or condition; etc. that gives rise to another; give birth to."
The Webster's All-In-One Dictionary and Thesaurus defines mother as:
"1.) female parent.
2.) the superior of a religious community of women.
3.) mother to give birth to; also produce; to care for or protect like a mother".

Yes, we women conceive the seed of the male sperm that intertwines with our juices and creates a life that eventually we women bear. But a true mother is not just a female gender. A mother could be a man or even a wild animal.
I believe that a true mother is one who loves unconditionally and accepts you and all your flaws. A true mom doesn't judge, but guides and encourages a child to be the best that he or she can be. A real mom is secure within themselves and allows one to grow into oneself through pure openness.
Moms do not stunt their children by telling them what they can't do. But allow a child to blossom into a magnificent individual.

See when raising an individual, we as mothers should not put labels on our children or think that we know what is best. We should allow the children to express and come into their own self-worth.

A Real Mother

Tamilyn Robertson (2)

It is great to want your child to be a doctor, lawyer, or even the President of the United States. But how often do we stop and listen and ask the child what they want to do? Or encourage them to just be the best that they can be in that moment.

I say all of that because my mom was a pusher. She chose a lot of great things for me. But today I know I should have chosen my direction and my mother should have been in the wings just to guide me.

We mothers of the world do not come with instructions. But if we have unconditional love for our children, they will become beautiful, intelligent individuals who will love and respect themselves.

So, to all mothers just know that if you are trying to do your best our children are watching us.

Please, if nothing else, let's always love on the babies so they can love on themselves and be the best they can be.

Momma, I need you still

Sara Brannon

As a child I cried for Momma
anytime I was hurting.
No matter who or what hurt me,
Momma was who was called upon.

As a teenager with my heart broken,
numerous times tears soaking her clothes,
At times making Momma late for work.

Into adulthood though not always agreed.
Momma still did all she could taking care of me.
Years went on with Momma by my side.
Even when I made her mad, her love never died.

Still today I cry for Momma when in pain,
her words still a guide to me
her endless love still surrounding me,
though she is in heaven so very far away.

Through It All

Jariel Vega

For better or worse, you've been a blessing and a curse,
You are my Heaven and my earth, I guess it all began at birth,
Remember times when it got hard, I seen the scarring on your arm, it left a scar inside my heart, despite it all, you gave your all, and through it all, you did it all.
I seen her going through withdrawals, I seen an addict give up drugs cause she didn't want to see me starve, because a mother's love is special, you see rubble, she sees stars, you see trouble, she sees promise, through the struggle, she sees the strongest.
Life is always hard to gauge when people rarely come to stay, a girl can always be replaced, but no one takes your mother's place.

Mothers Day Shout Out

Manuel Arevalo

Here I find myself humbled to give my perspective on a subject near and dear to make sure that I grew into a respectable and well-mannered man. My mother is everything to me. She was, for most of my life both mother, and father. For as long as I can remember, I've sent her both mother's and father's day cards. She appreciates the fact that I acknowledge her dedication to her number one job raising my two siblings and me.

Looking back on life, I now fully understand the gravity of what she was facing alone. The sacrifices she had to make in order to ensure that my siblings and I had some kind of normal upbringing us something I admire about her. She would work two jobs, clean houses, wash and iron peoples clothes, cook for events and landscape, all in an effort to make ends meet. This woman was and still is a super hustler. Do not get me wrong she didn't allow us to sit on the side lines and do nothing, she put my younger brother and myself to work as well. From as far back as I can remember she had us putting in work with her. When she was at her main job, I was washing people's clothes and ironing.

Mothers Day Shout Out

Manuel Arevalo (2)

At 9 years old she had already taught me how to starch creases into pants and shirts, not only that, but I could mow and weed eat a yard by myself, and prep foods. What I didn't know at the time was she was teaching me vital life skills that would stick with me forever. She was my role model and set the bar of what it means to put in hard work. Nothing would get in her way when it came to lacing up her shoes and literally creating revenue to provide for the family.

She struggles with the fact that I'm incarcerated right now. She is hard on herself and she thinks that if she had the means to move us out of the hood then I wouldn't be in here right now. I can only imagine what it feels like to have a child in prison, or not with you. I have two boys and two girls, and I miss them every single day. I tell Mom that it's not her fault that I made the choices that had led to my current situation. They were my dumb choices; I fought the law, and the law won, plain and simple. What has helped her with the guilt that she feels with me being in here is everything that I have done to prepare myself with a successful re-entry.

When I speak with her and share my accomplishments, she tells me, "That's good son, you have always been smart." I always throw in, " Ma this tenacity to be great comes from you; don't you know that a fierce lioness molded me?" It's the truth for a lot of men and boys in this country. We have come to a point where there is an absence of men in households across America. It holds true that the Moms of the world are the backbone of the family dynamic, I know that it is true for me. I will be out soon, a couple of days after Mothers Day this year, and the one thing that I have to do is succeed at a hog level to wipe away the guilt that she feels with me being incarcerated. Thank you Moms for letting me share, God bless and God speed.

Two Roads Team

MASTHEAD

TWO ROADS

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