

UNLOCKING THE PRISON DOORS

Before we can begin anew, we must be ready to surrender, much like the old saying illustrates - You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink. I can expose you to the power of choice, but I can't make you choose. Only you can make the choice. You determine your destiny. It's important that you clearly understand that if you remain on the same destructive path in life, you are guaranteed that the results will not be different. Life will continue to deal you the same old hand. Ultimately, there are no exceptions! The consequences for living a life of crime are costly. Initially, you may appear to be getting ahead, but a life of crime will always cost you more than what you have gained. In fact, you will pay double tomorrow for what you gain today. It's not worth it! Think about this honestly: How much did you truly gain? How much did you lose? Now ask yourself the question: Was it worth it?

I would like to share a poem I wrote that I believe many inmates can identify with. The poem urges us to recall our past, and to reflect on the high price we have paid for our misjudgments:

I Surrender – A Prisoner's Cry

By Jamila T. Davis

*There comes a point in our lives when enough becomes enough!
When constant troubles arise, and life is way too rough.*

*Like a bomb that drops, all hell breaks loose, without a person
in sight to give us a boost.*

*All our poor judgments backfire in our face, and those who we
trusted become informants in our case.*

*Everything we try begins to quickly fail, surrounded by these
cinder blocks, in our new home we call jail.*

*On our bunks we stop and think, "How in the world did we land
here?" That's when our problems come to light, causing
pain too great to bear.*

*Some of us started off as that sweet innocent child.
She had two ponytails, big fat cheeks and an irresistible smile.
One day she was lured by someone she thought she could trust,
Who snatched away her youth as his hands fondled her bust.
The shame never left, the reproach settled in.
Next thing she knows she's caught up in a lifestyle of sin.
Then there're those of us who started off fine, who lived in a nice
house, whose parents were kind.
Things were great, she's headed for success! Then she met her
love, that's when her life turned into a mess.
Blinded by love, she couldn't see, had no clue this kind of love
would ruin her destiny.
Then there's one who struggled from the day of her birth,
With daddy in jail and momma on crack, since she entered this
place called "Earth."
There were many nights the cupboard was bare, she had no
food to eat.
In a quest to survive she sought love, now she rocks designer
shoes on her feet.
Her love had the money rolling in, but as a drug dealer's girl,
her new problems begin.
When the troubles came many of us tried to escape, looking for
the solutions to bypass the yellow tape.
She started with weed and it put her at ease.
But one day she discovered the weed would no longer please.
Then she tried coke, then crack, then dope.
When that didn't work she lost her hope.
Whatever it was we were all sold out!
For a moment no struggles, no worries, no doubts.
Then like a whirlwind, the storms began to come:
The things we did we thought were wise, turned out to be so
dumb.*

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*In the storm we learned so much, no longer blind to life.
We learned that love wasn't love at all when it stabbed us like
a knife.*

*Where are all our friends who were around when everything
was up?*

*They're out seeking a free ride; who'll be next to fill their cup?
Things aren't what they seem to be. What we thought was an
escape, became a tragedy.*

We found out in the end we only have our self.

*Some of us are left beat down and robbed, HIV done stole our
health.*

*Bad choices and poor decisions led us to this very place. And on
top of all that misery, now we got this case.*

*There's got to be another way. Things can't stay like this! Left
inside this lonely place, our families greatly missed.*

Pushed so hard against the walls, depression has us bound.

It is not until we get to this place that true help can be found.

Are you tired of running in circles?

Are you tired of the hurt and pain?

*Are you finally convinced you must surrender because life will
never change?*

What about the kids you left behind?

Is it fair to them, that they, too, must do this time?

*What about the others who hurt because of our pain? Will you
change for them or will you stay the same?*

It's time to make a choice; is enough, enough?

Are you ready to release the shackles and take off the handcuffs?

*Are you ready for a brand new life? Where you can be a mother,
a friend and a wife!*

*Are you ready to achieve your dreams, without having to watch
your back? When life can finally be filled with plenty and we
no longer suffer lack!*

You can have it, it's your choice! You can sign the agreement with your voice!

I surrender, I surrender, is all you have to say. That's when help will come your way.

Are you ready to follow me now, down this road called change? I promise, if you surrender today, your life won't be the same.

Open your mouth and throw up your hands.

With your voice release the shackles and bands.

There's nothing left but for us to say, "I give up this old life, I surrender today!"

Many of us have been in denial, which has caused us to stagnate, trapped in the same place. We don't want to admit our shortcomings, so we live a lie. We are covered with masks of deception, acting as if life is fine and everything is okay. We hide behind people, places and things and we use them to justify who and what we are. If we would admit the truth, which is hidden deep down, we'd see we are empty and lonely, caught in a high-speed pursuit for fulfillment. In reality, we are on a path of self-destruction. While we search outwardly for fulfillment, we remain unaware that the solution lies within.

For example, many of us have sought men, believing – and convinced - that our fulfillment lies with one of them. "Once I find the right man, he will complete me, and my life will be good," we say. Others turn to drugs, thinking they will provide our sustenance. There are those who pursue money, saying, "Once I get enough, I'll be okay, because money is surely the solution that will take my problems away." On this high-speed pursuit we've been racing through life, only to hit these cement walls called "prison." A place none of us ever wanted to be in. We did not want to start the next chapter of our lives here.