

Messages from the Mound



In 2007, I began my prison ministry where I facilitated my Relationship First Aid spiritual based personal development classes at Mound Correctional Facility in Detroit. After Mound closed in 2012, I continued to communicate with the inmates through newsletters, birthday cards and attending/speaking at events at various facilities. It is suspected that the facility got its name because of the many ancient mounds that were found all over Detroit, and I believe the most concentrated and/largest ones

were along what is now known as Mound Rd.

"Messages from the Mound" is named after the newsletters that I send out to the inmates since that is where we all initially met. Because the classes that I was teaching them focused on spiritual elevation allowing the negativity within them to die, thus ultimately elevating their consciousness, I thought it an appropriate name because a "mound" is defined as: an "elevation" formed of earth overlying ruins, a grave etc., a heap or raised mass. The following articles are from men that are currently incarcerated or released and this serves as an opportunity for the voiceless to have a voice. If you have a loved one that is currently incarcerated and would like for me to send them newsletters, please forward their contact information with a MDOC number to: Relationshipfirstaid@yahoo.com or contact me at: Relationship First Aid, Attn: Ma'at Seba, 15224 W. 7 Mile Rd., Detroit, MI. 48235.

What If

By Maurice Dobson-El #526723
SPECIAL TO THE SUN



Hello my name is Maurice Dobson-El. I came down at the age of 23 with 24 years and a long tail.

I've seen so much on this journey. My first prison was Michigan Reformatory (RMI) where if you wasn't a color or gang member or had some kinda ties you weren't respected.

RMI was a dark cloud for most people. It was a war zone with myself. For most people,

you barely see people going to services for spiritual guidance. The courts denied my appeals multiple of times. At that point of my life, I could say I was I truly lost.

In 2022, RMI closed down, and they transferred me to Lakeland Correctional Facility where I got a chance to meet a couple brothers like Reggie White and Jawan X who I got spiritual guidance and fellowship from. They helped me see the good inside of me. There I had a chance to enter many classes. One class/program changed my walk of life (called Chance for Life) from gang banging to mentorship and leadership. I learned about communication, attitude, habits and much more.

I learned that I had to change myself and my thoughts because what a man thinks, is what a man does. (CFL) Chance for Life gave me tools to fix my future.

Support Prison Reform

This is the right time to support Prison Reform Bills.

Do you believe in second chances. We are asking for the community support and assistance in contacting your local State Representative or Senator to support The Second Look Bill. To get involved or support or just get some information.

Please visit the following social media sites.
Facebook: [nationallifersofamericainc](https://www.nationallifersofamericainc.com)
Website: <https://www.nationallifersofamerica.org>

If you want to help, please send the below message to your State Representative or Senator.

As your constituent I am writing to request your support for a hearing on the parallel bill packages SB 321-326 and HB 4556-4560. The push for this legislation, called "Second Look" legislation, is being led by Senator Stephanie Chang and Representative Kara Hope.

The purpose of this legislation will be to provide incarcerated persons serving lengthy prison terms an opportunity to petition their sentencing judge for a reduction of their sentence after being imprisoned for at least 10 years. This legislation is not a "get out of jail free card" and requires a judge to review every case. Resentencing could only occur after a Petitioner establishes by a preponderance of evidence that they have been rehabilitated and an amended sentence

would serve the interests of justice. There are many checks and balances.

Byproducts of this legislation would:

1. Provide hope to incarcerated persons by way of a second chance at life based on documented evidence of change and rehabilitation.
2. Provide a system to better equip the MDOC to manage the behavior of incarcerated persons in state facilities.
3. Improve safety and security for incarcerated persons and staff working in the MDOC. Ultimately, the Second Look Sentencing Act will engender the internal motivation needed for self improvement by incentivizing prosocial conduct.

In recent years the criminal legal system has begun modifying its charging, plea bargaining and sentencing practices, which reflect developments in scientific research about the youth brain; the impact of childhood, domestic and sexual abuse; the treatment of addiction and mental illness; and the penalty necessary to achieve the purposes of criminal convictions. Instead of adhering to policies that have produced no measurable improvements in the outcomes of Michigan prisons for the last two decades, it is time for Michigan to improve the definition of justice.

I trust you will agree that these are important goals worthy of your support.

A Normal Day in a Cell

By Jawan Hayes
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

A normal day for me seems to change each week, working and stimulating my mind is normal. Since the aftermath of Covid 19 arrived it caused me to remain lucid and determined not to become docile. There are two valuable lessons I have learned and now live by Choices & Time.

I always have a choice no matter what the circumstances. I value my time and I use it wisely. I no longer abuse either of these things. My time is spent by maintaining a Peace of Mind, which is done by reading, training the dogs, teaching classes five days a week. Not to mention having a nice cup of tea and watching the news to stay up to date with current events in the world. The act of kindness in training shelter dogs and giving them a second chance, a new life; is so rewarding, it has taught me the value of life and being responsible for a life.

January 1, 2022 was a sad time for me, I realize that I just started 22 years in prison, I instantly became sad, reflecting back, to the pain and suffering I have caused the Wright Family, for the death of their son, brother and father. April 1, 2000 is when I participated in a murder. The incident was centered around an abusive relationship with his wife which was a trigger for me, growing up in an abusive environment. Like most adolescents I didn't weigh the ramifications of my actions. What supposed to be a beat down led to a man losing his life. I have been living with regret, yearning for the opportunity to physically apologize to the Family for my actions, I recall apologizing to the Family in the courtroom, but the pain was so raw at that time the



family did not want to hear from me. I have sent an unsent letter of apology to the Michigan Parole Board.

Prior to this horrible event I was student at Marygrove College. I was also employed at a hospice care facility in Detroit Michigan. I have not changed the course of my transformation for 23 years now, which is to grow mentally, spiritually and to never victimize anyone physically, mentally or emotionally again. I have maintained a positive employment history and has taken advantage of numerous self-help programs and classes to help with my transformation.

I have attended college to advance my education and obtained a degree. I currently sit on the board of various civic organizations inside the facility. I am also a facilitator in the biggest self-help program in the State of Michigan and the Michigan Department of Corrections, The Chance for Life Organization. It has changed my life, teaching me a new way to think and how to

problem solve. I am teaching classes five days a week; the classes are Communications Skills to Conflict Resolution. I also counsel and monitor prisoners who are contemplating suicide. Being able to share with them that life is precious and how to navigate through mental hurdles and struggles is meaningful.

Facility Staff have called me a role model for other prisoners and have written character letters for me in hopes to obtaining a second chance in society someday. I am 44 years old and accept full responsibility for my actions on the night of April 1, 2000. I am seeking forgiveness and redemption. I have a supportive family, housing and employment opportunities offered to me, when I receive a second chance at life.

"We are defined not by our mistakes, but how we then go on to live our lives".

Change your Mind. Change your Life!

By Damian Jones #827488
SPECIAL TO THE SUN



My name is Damian Jones. I am from Detroit, Michigan and I was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison at the age of 23.

When I first got to prison at the age of 23, I came with the same mentality I left the streets with. I always believed in God but because I got sent to prison, I detached from a relationship with him. I felt like I was abandoned and left to figure out things out on my own. So, I continued on living the same life I lived in the streets for seven years until I hit rock bottom.

One night me and my bunkie at the time his name is Ian, was watching a T.V. show and somehow it sparked a conversation about God. I told him that I grew up believing in God, and that I used to pray but not no more because I feel like God abandoned me, but I do believe it is a God. He then told me that he went through a similar situation and that he prayed to God for help and his got back on track. So that night I considered Ian's story, and I prayed and asked God to show me the way because the way I am going can't be

working. Prior to that night I had not prayed in years even though I grew up praying.

A couple days later I got what I believe to be an answer to my prayer. That answer was "YOU MUST CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE toward life IT MEANS that you must Stop Thinking and Acting in the wrong way, when we do this we are taken out of the old order and established IN THE NEW! Til this Day I cling to that.

At that time I was so desperate to changing the conditions of my life after hitting rock bottom I was open to a new way. I was convinced that my way of life was not working. What stood out to me the most was it said "Thinking in the wrong way. I was always told that I need to behave better, but no one has ever told me that I need to think better. So that day I begin working starting with my thoughts, by the middle of that day it hit me my thinking process was screwed up and that was my problem.

I began working on thinking more positive and building a positive mindset. I read lots of self-books and positive thinking philosophy books now three years later the conditions of my life has change dramatically. Today I have been given opportunities to speak in front of hundreds of my peers and facilitate classes to help others make changes in their life and I really take that as blessing. The message I hope to send from that passage is this "If you can CHANGE YOUR MIND THEN YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE." Thank you for your time in reading this

EVERYONE HAS A PLACE, A VOICE, AND SOMETHING TO CONTRIBUTE.