



In 1993 while incarcerated in Connecticut's Bridgeport Correctional Center a trend was started in Memorial Unit 2. For the first time the positive messages of an inmate, were painted on the walls along with the outstanding artwork of another. It was believed at that time that if those words could so much as help one person, it was worth writing. As far as we know that practice continues today in BCC. One can only assume that there has been some level of statistical success that fuels this to continue. It is time for this venture to come back around full circle and develop into what it was set out to be from the beginning. Thus far the inmate who started that trend has not been incarcerated again. **I AM THAT INMATE.** Inmate #218896.

Angels With Broken Wings is an anthology of Poetry, Art, Quotes, Short stories, Haiku and any creative expression that we intend to introduce to society, created and written by current and former inmates, as well as the people who support them.

Poetry, short stories, quotes and expressions come in many forms. No matter the genre, literary expression is the most dominant form of communication there is. Greeting cards, which are simply poems, quotes and short stories are used to convey thoughts, feelings and emotions. Happy birthday, congratulations, I love you, get well soon, sorry for your lost, are expressions we all use at some point and time. The difference between an expression written by Amanda Bradley and John Q Inmate is solely based on situation and position. The message is still the same. When one reads a story it's an invitation inside the mind of a writer to view things from their perspective. To vicariously have an experience without being held accountable for the actions is one thing that is offered to the readers. The opportunity, for an inmate to communicate their remorse, express their feelings, share their experiences, thoughts, dreams, goals and outlook are just a few accomplishments that can be achieved by allowing those who are forgotten to have a voice. You may ask how, is this an accomplishment? A trust fund is lost, a bad investment is made, pressure becomes overwhelming, infidelity is discovered, education or opportunity is gone and for some these things are enough to drive one to feel they have nothing to live for.

Yet there are those who will never see society again who still go on. Maybe the key that allows them to still go on can preserve the life of someone in society who feels they have nothing left. That key might just be encouragement that comes from words that are written by an inmate. The message that says, "***Stay focused; don't make the mistakes that I have made...You don't want to end up here. Life is what you make it, not what you want it to be.***" Those messages might seem meaningless to some. Those messages however apply to all. Black, White, Hispanic, Rich, Poor, Educated, Illiterate, Employed, Homeless, Addicted, Disturbed, Dysfunctional, Neglected, Abused, Stressed, Misguided, Desperate, Victimized, Threatened, are some of the people that can benefit from these thoughts. If what a current or former inmate has to say can so much as change or save one life, then it was worth writing. As you ask yourself how feasible this might be, ask yourself how supportive you might be if the one life that could be saved is the life of your child or someone you love.

Art, paintings murals and sculptures have played a very important role in creative expression throughout the history of man. It has been said that '*a picture is worth a thousand words*' and '*actions speak louder than words*' however much too often we are defined by the actions in our past opposed to what we have become. It's not uncommon for one to not understand their potential until they are placed in a position in which they must explore themselves. So they pick up a pencil, a pen, markers, a brush, objects and materials that most people would discard and they create some of the most phenomenal works of art on the planet. In many cases most of these creations are never seen.

Should the world be denied a potential masterpiece simply because it was created by an inmate? People have been known to find themselves as well as religion while incarcerated. Some have also found their natural talents. A talent they were not taught, at an art school or a program but something that has been instilled in them from birth.

Let us expose those works of art. For all we know an art exhibition of an inmate's work upon their release may allow one to be self sufficient upon reentry into society. Inmates being contracted for ventures from animation, book covers, designs and even life size sculptures are some of the doors that can be opened. As for the doors this will open, the possibilities are endless.

Reentry into society will be assisted and potentially accelerated, based on society having the opportunity to explore the insight and thoughts of those who have been incarcerated. In many cases parolees are denied equal opportunity for employment and/or terminated once it has been disclosed that the individual has been incarcerated. It is a known fact that these biases takes place even with jobs that no one else wants. How can one be expected to become a productive member of society if they are denied the opportunity to do so? It's human nature to fear what we don't understand. In particular what goes through the mind of someone who has been incarcerated. It is that fear of not knowing that sometimes drive people to deny those who are reentering society the opportunity to reform and rebuild their lives. States such as Wisconsin should not have to invoke a Fair Employment Act nor should cities like Philadelphia have to offer \$10,000 in tax relief for every ex-con hired for people to have the chance of redemption.

The message is simple. There is not one person on this earth who is perfect. We come from different walks of life and have different experiences that determine who we are and the decisions that we make. Some decisions are made out of desperation, fear, based on emotion, negligence, addiction, and even self-preservation. There is no justification for certain actions however knowing what drove someone to commit those actions can make a difference in the perception society has of those who have been or are incarcerated. It's ironic by comparison how certain actions are glamorized and understood but when entertainment, actors and other factors are removed from the equation there is nothing to be understood.

The constitution gives us the right to be heard. We all have that right to express ourselves. We all make mistakes. We all have something to say that might make a difference. We are all imperfect. Whether you a homeless or the president of the United States, we are all **Angels With Broken Wings**