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Years of comments on Graduation Wall motivate students

By J. C.

Teacher Jeffrey Rudd generally emcees the graduation ceremonies at Miami Youth Academy. That includes the tradition of the graduate writing a meaningful statement on the MYA Graduation Wall.

Here is an interview with Mr. Rudd:

Q: How long have you been teaching in alternative schools like MYA?

A: 28 years.

Q: What message do you try to convey to graduating students?

A: That there's a possibility for everyone to succeed and that everyone faces challenges that you have to overcome.

Q: When was the Graduation Wall started and what is its purpose?

A: It started in 2017. A graduating student writes a short, important idea that he and other students can remember as they move forward. It can provide motivation.

Q: What is your favorite quote on the wall?

A: "Do good, so good follows." I also like: "Do today what others won't so tomorrow you can do what others can't." It speaks to having to commit yourself to something, so you can get ahead in the future. Finally, I like: "A wise man once said life is 10 percent of what happens to you and 90 percent of how you react."

Q: The Graduation Wall is not the only prop you use. You always hand out a deck of cards to every student as he graduates. Why?

A: Because it's a symbol of the way life works. Sometimes, you get a bad card, but you have to keep playing and have faith. You'll get better cards down the road. Sometimes, a card like a 2 looks bad, but then you get three more 2s and then you have a very good hand.

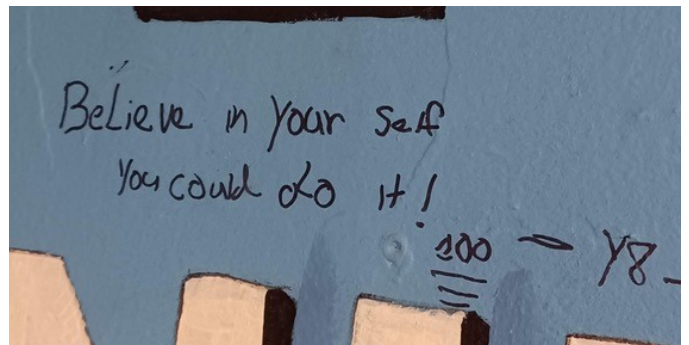


Q: What's the biggest impact you want to make as a teacher here?

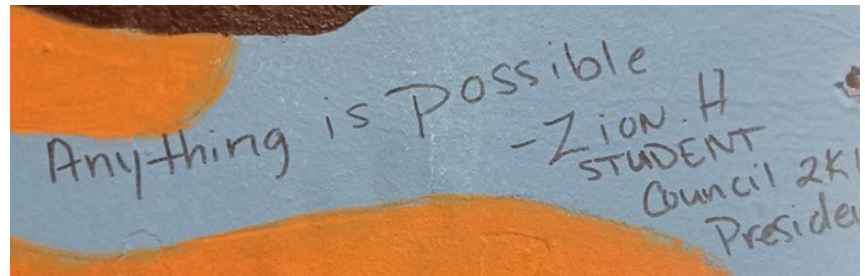
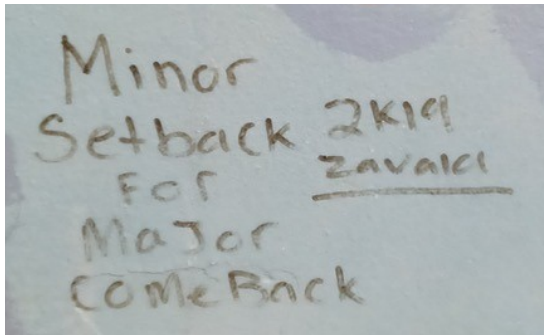
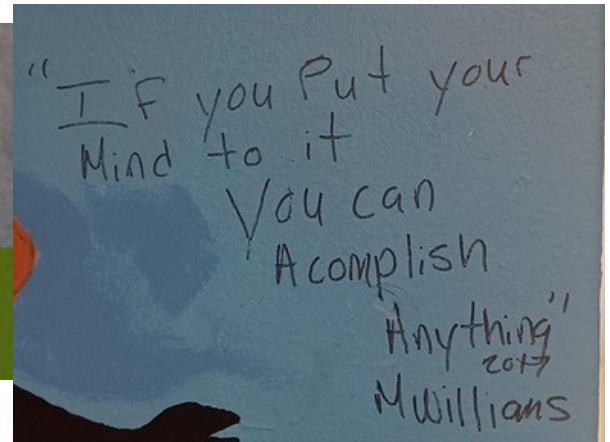
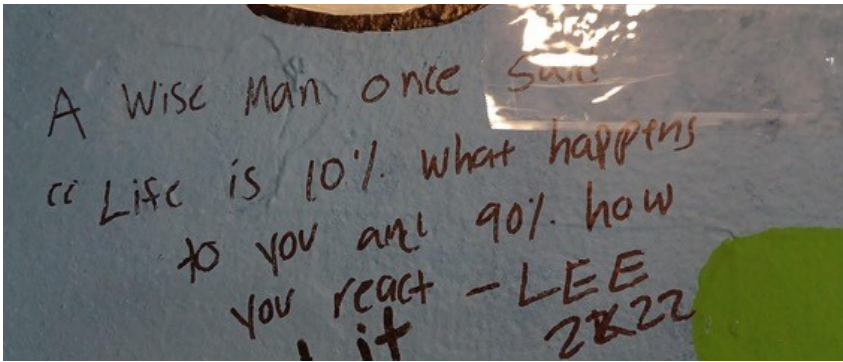
A: I want the youth to realize they have the ability to do things that they didn't think they could do before they got here. I want the kids to realize that not only are there possibilities out there, but that they have the skills to take advantage of those possibilities.

Q: Is there a message during the ceremony that you try to impart to the parents or visitors of the graduating student?

A: I try to let them know that their kid has accomplished something and that they should be very proud for him.



More Graduation Wall Images



J. C. Z. graduates with GED

By J. C.

Q: How does it feel to graduate?

A: I mean I came a long way. I dropped out of school in 8th grade and now I got my GED.

Q: Did you ever think you were going to graduate?

A: No. I knew I had common sense, but the streets were for me.

Q: Do you think you learned anything here?

A: Yes, I learned how to better myself and to be humble.

Q: Can you give a piece of advice to other youth?

A: Go home and stay out of the way.

Q: What are you going to do when you get out of here?

A: Go to a community college, start a new life and get out of the streets.

Q: As you know, controlling anger can be a problem for us. What would you advise someone trying to count to 10, but getting ready to blow at No. 2?

A: Think about something that makes you happy.



Student writes personal journal for Piano Slam 2023

Student N. H. was selected as a finalist for the poem he wrote for the annual Piano Slam contest for Miami-Dade County students. The 15 finalists, chosen among more than 1,000 students who entered, performed their poems in April at the Adrienne Arsht Center downtown.

N. kept a running journal of his impressions during the rehearsals that led up to the big event.

| Date | Notes |
|-----------|---|
| 03/31/23 | <p>Yesterday was my first day at Piano Slam. It was also my first day in six months of being able to leave the program. I have to say it was the happiest and most relieved moment I have had since I have been in the program.</p> <p>Everyone at Piano Slam was very nice, with a really welcoming and positive energy. The first thing we did was tell the group and the leader our names and why we choose to write a poem. I told them the reason why I chose to participate was it was a really good opportunity to try something new. The leader of the meeting told us that everyone was going to recite their poems so that we can get used to saying our poems in front of people. I went third. I was a little nervous, but I finished without stuttering.</p> |
| 4/3/23 | <p>Today, was the first real rehearsal. I was introduced to my coach, who greeted me nicely and even gave me a painting to take home with me. I ate food and had a Diet Coke. I practiced my poem two times. Then my coach gave me tips on how to be successful when I perform my poem.</p> <p>Then I listened to the other kids recite their poems. I was really impressed because the other kids seemed like they were more ready than I was.</p> <p>I also met the director and the other coaches, as well. Everyone was super friendly.</p> <p>I was getting excited and couldn't wait for tomorrow's rehearsal, because it would be the first time that we go to the Arsht Center downtown.</p> |
| 4/4/2023 | <p>I walked into the Arsht Center for the first time in my life. It's like I had VIP access to a whole concert hall. The big doors, the curtains and all of the things that happen behind the stage really affected me.</p> <p>We walked in a circle and kept doing routines to try to loosen ourselves up. I had a really good time.</p> <p>At the end, the director made us choose a character who is outside in the sun all the time. I decided to act like a plumber. There also were team-building exercises.</p> |
| 4/10/2023 | <p>I was introduced to my dance instructor, who I worked with.</p> |
| 4/19/2023 | <p>The performance was a blast! Being backstage, the butterflies in my stomach, the thrill and the audience all had a big impact on me.</p> <p>I was late arriving. Everyone was already on the stage rehearsing. After we rehearsed for about two hours, we went backstage and got to eat some food. Then we received our costumes. I received a hair band and a sleeve. Then we went to the dressing room that was located upstairs of the stage. I thought dressing rooms were supposed to look all fancy, but this was just a room with a bunch of chairs. We were there for about 45 minutes, then at 7:15 p.m. we headed back to the stage.</p> <p>I started to feel more nervous because I forgot some of my lines and my coach was nagging me about having papers. He took both of my papers and told me to remember what I know, and if I don't remember then to skip it.</p> <p>It's five minutes from the show now. I continued to rehearse by myself behind the stage, giving everyone high fives.</p> <p>At 7:30 everyone was allowed onto the stage. Loads of people were going to their seats. I was looking for the people that were coming to see me. I saw them, which encouraged me to perform well, which I did.</p> <p>There was applause when I finished, as there was for all the poets. I was filled with joy with how everything turned out.</p> <p>It was an experience of a lifetime. It taught me that you can have a good life if you work hard for it. Thank you and God bless.</p> |

Music Is Life

By N. H.

Music to me is life
Aria in my soul, strong
Music evokes a feeling
Like I can do no wrong
Without music, life would be devastating
Rhythm and beats expresses that which cannot
Be put into words
That which cannot remain silent.
Genres of music that reflect life
From Adagio melodies of the sunset
To the Dark rhythms of the night
To the blazing beauty of a sunrise
The first glimmer of the rising sun
Always there at every dawn
Causing my heart to ease and to breath
The heat slowly touching my face
Reminding me of a new day
You made me remember
The happiness
That comes today
Short moments never last

Though people's taste in music is differ
Keep singing your own melody
Like a piano played in
Minor keys represent an elegy
Major keys, brightness and joy
As you go through eternity
Remember different keys
Make harmonies and have melodies to sing
Though some are sung in Forte
Over other voices
That also have a story to tell as well

The tone should be calm, chill and patient
The melody should be kind and peaceful
Pitch should be pleasing, filled with light
Day after day I scan for that strain
However, I know, oh, I know
Whoever can create that tune
Is he

As God gave me the sunset to comply
And the power to generate light when I cry
God gave him ears, an ability to find new music
That I need to forgive the darkness

Knowing a person is like diving into music
Attracted to their melody
We learn every note of their score
What they thrive for
Who they are and the lyrics at their core
It is our choice to love or hate their tune

Music speaks to people's hearts
Throughout the world
I believe it is the most important language.
Genres of music favored, That they consider
their savior
Music is like an ice cream flavor
Whether the music is plain or mixed like rap
People get lured into music like a mouse trap
We all choose what we wanna hear and what
we want to remember
Like bars of rap in opposition
One side causing harm
While one side is trying to ensemble
So that future sunrises have something to remember
Eternal dance of shadow and light
Sound and life



My University of Miami experience affected me

By W. W.

When I first went to Miami University for an exchange criminology class, I found it to be a very big place.

But then, as we walked, it became a more normal scene to me, as I saw an ice-cream truck and students walking around or doing their homework or talking on their cell phones.

I was nervous when our class started and we broke down into groups. But I calmed down and even laughed as we introduced ourselves. I talked about my experiences at MYA and what I'm going to do when I get out of the program, and how I will not come back to MYA.

The UM students talked about how much time it took them to get into the college and how much work they have to do. I got to understand how working hard leads to success.

We also talked about police and how police should handle juveniles and why schools need security to protect kids, including using a dog to smell out drugs.

The part I liked the most is when one of the students in my group said some really touching things. It's one of the reasons I'd like to visit UM again once when I leave this program.



STAFF INTERVIEWS

Journalism students learned the important reporting skill of interviewing by preparing and asking questions of MYA staff. One of the benefits – if students learn how to interview someone, they will be better prepared when they are interviewed throughout their lives.

Military recruiter helps reshape Mr. DeAndrey Bynum's life

By S. C. and K.J.

Q: Where are you from?

A: I'm from Miami.

Q: What were the people you grew up with like?

A: I grew up with crack in the square, lots of traffic, and family members surrounding my life with crime.

Q: Did you get into trouble as a kid?

A: Yes, I got in a lot of trouble. My dad was around but my mom had to work a lot.

Q: What types of grades did you make in school?

A: Early on, bad grades, but in high school I stepped up.

Q: Who or what made you change?

A: My military recruiter, Sgt. Michelle Robinson. I wasn't going to graduate on time, but she worked with my school counselor to get me more credits so I could graduate. I was off to the military. She didn't have to do that. She went the extra step and that made me look at things differently.

Q: How long were you in the Army?

A: I served four-and-a-half years, including time in Korea and Germany.

Q: What did you learn?

A: The Army taught me discipline in life. It matured me.

Q: Before working here as a staff development specialist, what else did you do?

A: I worked in the post office and with kids with incarcerated parents.

Q: What do you do at work here?

A: I do a lot of training of new and old staff.



Q: Why do you like working with youth?

A: Because I've always had the mindset of trying to find a solution or change the mindsets of young people who are acting out or have behavior issues.

Q: What do you enjoy doing on your time off?

A: I watch a lot of sports.

Q: Who do you trust in life?

A: My wife and my supervisor.

Q: Do you have some words of encouragement or advice?

A: Measure yourself by the distance traveled because everybody does not start off in the same place!

Youth specialist, Mr. K. Green, turned away from trouble to make progress

By W. W.

Q: Where are you from?

A: Florida City.

Q: What type of kid were you?

A: Hard-headed, ambitious, goal-driven, and a smart athlete.

Q: Did you get in trouble as a kid?

A: Yes, too much trouble but I managed to control my anger.

Q: Has life ever been a struggle for you?

A: Of course, everyday life would be boring if we didn't have to learn how to deal with things.

Q: What are your top three goals?

A: To own my own house, have three passive incomes and to travel.

Q: What do you consider very important in your daily life?

A: To stay motivated every day for my goals.

Q: Do you look up to someone?

A: My uncle. He took me in when I was 16 because no one else could handle me. He made me the man I am now.

Q: Who can you trust and why?

A: My mother, who has been going hard for my siblings and me, and my uncle. I know they only want what's best for me.

Q: What are your coping skills?

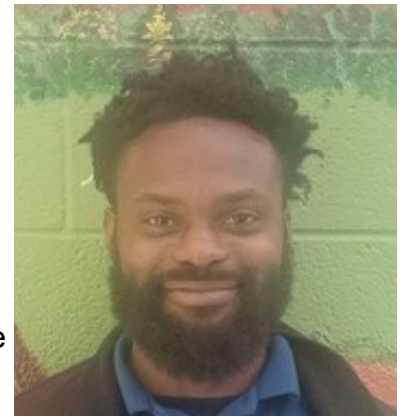
A: I like to go to the gym and work out.

Q: What are two things you want to have right now and why?

A: Money and vacations, because wealth is freedom and vacations bring happiness.

Q: Would you like to own your own business?

A: Yes. I would like to elevate my family's wealth.



Veteran teacher, Mr. Jesus Gonzalez, urges students to stay focused

By L. B.

Q: Have you always lived in Miami?

A: Yes.

Q: Who was your biggest role model growing up? Why?

A: My grandfather. He came here from Cuba with nothing. He always worked, he took care of his family, and always made sure everyone was taken care of and doing OK.

Q: What made you decide to teach kids in the Department of Juvenile Justice system?

A: I went to school and got my degree to work with students that have emotional and behavioral problems. By coincidence, the first job I was offered was at a DJJ facility.

Q: How long have you been working as a teacher?

A: 23 years, including four years now at MYA.

Q: Did you ever get into trouble as a kid?

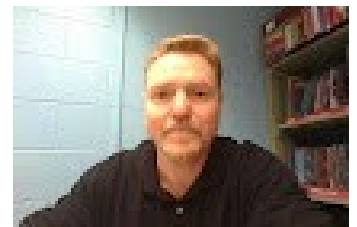
A: I have never been in trouble with the law.

Q: What do you like about your job?

A: The satisfaction of working with youth who got into trouble and being able to teach them, so they don't repeat previous mistakes.

Q: What is your best advice for kids who leave the program?

A: Stay focused on your goals. Remember that you have your whole life ahead of you. It takes time to succeed, and it won't be easy. But you can never give up.



Ms. Adriana Quarta says 'I cook with my heart'

By K. M.

Q: Where are you from?

A: Cartagena, Colombia.

Q: What is the toughest part of your job in the kitchen?

A: To make sure I have all the tools ready to start the job.

Q: What was your previous job?

A: In the kitchen of a nursing home.

Q: Why did you choose to work at MYA?

A: Because I saw the opportunity to cook for the youth and for them to learn from me.

Q: Did you go to college?

A: I went to trade school for culinary arts in Colombia.

Q: What are some interesting facts about your childhood?

A: I had a great environment. It was very tropical and on the Caribbean. I learned how to be a great swimmer in the ocean.

Q: Did you ever get in trouble? If so, what happened?

A: I did in fact get in trouble. It was from ditching school. But I learned fast from the mistakes I made.

Q: What is your favorite meal to cook?

A: My favorite meal to cook is spaghetti.

Q: How did you learn how to cook?

A: My grandma taught me how to cook. I love to cook because I cook with my heart and it shows people how much I care.

Q: Do you enjoy working here?

A: I really enjoy working here. It's a good place to advise young people and provide opportunities. I can show them how to cook, how to prepare the food and the materials to use.

Q: What is your best advice to us?

A: My best advice is to always, always think before you do something. Take life step by step, because life is so beautiful and you shouldn't waste it on crimes.

Q: What didn't I ask you that is important for the readers to know?

A: I've had the opportunity to learn from the youth and the mistakes they've made. I get the chance to make amazing memories through the bonds that are created by cooking and talking with them.



MYA Letter Exchange with San Quentin

Journalism students at Miami Youth Academy and men who are incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison in California have been exchanging letters.

Below are two recent letters from San Quentin and some of the student replies.

Hi guys,

I'm still never amaze at how smart you guys are. Just like us some of you were living in situations that cause you to grow up fast. A lot of us grow-up in this hustling lifestyle. We were taught that those who did not hustle were squares.

Living the street life has lied to us. We have to many people dead or in jail chasing the street life. I'm serving a life sentence for something I done at the the age 18 years old. I'm now 50 years old. One bad decision can cause you a lifetime of pain. It will cause your mother pain, your brother or sister pain, your whole family. Also the people you harm can deal with a lifetime of pain. Remember there is no such things as a victimless crime, even if you break-in cars. Somebody have to pay for the damage you can cause them to miss work or not get their kids to school on time, you are putting them into a hardship.

Spending over 25 years in prison, will make you look at life differently. You miss so much of your life and ~~the~~ being in the life of the people you love. What I come to learn in life is that

* OVER *

You Need a good Mentor, there are a lot of people doing a lot of good things in life and not getting into trouble. Sometime you have to learn from them as well as what are they doing with their lives.

So far we have followed people who have lead us to jail. So find you someone you can trust to pattern what you want your life to be like.

Remember you are young and still have a lot of life to live. None of us are perfect you will make mistake, but the main thing is don't followed the crowd. It take strength to say NO. If people truly want the best for you that would want the best for you. I want the best for you.

Wali,

MYA students respond

Hi Wali,

Thank you for writing back. I thought about what you said. It's so crazy how a decision you made when you were 18 affected you for the rest of your life.

I was wondering how you keep up mentally. I get out in four weeks, hoping I can stay out of trouble and stay ducked off. I'm also trying to get my GED, and really start up my clothing brand. When I was out, I used to make shirts, sweatsuits, and jackets with my brand on it, but I never really sold them. I used to make my friends and sister pass out the clothes through school and every time someone would take a picture with the clothes, I would make them tag me so I could get a bigger buzz in the city.

My uncle has been telling me to stop playing and start selling them, but I haven't really had a chance since I've been locked up for six months, but that's just an excuse.

"You can't make it in life if you're full of excuses," my uncle used to always tell me growing up. I look up to my uncle as a father figure. He owns a vape shop, trucking company, and rents out cars to people. He did two prison bids, but he learned from his mistakes.

When I get out I have to move righteously because a lot of people are hating. I need to stay away from negative peers.

Here's hoping you can come home soon. Hang in there.

All the best,

J. C.

More MYA student responses

Hello Wali,

Thanks for the letter that you wrote to us. It makes me feel very cared for. I wish the best for you in there and I hope that you keep your strength like I am. It makes me feel good that you take time out of your day to write letters to us and tell us that we have another chance to be great.

I can tell that you have a good heart because ordinary people would have given up at that point and not cared about the lives of teens in juvenile programs. You do and that's a very good thing.

I have a few questions to ask you about your current situation and I would like for you to answer them:

-- Why do you write to us kids?

-- Do you feel like the kids that you write to will listen?

-- What is your best advice about not following the same people who got me into trouble after I get out of here?

-- What's it like in San Quentin?

Now that I have asked you some questions, I will tell you how I grew up and how the program is here at MYA.

The program here is kind of like a daycare that you can't leave. The purpose is to give you a wake-up call.

I grew up mostly with my mom. She has a problem with alcohol and it would always make me angry because she would say hurtful things. But I try not to think about it.

My dad has always struggled with drugs, crack in particular, and it got him locked up a lot. When I did see him, he would always steal my stuff and sell it for drug money. My dad has been locked up for about 12-13 years of my life and I'm only 15.

When I recently met the drug-free version of my dad, he is actually a really good person. The things he went through caused him to use and I understand it more.

It's the same way with my mom, as well. When she's not drinking, she is very loving and shows that she cares about me.

I really appreciate you taking the time to read my letter.

Sincerely,

L. B.

What's Up Fellas?

My name is Kevin Lee Robinson. I've been in prison for 28 years this time. I have 7 more life sentences to go. Look fellas, I been where you're at now, when I was 16 years old I was given 6 years in the California Youth Authority for 8 counts of armed robbery. Listen, when I was young my family was very poor. We were homeless and at times lived in shelters, motels, with family, and when we did get a house it was owned by slumlords. I didn't have the cool clothes or shoes that was in style; I was bullied, teased, and my mom moved around so much I fell behind in school and was finally put in special education classes. I felt different, ostracized. I been to 9 elementary schools, 5 junior high schools and 3 high schools.

I have 8 siblings; its 9 altogether. I'm a middle child, so I felt most of the attention from our mom was directed to my older or younger siblings. Growing up I barely had the things I needed and nothing I wanted. We were hungry a lot of times.

I'm telling you this because I been where you're at. Sometimes I felt hopeless, less than, insecure, powerless, but because of my selfishness and not understanding what morality was at that time, I made my decisions in life based on wants, needs, desires and emotions. I look back today and out of all my siblings I'm the only one doing 7 life sentences. These past 28 years of incarceration has given me time to really think back on my life. I used to blame everyone for my actions; the fact is, I can only blame myself. No one made me rob, steal, sell dope. No matter how bad the situation is or feels, remember, the choice is yours. You have a choice, choose wisely.

Some choices seem limited, and maybe thry are. Our choices will determine our future. I knew right from wrong but I consciously chose to do wrong because it got me what I wanted at the time. Material wealth that I put a whole lot of value on that really doesn't have any value at all. I now understand it was shameful to the community, because it gave the wrong example to other people to follow and I harmed a lot of people along the way. There is no such thing as a victimless crime.

I know the world may seem cold and heartless but you guys are at an age where you can be the agent of change. Make it a warm and heartfelt place. You guys are literally at the age where you can say "I want to be this" or "do that" and have the actual time in life to accomplish it. When I was your age older guys used to encourage me to commit crime, tell me about all the glitter and gold and riches. They failed to tell me about the other side, prison for life.

I encourage you guys to use the time that you have in there wisely. Think about what you gonna do to better your life in a positive way once released. Think about how you're going to avoid those traps that will end up with you back in jail or worse. Let this be your starting point in your life for a fresh start. Yeah, it may not be easy but you can do it. I believe if you take the same energy you use to rob, steal, sell drugs, if you used 10% of that energy in doing positive things, school, work, career search, you will be a success. Remember, choices will determine your future.

Respectfully, *Kevin L. Robinson*

Hello Mr. Robinson,

I just got some good news today. I made the Pi-ano Slam contest in Miami. I never thought poetry was my thing, but I think God has given me a sign that maybe I should take an extra step for this. I wanted to spread some of my joy.

I also just read your letter and this is my first day of journalism. I'm sorry that you have to serve life sentences. It must have been hard and stressful news when you were told that you would have to do that time. But I could tell that you were strong about it and continue to move forward.

As for me, I don't know if I could handle that. I'm just a kid from New Hampshire who had a great family, great friends and great support until I moved to Florida with my dad. I thought I knew it all and I didn't have to listen to anyone.

I was wrong. When the wheel was given to me, I kept going in the wrong directions. I kept hanging around the wrong people, let social media influence me to act in certain ways and live a certain type of lifestyle. But I didn't need to act that way because I had everything. I thought I could do it myself and didn't need my family. That caused me to be here.

Hi Mr. Robinson,

You gave me great advice. I don't want to end up having to serve a life sentence. You made me realize that if I keep making these terrible mistakes, then I will end up in prison. I am going to stop stealing and doing drugs. Like you said, you have a lot of siblings. I don't want to show my siblings bad examples and behaviors.

This is how I plan to change my actions when I get out of here –

I'm going to get a job in HVAC and help my family out because my mom is struggling with the money situation. I'm getting my GED and then I'm going to get into college. I'm going to stop using drugs so I can finish my probation so I can finally be free again.

Those are my goals. Here is how I plan to control myself if I am tempted to do the wrong thing

I have learned a lot here at Miami Youth Academy. One of the most important things is to be patient. Waiting is a sign of true love and patience. Anyone can say I love you but not everyone can wait and prove it's true. I learned that when you're patient, you can be the most powerful man in the room. Being patient means you're not worrying about what you're being patient for. You're focusing on the next thing that's going to happen.

I leave here on June 1, 2023. I'm ready to go and I never want to commit a crime because if prison is worse than this, then I'm going to take these nine months as a slap in the hand and never commit a crime again.

I miss my freedom and I'm sure you do, too. I hope you can find a way to get your freedom back into your life. I hope you can because freedom is the most beautiful thing in life. If my friends tempt me to go in the wrong direction, I think I can beat that problem.

Mr. Robinson, if you had your freedom, what is one thing you would want to do? I'll make sure to accomplish it for you.

Sincerely,

N. H.

I plan to go play basketball or go out with my friends, instead of stealing and doing drugs. Or if I'm home and I have temptations of doing wrong, I will play video games or lay in bed and chill or go for a drive to ease my mind.

I know my friends could pressure me to do things. If they do, I will try not to follow them. Here's what I will say or do –

If my friends try to pressure me to do the wrong things, I will tell them I want to go home or ignore them. And when I get home, I will stop being friends with them because those bad influences will only lead you to jail or death.

Thank you for listening and if you have any questions ask them when you write back to me.

Sincerely,

K. M.

Dear Mr. Robinson,

How is it going? It sucks that you had to do 28 years in prison.

When I was 16, I did a carjacking robbery. We were homeless at the time and lived in shelters and different motels. When we had a house, we lived it in for two or three years. Then my mom said to leave everything and just get in the car. We drove all the way to South Carolina.

I went to different schools and met different people. I never liked school for some reason.

I have four siblings on my mom's side and two on my dad's side. I'm the second oldest. We didn't have much food or clothing. Sometimes I felt helpless and insecure. Eventually, we moved to Miami.

I lost a family member recently and it hurt me. I almost lost another family member. He got shot and survived. He's the main person I look up to. I called him my brother. If he would've died, I would go crazy and catch more time. I'm glad he is OK.

I have been involved with the police many times. Nobody made me steal, rob, or anything like that. I beat up people for no reason, I threw rocks at people's cars, I knocked on people's doors and ran. I had fallen behind in my classes. I only can blame myself for what I did. I can't blame anybody else.

I have trust issues, so it's only a few people I really, really trust. I'm going to change when I get out. I'm going to get my driver's license and a job. I'm very excited to adopt my niece.

I turn 18 in June, right before my release date, so I really have to do better and make my family proud.

It was nice for you to write to me. I hope I receive your letter before I leave.

I have some questions for you –

What is your best advice for me when I get out?

What was it like when you first went there and what is it like now?

Do you feel the kids you write to are going to listen to you?

Who can you trust and why?

What are your coping skills?

Respectfully,

W. W.

About the Titan Tribune

This is the 16th issue of the Titan Tribune, a newspaper about Miami Youth Academy that is reported and written by the journalism students here.

The class and newspaper are a collaboration of MYA, Exchange for Change and the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Division of Educational Opportunity and Access. Exchange for Change is a non-profit that teaches writing classes in youth-commitment and adult-correctional facilities.

The paper is edited by retired newspaper reporter Henry Unger, an Exchange for Change volunteer. He is assisted by MYA teachers Jesus Gonzalez and Deborah Sanchez. The paper's layout and design were done by Miami-Dade teacher Daniel Wynne.

Reading Maya Angelou poem impacts MYA student

Still I Rise

By Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.



Still I Rise pushes me to keep going

By W. W.

I fell in love with this poem because what Maya Angelou wrote really ringed true. I'll take "Still I Rise" over any poems that are out there.

My favorite part is:

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

I like it because it motivates me to not be put down by other people, but to take up for myself and keep going and going without stopping.

I wish Maya Angelou was still here because I would ask her questions like -- why did you write the poem and what made you start writing poems?

I know she had a rough childhood as a kid and had been through a lot like I have been. I lost my father when I was 5 years-old, and my mother had to take care of four kids by herself.

As for me, I've had a lot of trouble with the police and giving my mother a hard time in school. But I realize that it's not worth it because I'm putting my mother through a lot of stress.