

Dear Readers,

March 20, 2017

*I thought I would take a minute and write a little something...* I was getting to a point when I was tired of all the shit one has to take being Transgender in an all male environment. Add to that, I am the last one standing here at lovely Valley State Prison, they no longer allow Trans people here but I received an exemption, so I'm the last. Well I have a pretty good thing going here. I'm getting ready to take the State Board exam of barbering and Cosmetology and I'm getting ready to finish up my college degree, those are good things right? Yes they are, however all of the crap I have to take daily was beginning to be too much for me. The constant degrading things people say are overwhelming and for the most part I can overlook them but it does get tiring...well just when you think you can't take anymore a wonderful thing happened...Feb 26<sup>th</sup> was my birthday (all of my family and friends forgot, or so I thought) well I have these friends named Molly and Chela who have become my family, I have written about them before. They have two kids who call me auntie Terra and they write, call and visit frequently. Molly and Chela did a mass email about my birthday and over the course of three weeks I have been flooded with cards and well wishes which has given me a much needed boost to my self-esteem and general well being. I'm at a loss for once, to describe the feeling it gave me to have all of those people who do not know me send me these congrats...prior to this I was feeling a little un-important, un-wanted, un-remembered but that one little gesture reminded me how much support I have from my loved ones. I owe a great debt to Molly and Chela who have thorough the years seen me through some pretty dark times. Keep in mind these are people who I met through a friend in prison and they did not know me prior to my coming to prison. It is funny where life takes you sometimes.

So my conviction has been restored and I feel like I can handle what ever comes my way these last few months of incarceration, a little over a year actually. It is a little scary at the thought of getting out even though I have done everything I can to ensure my success when I leave, I have spent very little time in my life living on the straight and narrow. It is both exciting and scary trying to do something you have so little experience in. I think that is the hardest thing for people to understand, who have never experienced this. They think, just get a job and pay your bills and don't commit crime and life will be great. That sounds good on paper but the reality of it is people who have done this their whole lives now have to find a new way to live if they don't want to come back. Little things like getting an I.D. or social security card are frightening. If you never have or haven't in 20 years you forget how to do those things. What about those who have never even filled out an application for an apartment(ever) it's like starting from scratch. What do those people do who have never had a legitimate job and know nothing about paying taxes...these are the things those of us are dealing with. Just because we parole doesn't mean everything is great...however if you are as lucky as I am to have friends who do not think your stupid when you pose such questions to them it does make it easier...which leads me back to the beginning Molly and Chela are amazing and I can't believe how lucky I am to have them in my life.. KAKAMIA I will always love you for bringing them into my life...if you all want to know who Kakamia is all you have to do is get a hold of a book called "Angels With Dirty Faces" by W. Imarisha she is an amazing author. There may be a page or two in the book devoted to miss Terra also☺ I hope everyone has a great day and remember you can change a life with a few words. To all of you who have EVER responded to my blog I thank you for all of your words of encouragement, your in my heart...lovethrustruggle, Terra