

# *Self-Esteem*



## CONCERNED ABOUT DRIVING HOME

**C**oncerned about driving home today.  
**O**n my way home, it may rain.  
**N**ever liked to drive in the rain.  
**F**rom where I sit, I see clouds.  
**I**n low places along the road is water.  
**D**own the valley is a rainbow.  
**E**vening time brings darkness.  
**N**ervous about driving home.  
**C**hange the rain to sunshine.  
**E**ven if it's only in my mind.

*Arthur Massengill*

## I AM

I am an emotional person.  
I am curious to look into the dark.  
I hear the wind sometimes.  
I see through the mirror.  
I want to be just me.  
I am an emotional person.

I pretend to be a better person.  
I feel like the world comes to me.  
I worry because I can't help everybody.  
I cry because she left me.  
I am an emotional person.

I understand the world sometimes.  
I say I believe in me.  
I dream to fly much higher.  
I hope to continue with my life.  
I am an emotional person.

*Nelida Arroyo*

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IT BEGINS WITH AN "R" AND ENDS WITH AN "E"

How could you dare treat me like shit  
Beating me down while calling me a bitch  
I'm the mother of your child or maybe the  
child of your mother.  
Why did you take my innocence during the  
thunder?  
Left with bruises not only physically but  
mentally too  
Never knowing this is only the beginning of  
the things you'd do  
Am I cursed from heaven  
Because I'm going through hell  
I think my mom knows 'cause she tells me in every  
thing I'd do I'd fail  
"GOD HELP ME"  
Take away the thought of death  
Because I always cry at night when it was to  
my room he crept  
"DADDY NO" please leave me alone  
"HELL NO" he said  
"I brought you into this world"

RAPE

*Latosha Stokes*

## LAUGHTER

Laughter is the best medicine,  
This I believe is true.  
When your life is turning upside down,  
A hell you're going through,  
Just hearing someone laugh can help you realize  
That it is all you need through rough and trying times.

So when you're down and things look black,  
Remember this is true,  
Laughter is all you really need,  
Especially when you are blue!

*Brandi McDaniel*

## MY LIFE

As a child I grew up in an abusive home. My parents were not together. My mom remarried, and her husband was physically and emotionally abusive. My mother was never there when I needed her. All of the men my mom had relationships with abused me physically. I was raped continuously for many years. My mom never believed that I was raped. As I got older, it made me feel unwanted. Because of this, I chose bad relationships. I still have a hard time trusting people in general and falling in love.

I have four children and will have my fifth in the spring. Two of my sons live in Newcastle, Indiana, with my mother. My daughter lives with my father in Winchester, Indiana. My son, Darius, lives with me. He is one year old. When he was born, I was scared because he swallowed some fluid and had to be in the ICU for two weeks. Then I was able to take him home. He loves to listen to stories like "Winnie the Pooh." Darius is very active and loves to play with other children at the daycare center. I take him for walks to the park, and he enjoys it. He likes to see animals and watch the other children. He also likes to sit in the grass. I enjoy being Darius's mother.

Children make me feel happy and loved. I have always wanted to give children what I never had myself. I never got to be a child. I also had children at a young age. I was a mother at the age of thirteen.

Darius and the new baby may share life together as brother and sister. I have a high-risk pregnancy because I had a blood clot in my left leg the last time I was pregnant. Everything else in this pregnancy is fine. I just need to watch what I eat, like sugar, fat, soda drinks, and fast food. I am praying that I have a healthy baby girl. Girls are so much fun to dress. I

love to do their hair. My son does not have any hair. I did not get any hair until I was about two years old.

I look forward to being the mother of two children. In my free time, I will read stories to my children, take them to the park, and play with them on the swings. As my children grow older, I hope they finish school. I am praying that they will get some kind of college degree so they can get good jobs. I will put a good head on my children's shoulders so they will stay in school.

I was made to drop out of school when I was sixteen by my mom. She wanted me to work so she and her husband could take all of my money and spend it on drugs. My children have gone without things they needed, so I want them to understand how important school is. In today's work field, getting a job can be very difficult without an education. I know what it's like to be without an education. Now I wish I had not listened to my mother. I wish I had finished high school so I could give my family a better life.

I have been through a lot of pain with all the problems with abuse. I have had many years of counseling and treatment. I have bipolar and post-traumatic stress disorder. At times I have depression problems. Now I have fewer problems with my depression. I also have a sleeping disorder. There are many nights when I don't get any sleep. My doctor has shown me many ways to live with depression.

I have learned a lot of different ways to get all of the fear out of my life. I am studying for my GED, taking parenting classes, and trying to turn my life around. I hope to make a better life for myself and my children.

*Julie Howard*



## TOP TEN REASONS TO GET A GED

10. To impress my girlfriend/boyfriend.
9. To make new friends.
8. To get a diploma to cover up the hole on my wall.
7. To be smarter than my children.
6. To feed my brain that's starving for knowledge.
5. To take on a challenging task.
4. To advance in the work environment.
3. To go to college.
2. To feel better about myself.
1. **To prove to those who said I couldn't do it that I CAN!**

*ABLE Class  
Live Oaks*

## I AM

I am a woman who loves her life.  
I wonder if I can do everything I want.  
I hear my thoughts in my mind.  
I see my future in front of me.  
I want my goals to come true.  
I am a woman who loves her life.

I pretend to be the happiest person in the world.  
I feel I have everything I want.  
I touch my heart with my feeling.  
I worry about discrimination in the world.  
I cry when I miss my family.  
I am a woman who loves her life.

I understand I am here just for awhile.  
I say I believe in God.  
I dream how my life will be.  
I try to do and be everything I can.  
I hope for happiness in all the world.  
I am a woman who loves her life.

*Adriana Cardenas Ramirez*

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THE BLACK WOMAN

I was created in love  
So that is my calling.  
And I was created in beauty,  
So I was blessed with this face.  
And I was given this voice  
So quiet does not know me.  
And I was showered in color  
So royalty is my race.  
*I am black woman*  
*I am her and she is me*  
*I am her and she is me*  
*Quite undeniably.*

I was created a doll  
So man's plaything I am not.  
And I was given strength unbound  
So I am ignorant of being weak.  
And I was given an ample smile  
So that all might see my joy.  
And I was given ears to heed all  
Whenever wisdom speaks.  
*I am black woman*  
*I am her and she is me*  
*I am her and she is me*  
*Quite incredibly.*

And all of the earth is my child  
And my husband is the sun  
And the stars my trinkets  
Every last twinkling one.  
And my father's spirit descends  
Upon me  
In the form of a dove.  
I am black woman, the one and only goddess

The very moon sings of me.  
I was created with feet of bronze  
So onward I must march.  
And I was given a vision  
So it reality I must make.  
I was given a mind to learn  
And in turn to teach.  
And I was created with a mother's heart  
Sacrificing for my world's sake.  
*I am black woman*  
*I am her and she is me*  
*I am her and she is me*  
*For all eternity.*

*Carole Jones*

## YO SOY UNA MUJER ... (FOR EVERY WOMAN!)

I am the one in the restaurant who waits on you,  
I am the mother who holds you gently and sings to you,  
I am the one who cares for you,  
The sinner or the saint,  
The lady on a stage that sensually shakes her hips,  
The loving wife that softly kisses your lips,  
So many things that I could be,  
So many things that you may see,  
But before all of those glorious things,  
I am a lady,  
A woman,  
Yo Soy Una Mujer!

*Melissa Perry*

## ALONE

Feeling alone is frightening and scary. You never know when someone or something is coming to get you.

It's like being in a long hallway and all you can hear are the echoes. Everyone is passing you by. You wonder what they think of you or even if they notice you at all.

It's like being in a deep depression and never getting out.

It's like the feeling of dark clouds all over you, never knowing if it's going to rain or shine.

It's like a long dark road that never seems to end until you're lost.

It's wondering if you can hold on at all.

*Argiro Thimakis*

## LIFE LESSONS

The best piece of advice I would give to others would be to stay in school and not to drop out. Even if it seems hard at the time to stay in school, I have learned it only gets harder in life after you get out.

I dropped out of school at the age of 16 and got married to my husband while he was in the Navy. I went to live with him off-base, and it was the first time I was ever away from home. At the age of 17, I had a child. I was scared and had a lot to learn. I didn't have to work while I was married but worked a few jobs for a short time. The jobs I was able to obtain did not pay much because of my lack of education.

Later, my husband and I grew apart and became different people as we matured. We divorced after 11-1/2 years of marriage. After my divorce, at the age of 28, I had to live with my parents until I could get on my feet.

My first job after my divorce paid \$4.00 an hour. I was trying to support myself and my daughter on this meager salary. If I had received my education, I could have been independent, instead of depending upon my parents for financial help.

I am fifty years old now, and yes, you can learn from life's experiences. But in today's society, education is one of the most important things in life. And without it you will always struggle through life.

*Terry McMillan*

## UNFORGIVING

Why is life so unforgiving,  
Some people think it's not worth living.  
But with my life it makes me think  
Life is like quicksand. You begin to sink  
Into a pit of burning hell because I'm  
Trapped in this unforgiving cell.

*Amanda McPeak*



## ABOUT ME

My name is Louise Nymann Hansen. I'm a Danish au pair in Cleveland, Ohio. On October 20, 2003, our community counselor, Laila Streza, prepared an unusual event for us.

We were going to have a mock trial which is a "play-trial" for our fall event. Prior to the event we were given a story and our parts in the trial. The mock trial was going to be about the fairy tale of "Goldilocks and the Three Little Bears." This is a very famous fairy tale which most people know. It might seem a little bit silly to have a trial based on a fairy tale, but it was taken very seriously by the judge and participating lawyers. Our judge was Laila's sister-in-law. She is a real judge, and we had real lawyers – only the basis for the trial was made up – nothing else.

I got the role of Mama Bear. I was given information about what Mama Bear did and saw at the Bear's house for the event "of the crime." All the other questions the lawyers would ask you, you would have to make up as you went along. Everything at the trial was like a real American trial – at least as you see it on TV. We – the au pairs from all over the world and foreign exchange students from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland – had all the parts like the jurors, witnesses, plaintiff and accused. So when I, as Mama Bear, was called to the stand, I was sworn in like at a real trial and questioned by both parties.

This was all a very interesting experience. We foreigners got to see how the American court system really works and the importance of every little detail. After all the witnesses were questioned and all statements made, the jury came back with the verdict. They unfortunately let Goldilocks go. Everyone knows that she is guilty from the original story, but if you don't have the evidence and proof for it, then she walks. Innocent until proven guilty, and in this case it wasn't proven.

The entire experience was very rewarding. I got a view of the American way of life and American culture.

My reason for coming to the United States in the first place was to experience the American way of life. I have been so lucky to have a great counselor who also has become a best friend for life. Laila Streza, who is Danish like me but has lived in America for almost 20 years, has given me the best possible view of the U.S. with its ups and downs and what it is like to live in America permanently. We have traveled together in the U.S. and Canada. We have talked night and day. Having the best counselor and friend that you can possibly have has just made my life and year much better.

My year, which is pretty much over now, has been very educational and rewarding for me. America has helped to make me more independent and to become a stronger person. I thank my au pair agency, EurAuPair. I thank them for my wonderful host family, for making me a better person, for giving me the opportunity to learn to speak fluent English, and for my best friend, Laila Streza, whom I owe more than I can ever repay. Giving thanks to you all here is the least I can do. Thank you.

*Louise Nymann Hansen*