

Words of Wisdom II

Poems by mothers living at
Concourse House Home for Women
and their Children

Bronx, NY

2015

Introduction

This is the second chapbook collection of *Words of Wisdom* poetry.

The mothers and I met weekly in the community room at Concourse House to explore, write and read poetry on the mic.

In our workshops we wrote and collaboratively created a small representative of the voice of the mothers currently living in transition at Concourse House. It is our hope to continue writing poetry, to share it with each other and you. We hope you enjoy this inspiring collection of poems.

The authors in this book are not identified by their real names. They created fictitious names to protect their privacy.

-Sally DeJesus, facilitator and poet/artist

Special Thanks to:

Manuela Schaudt, Executive Director

Concourse House Home for Women and their Children, Bronx, New York

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Richard Gold, Founder, Pongo Publishing

***And for the mothers living at Concourse House
who showed up every week with their babies
to write and read poems.***

Thank you for sharing your Words of Wisdom.

POEMS

by Tiffany James

<i>A Poem of Life.....</i>	6
<i>About Me.....</i>	7
<i>I am Beautiful.....</i>	7
<i>I am in Love with You.....</i>	8

by Anonymous

<i>Love, Sometimes.....</i>	9
-----------------------------	---

by Chona

<i>The Song I Couldn't Finish.....</i>	10
<i>Inside Me.....</i>	11
<i>I Am.....</i>	12
<i>Being.....</i>	13
<i>This is who You are to Me.....</i>	14
<i>The Lessons of Courage and Fear.....</i>	15

by Anonymous

<i>The Song I Couldn't Finish.....</i>	16
--	----

by Luna

<i>Self-Portrait.....</i>	17
---------------------------	----

by Everyone – a Group poem

<i>Comfort.....</i>	18
---------------------	----

by Blu-Sky

<i>My Hope.....</i>	19
<i>The Song I Couldn't Finish.....</i>	20
<i>This is who You are to Me.....</i>	21
<i>You Don't Know Me.....</i>	22
<i>I Am.....</i>	23
<i>My Journey There and Home.....</i>	24

by Anonymous

<i>Portrait Poem #2.....</i>	26
<i>Love, Sometimes.....</i>	27
<i>Love, Sometimes #2.....</i>	27

by Sherie

<i>Life in Jamaica.....</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Ten Reasons to Love Me.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>A Poem.....</i>	<i>30</i>

by Sherie & Sally

<i>Home to Me.....</i>	<i>31</i>
------------------------	-----------

by Everyone – Group poems

<i>Trapped.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Back When.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>If I Were in Charge of the World.....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Comfort II.....</i>	<i>35</i>

by Beautiee

<i>Untitled.....</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Ten Reasons to Love Me.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Emotions.....</i>	<i>38</i>

by Everyone

<i>To Understand Me You Need to Know.....</i>	<i>39</i>
---	-----------

by Anonymous

<i>I am Beautiful, I Was.....</i>	<i>40</i>
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Poem of Life

by Tiffany James

Life is but a stopping place
a pause in what's to be
a resting place along the road
to sweet eternity.

We all have different journeys
different paths along the way
we all meant to learn some things
but never meant to stay...

Our destination is a place
far greater than we know
for some the journey's quicker
for some the journey's slow.

And when the journey finally ends
we'll claim a great reward
and find an everlasting peace
together with the Lord.

About Me

by Tiffany James

Black, powerful and in control
a hard working person
a strong black mother
a veteran with all the caesarean
I had to deliver my kids.

I am a Capricorn the best sign there is
I have a gift that some others may not have
growing up was rough for me I had to slave.

I Am Beautiful

by Tiffany James

I am beautiful
not by my looks but my by Heart.
I know I am Beautiful on the inside and out
on the inside I care for everyone,
I love everyone, I know
I am not the prettiest girl out there
but I am 100% original
I show my outer beauty
by not hiding behind all the make up
you don't need make up to be pretty.

All you need is your heart
with it you know
you are beautiful
show off your personality.

I Am in Love with You

by Tiffany James

As I look into the future as far as I can see
I can see nothing except you being with me
you are in all of my dreams
whether I'm awake or asleep
anywhere because it's way too deep.

There is nothing I can do to make it go away
I'm in love with you Jason and my love is here to stay
the feelings I have I have never felt before
I don't know anybody else and I know this for sure.

If I can't have you I would rather die alone
the happiest day of my life was when I called you on the phone
no one could ever make me feel this way
the way I do with you
the love I feel with you
is something totally new.

I want you to come back into my mind
Not as a friend but as my boyfriend
I want to be your lover and your best friend
I want to grow old with you until the very end.

I dream in the future you'll call and I am the one
that you have decided that we are not yet done
I pray that someday my dreams will come true
I have this dream every day
because I'm in love with you.

Love, Sometimes

by Everyone - a group poem

Sometimes love is as confusing as
a two-faced friend, a game, a poem
or a newborn baby
like when he cries and you don't know why.

Sometimes it's as tempting as a candy bar
shopping or cash.

Other times love is as frustrating as life
like when you are not able to get a job,
finish school, stay financial
or meet the credit requirements to get an apartment.

Maybe love is as mean as a vampire or
a cold-hearted pastor
like when you come to church
and you are ridiculed for wearing a short skirt.

Perhaps love is as romantic as
visiting the Bahamas, that first kiss,
where there is no larceny in that kiss
like when you are relaxing
like when you were running around free
without a care in the summer.

Love shouldn't be a struggle.

The Song I Couldn't Finish

by Chona

The words I couldn't say

I couldn't say *I'm sorry because I left you all alone.*

The things I couldn't change

I couldn't change how I look for you because God made me this way.

The walls I couldn't break through

I couldn't find a way to break walls you had up that didn't allow you to love me.

The feeling I couldn't feel

I couldn't feel happy anymore because you care no longer here.

The help I couldn't give

I couldn't help you anymore because I can't help myself.

The song I couldn't finish

The song was about me and my love I can give because of the pain felt from you.

Inside Me

by Chona

Inside me you will find someone who dreams of
becoming someone my kids are proud of.

Inside me you will find someone who is like a lonely star
because that's exactly who I am.

Inside me you will find someone who is like a winter storm
when I am very angry.

Inside me you will find someone who is burning to show you
the real me.

Inside me you will find someone who is like
a wild horse
a white rose
a calm storm
a lonely swan.

Inside me you will find someone who is determined to be
better than I am now.

I Am

by Chona

I am Chona
who needs a place to live
who loves my children
who sees me doing the impossible
who hates my daughter's father
who fears dying before my children are old
enough to take care of themselves
who dreams of winning the lottery
and buying my children a big house
who has found poems of love
resident of Concourse House.

Being

by Chona

Being trapped looks like a pair of
jeans that are four sizes too small

Feels like the fat that sucks in
the jeans that are two sound

Tastes like when you throw up
and you can't breathe

Sounds like the breath you take after
you held your breath up in water

The hat was magic and turned into other hat
boats had magic to help me fly away
the car was like night rider's car

Mother - meeting a man like my father
Father – leaving my children.

This is Who You Are to Me

by Chona

In my ocean you are the waves
and no matter what you will always be there.

In my grassy field, you are a
because you are the green that give
the grass color
because without you
there is no grass.

In my galaxy, you are
the brightest star that shines
because when I look up
I can always see you.

In my heart
you are my lub dub sound it makes
because without you I am not alive.

You are my world.

The Lessons of Courage and Fear

by Chona

In my life I've known Courage.

We met when I was standing up bullies in the third grade
nowadays courage is right beside me as I live in a shelter
I find courage when I need it.

In my life I've known Fear.

We met when I was in the third grade
these days fear is always on my left trying to get to me.
fear finds me when I feel like giving up.
I've learned that courage and fear are different - -
when courage tells me, *You're doing it for your girls*

Fear says, *Just let go and stop fighting*
Usually I listen to courage.

I wish that my fear would just go away
I wish that fear no longer existed.

The Song I Couldn't Finish

by Anonymous

The words I couldn't say
I couldn't say goodbye when you left

The walls I couldn't break through
I couldn't find a way to not let you go

The feeling I couldn't feel
I couldn't feel spending time with you

The help I couldn't give
I couldn't help the fact that you wasn't there

The song I couldn't finish
The song was about my father.

Self-Portrait

-Luna

I am painting my self-portrait.

For this work I have chosen the colors of
purple, orange and lime green.

The background of my self-portrait will have the moon
my life has been rocky.

In my self-portrait I will be holding a feather
and my eyes will look confident.

When people see my self-portrait
I think they will say,
She looks like a humble person.

I would like to give my self-portrait to my son.

The title will be,
My Struggles.

Comfort

by Everyone - a Group poem

I remember the comfort of my aunt's soft hand
his hug and the love of my mother.

I remember the comfort of cuddling
the love my children give me every day.

Comfort to me looks like when my
grandmother asked me to drink coffee with her
she was bonding
or like when I was sitting in my mother's lap.

Comfort to me tastes like
warm apple pie and warm soup.

I remember comfort when
you said you loved me
when I got my foot rubbed
when my mom used to comb my hair.

My Hope

by Blu-Sky

I hope

the end of every year will be followed by new hopes and new dreams.

I hope

the weakest dog will find his way home with a family that brings him back to life.

I hope

the fiercest storms will only wash away all of the world's ugly.

I hope

every room will eventually have laughter and love family that will never abandon you.

I hope

gunfire in the distance is just kids in summer playing with fireworks and excited for the lights.

I hope

when life passes, you don't have any regrets and you live life to the fullest.

I hope

the angriest person in me will learn to be happy that I'm living.

The Song I Couldn't Finish

by Blu-Sky

The words I couldn't say

I couldn't say I miss you or how I yearn for your touch

The things I couldn't change

I couldn't change the past or how I hurt you

The walls I couldn't break through

I couldn't find a way into a heart that was already full with love for someone else

The feeling I couldn't feel

I couldn't feel the love you said you had for me

The help I couldn't give

I couldn't help you feel the love in my heart when I made the mistake that broke our bond

The song I couldn't finish.

The song was about you.

This is Who You Are to Me

by Blu-Sky

In my ocean, you are a rainbow fish
because every color is something new in you.

In my grassy field, you are a pond
because I come clean and feel free.

In my galaxy, you are a planet with moons
because there are still parts of you that I haven't explored yet.

In my life
you are a stranger
because there are still a lot of things I don't know about you

You are my world.

You Don't Know Me

by Blu-Sky

You see that I am still
you see that I am a loner
but you don't know me.

You would know me if...
you knew how hard it was to put on a smile on,
on days I feel like curling up and crying my eyes out
you knew how I feel sometimes that no one listens to my truth
you knew how I crave for my mother's touch one last time.

You see that I am loud
you see that I am silly
but you don't know me.

You would know me if...
you knew how I like to read a good book on a cold day
you knew how I love caring for others when they are weak,
how it helps me be strong.

You knew how I am a great listener.

I Am

by Blu-Sky

I am a lonely child
I often wonder how life would be had he
been there
I hear he was a good man that drank a lot
I see how her face lit up as she spoke about him.

I thought I wanted to meet him but years go by
and feelings fade
I am a lonely child.

I pretend I am happy
I feel empty inside like there is something missing
I dance on the outside to cover what's missing on the inside
I wonder if my son will grow up filled with love
I used to cry when I seen little girls playing
I am a lonely child.

I understand that not everyone is built to be parents
I was a lonely child.

My Journey There and Home

by Blu-Sky

Things weren't perfect for me in my life.

First I was carried there in a tornado of social workers
my mom was sick and could not care for me.

I landed in a strange Munchkin Land
that had strange faces watching me
as if I'm a freak in a circus.

Like Dorothy when her house fell on a witch,
I accidentally hurt someone when
I started to lie
one turn into two lies and the
hurt grow bigger and the bigger the
hurt the more people it hurt.

Flying monkeys were mad at me,
and they flew away and I felt alone and I cried.

My imperfect friends let me down by not
understanding my struggle and why I felt
I needed to lie
in the first place.

I believed in a wizard who told me,
I will love you forever.

I had the false idea that I was unloveable
and that no one would ever care
There.

But not a good witch is on my side who says,
Come to me and I will love you unconditionally.

I also have friends who will care for me
and protect my feelings at all costs.

On the yellow brick road I hoped to find myself
and be the best me for him cause he's watching me

I wore out the ruby slippers that represent my courage
I walked places I've never been.

Of course I had the answer in my heart all the time,
which was believe in myself.

I was a survivor because
I lost my way
I lost my mother
Ended up in the world alone.

And I will never be the same because
I am stronger than I was
I know I can survive anything the world throws at me.

And I will always be grateful for the lesson the world
has given me.

And I will always worry about whether he is getting
the right 'all of me'

Home.

Portrait Poem #2

by Anonymous

I am crazy hopeful
but I still wonder if you love me enough.
I hear sirens but I don't slow down
I see change and surprise
I want to be loved
I am crazy hopeful.

I pretend I'm ok when I'm not
I feel stronger now anyway
I touch new realities
I worry about my son
I cry about police brutality, injustice, violence, but
I am crazy hopeful.

I understand there are things I can't change
I say I love you and I mean it
I dream that we will spend the rest of our lives together
I try to understand that it might not be possible for you
I hope we can find a way that doesn't hurt anyone
I am crazy hopeful.

Love, Sometimes

by Anonymous

Sometimes love is as confusing as a newborn baby
Like when he's crying and you don't know why

Sometimes it's as tempting as going shopping
Like when you see a big sale

Other times love is as frustrating as a little sister or life itself
Like when things don't go the way you expect them to.

Maybe love is as mean as your boss at a job you really need
Like when the day is long and work is piling up

Perhaps love is as romantic as a kid in summer
Like when you don't have a care in the world.

Love, Sometimes II

by Anonymous

Sometimes love is confusing
Like when a baby is crying

Sometimes it's as tempting as driving around
Like when you arguing with your partner

Other times love is as frustrating as dealing with people every day

Perhaps love is romantic as visiting the Bahamas.

Life in Jamaica

by Sherie

Laying in my hammock on my veranda
looking up into the sky where the stars
are very bright and beautiful
my family and I listen to Reggae music
rocking to the beats of Bob Marley songs.

We planted our own food, we ate
natural plants from the ground
not from a store
Sugar cane
Mangos
Plums and
Papaya
Were sweet like candy.

We raised goats, pigs and chickens
for our food
we drank herbal tea medicines
Fever grass for the flu
Cerassie for the stomach
and Thyme
for flavor.

These were some of the best days
of a child growing up in a sweet
sweet and
Irie Jamaica.

Ten Reasons to Love Me

by Sherie

I may not be perfect, but I am honest
I always wish for a beautiful home and also a car
I do my best to understand everyone.

I can create memories
I want the people around me to feel comfortable
I hold onto some things forever, like love.

I have unusual ideas, like making a flying car
If I were an animal, I'd be a lion.

I have secret talents:

*I mix all different types of cooked foods together
and it always comes out amazing when done*

I am an ocean diver

I can stitch clothes together

I am a jack of all trades

I am a designer.

I am beautiful and blessed!

A Poem

by Sherie

I needed real love
he needed me to love him unconditionally
I expected Sean to be hurt
he expected me to be silent
I needed to have a voice and to speak up out loud
he wanted me to shut up.

I expected not to be silent
when he expected me to be silent
but my children always got my unconditional love.

My pet's name was, *Speedy the Fish*
he grew up so fast he almost outgrew his tank.

I really needed a chance to be myself
I really needed some relief from my pain.

But I am a survivor
I will always keep on pushing until I reach
my destination of being
what I want to be.

Home to Me

by Sherie & Sally

When I think of home I see a kitchen
colorful fruit
soul food and
my smiling son.

When I think of home I hear kids making noise
stray cats crying
and a talking parrot in my grandmother's Jamaican kitchen
snitching on me and my cousin stealing food.

When I think of home I smell fresh scents
cleaning smells
and coffee.

When I think of home I taste peppermint
tea in the morning.

When I think of home I touch soft
bed linens.

My future home
When I think of it
is where I feel free and safe to be myself
where I have health and strength
to be around all my kids and loved ones again
and do things together.

My future home
when I think of it
is a dream.

Trapped

by Everyone - a Group poem

Being trapped feels like closed
in a dark closet, locked
with creepy sounds coming from
the hallway smelling like old dirty
laundry tasting like mildew from
the corners of the tub.

a hammer
a fire extinguisher
a closed window

I wish the hammer can walk
The fire extinguisher to have wings
The closed window to say,
Free yourself!

Back When

by Everyone - a Group poem

I remember back
when dad was still with us
when I had to pay no bills
when my mother was alive.

I remember back
when I slept all the way through the night
when I didn't have no health problems
when we were happy together.

I remember back
before the hurt and pain of relationships
back when I didn't have no kids
when I could be outside on my lonesome.

I remember back
when I could stay out all night
when I had my own apartment
before coming to the shelter.

I remember back
when I had a good job

I remember back when the moonlight
and stars came in peace.

If I Were in Charge of the World

a group poem

If I were in charge of the world
there'd be no more wars or hungry or homeless people.

If I were in charge of the world
there'd be more public housing
there'd be no more senators and no more greed
and everybody would have a good education
there'd be food and housing for all.

I'd be serious and I'd say,
*Stop all the wars and get rid of all the guns and go get a job
and stop lying so much.*

I'd be serious and I'd say,
If a man caused heartbreak to a woman they'd go to jail.

If I were in charge of the world
You wouldn't be afraid of heights
You wouldn't be afraid of different races
You wouldn't be afraid of walking outside at night as a woman
without worrying or fear for your life

If I were in charge of the world.

Comfort #2

by Everyone - a group poem

Comfort to me is

the sound of a guitar
hot chocolate
somebody saying,
I love you.

Comfort to me is

romantic
like good food
unpredictable.

Things can comfort you

that you never thought could
like being in the woods
like no internet
like watching old school black & white movies

Can comfort you.

Untitled

by Beautiee

Beautiful am I
like the dark, blue and purple skies.

I once was afraid to show my wings
to the world that I
can fly.

I always imagine if that beautiful woman
would come out of her disguise

skin like silk
dark dreamy eyes
kinky curly hair
tall like a glass of wine
her mind
set at ease.

Then she turned to me
and now I see
how much I shine
voice sweet as love
heart of gold
I was...
I am...

I am beautiful
Can you see my shine?

Ten Reasons to Love Me

by Beautiee

I may not be not be perfect, but I can be determined
I always wish for the unexpected
I do my best to understand how I can be better.

I can create a world of miracles
I want the people around me to feel free and safe
I hold onto some things forever, like pain and happiness.

I have unusual ideas, like sky diving or swimming with dolphins
If I were an animal, I'd be a white lion.

I have a secret talent –
I can hear the melodies of peoples' pain.

I am the one.

Emotions

by Beautiee

To hold back my emotions is like
stopping yourself from breathing.

The racing loud thumps in the pit of my
chest as it hurts to breathe it slowly speeds
up with the thoughts racing through my brain
I begin to panic as the world stops around me.

My ears suddenly go deaf as if I am
thirty-thousand miles above the pretty blue skies
I heat up so fast it feels like warm blood
running through every part in my skin
throughout my body
but I quickly catch myself for the world cannot see
of this deranged angry beast.

She fights to get out
I fight to keep her in.

The pain I feel breaks me down
I then kneeled down like I took a bow
and begin to catch every salty tear that dripped from my eyes
not to keep her inside will hurt me otherwise.

So I swallow the anger, depression, anxiety
and loneliness and stand with a smile restricting the beast.

To hold back my emotions is like
stopping yourself from breathing.

To Understand Me You Need to Know

by Everyone - a Group poem

To understand me you need to know
that I'm always right except
when I'm wrong,
that I'm very sensitive
very tough,
that I am very stubborn
and hard-headed.

To understand me you need to know
that I think a lot
but not before I speak,
how open and willing I can be,
how forgiving I can be
how much I laugh
how much I cry.

To understand me you need to know
how many grudges I still have
how lonely I am
but how much I still smile.

But to really, *really*
understand me
you need to know
I'm human
I'm loveable
I'm real
I'm me.

I Am Beautiful, I Was

by Anonymous

I am beautiful.

Once I was afraid to be beautiful.

My eyes are beautiful like bright reflections of the moon on water
once I was afraid to see how beautiful I was, I am.

My hair is beautiful like a dancing waterfall

My neck is beautiful like a marble statue of a goddess

My lips are beautiful like a sweet ripe purple plum

Once I was afraid of you

but now my heart is beautiful like an unfolded bouquet
of bright and colorful flowers.

Once I was afraid to feel love

but now I'm afraid not to feel love!

I am beautiful

I was afraid to be beautiful

I am beautiful.

Words of Wisdom II
a chap book of poems written by mothers at
The Concourse House
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by Sally DeJesus

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Concourse House, Home for Women and their children works to eliminate homelessness by providing homeless families with safe, stable transitional housing. Concourse House works with families to break the cycle of poverty by providing a variety of social services and interactive programs that promote personal growth and independence.