

# #EVERYONE'S COLUMN

ISSUE 7:  
FAMILY

#Everyone's Column is made up of submissions from inmates, desistors, staff, and volunteers. It aims to allow you a space of reflection and promote a sense of community. We hope that you will inspire and be inspired.

## FEATURING SUBMISSIONS FROM RCU.

RCU, also known as the Resolute Correctional Unit, is a transformative environment that supports and strengthens renounees' prosocial identities and their resolve towards a gang-free lifestyle. Renounees live as a community with a shared purpose and opportunities are provided to further strengthen their prosocial identity through a series of programmes and practices.

**"CHANGE HAPPENS AT THE  
RIGHT TIME FOR EACH PERSON,  
AND IT'S NOT FOR US TO JUDGE  
BUT TO SUPPORT AND PRAY FOR  
ONE ANOTHER'S GROWTH."**

\*Reflection from a desistor



# THE STRONG FRONT THAT FELL

Growing up in a middle-low income family, my parents brought up four of us with love and discipline instilled. We may have differences among each other, we are still closely knitted as a family. Being the eldest, seeing my father, the sole breadwinner, working so hard supporting the family, I decided to work part-time to lessen the financial burden from secondary school till the end of my university study.

I had grown up independently and my parents did not interfere with my choices and had been supportive of my decisions. I had a good career and because of my independence, I kept everything to myself. When I faced failures, I would hide it from my family by putting up a strong front as I did not want them to worry about me. However, I ended up falling into the drug cycle. During my DRC1 detention, they were shocked to find out that I had taken so much burden onto myself. They reached out and supported me throughout my recovery, but I slipped. Back in DRC2 now, despite being disappointed, they continued to support me, especially my parents and relatives. My wake-up calls were my parents crying in front of me and my siblings questioning me. How many tens of years do our parents have? Can we have our old korkor back? These set me thinking, my family has always been there for me, but I am the oldest child who has been running away. They still believe in me and love me for who I am. Friends come and go, but family will always be there for me. They will be my strongest pillar of support when I am out of DRC and throughout my recovery journey.

# I MISS YOU, GRANDMA

\*This is a submission from the RCU.

I grew up in the family being the youngest, my relationship with my grandmother was the closest. She was the one who I saw constantly and she would get me whatever I wanted. I loved her very much. When I was 21, I was arrested for drug trafficking and my parents did not let my grandmother know that I was in prison. After a few months of probing from my grandmother, my parents decided to tell her that I was in prison. She was in Australia when she found out. She was very disappointed and upset that I landed myself in such a situation, but she still flew back from Australia just to visit me. When I saw her during the visit I felt that I was a failure and that I had really disappointed her. There were so many things that I wanted to say but time just wasn't enough.

Months later after the visit, she passed on. I felt so helpless when I heard the news as I couldn't be there for her. If I was given a chance to say something to her now, it would be: "Grandma, even though you are not here, don't worry. I am still trying my best to change."



# HER FAVOURITE DESSERT



I was raised by my mother as the sole breadwinner. With the help of an obsolete tool called the typewriter, she brought food to the table. Her occupation was a typist in a hospital in Malaysia. My father was a diabetic and he stopped working at the age of forty. He looked after me and my sister at home until we both finished school. Through their diligent savings and prudent spendings, they were able to put me through tertiary education in Singapore. I graduated and subsequently became a Singapore citizen. I was earning a good salary, holding a managerial position in a prestigious organisation.

I only have two regrets in my life. The first is my encounter with drugs that subsequently led me to DRC not once, but twice. The second is not being able to perform the last rites as the eldest son at my father's funeral. I was on tagging when he passed on in Malaysia. I remembered how devastated I was when I went to work that day. I kept this to myself and did not inform my colleagues. To this day, I cannot forgive myself. I now understand the saying, "Grief has no time limit."

My mother was diagnosed with severe dementia a year ago. It really pains me to see how my once able mother lost the ability to fend for herself overnight – from showering, controlling her bowel movement, to knowing when to eat and remembering our names. I had started well in life by the grace of my parents' effort and unconditional love. How could I ever repay them? How could I find redemption for the hurt and shame I have caused?

"Here are your orders. Two bowls of peanut paste." The desert auntie's voice startled me from my thoughts. My mother was still staring into space when I placed the bowls down on the table. I placed the spoon filled with peanut paste near her mouth. "Come taste your favourite dessert, Ma," I gazed into her eyes, persuading her. Her lips parted and as she gulped down the hot dessert, her lips curled into a smile.

"Will you forgive me, Ma?", my heart asked quietly. I promise to make things right again, to rebuild my life. I want to mend our relationship and make you happy again. Suddenly, she looked at me like she heard my thoughts. Gently, she reached out and placed both her hands on mine. Tears rolled down my cheek.

"Thank you, Ma."

# BLINDED



I wish to go back home, like how it used to be,  
But now I am in a place, where I do not want to be.  
For the Hes and Shes at home, how has it been?  
Thanks for loving me, for the heart to forgive me.

Sorry to let work blind me,  
To see what and who matters to me,  
In the clouds of stress and darkness, chillings crept into me,  
And take me places as high as it can be.

I lost my memory and forgot I had a family,  
I thought that if I could turn back time, I should not be a busy bee,  
But no matter what I can be or cannot be,  
Drugs should not take over me.

Past, present or future, what should I be?  
Be the better self, no matter where life's difficulties will bring me,  
There is always family, standing behind me.

# WHO WE CHOOSE TO BE

\*This is a submission from an S1 staff.

Family shapes who we are as a person from birth. Our parents provide for us, teach us, and discipline us. Our siblings and children love us, play with us, and grow alongside us. At its best, family can be a source of comfort, guidance, and love. But unfortunately, for some of us, family can be a source of pain, neglect, or even abuse (physical and/or emotional). Negative habits and generational trauma could often be unintentionally passed down like an unbroken cycle, passing down one generation's suffering to the next. A father's absence, a mother's emotional unavailability, or the lingering nightmares of the past can shape us in ways we might not even realize. But are we forever cursed to repeat this negative cycle? No, I refuse to let this define who I am. We will be the people we choose to be. Some questions to ask yourself:

- Am I a source of love or suffering for my family?
- Am I repeating the mistakes of past generations?
- What can I do differently for my children and those I love?

It takes courage and immense self-awareness to admit that you may be a source of pain and suffering to your loved ones, but the important question is, what will you do to change that? We cannot change the past, but we can shape the future.

# BREAKING THE CYCLE

\*This is a submission from the RCU.

I was born to a family where my parents showered me with love and concern to the extent that my mum was blamed by my relatives for overly pampering me. They nurtured me with the right values. All my wrongdoing in the past was not the result of my parents' nurturing, but was because of my curiosity, impulsiveness, assumptions, and stupidity that led to where I am now.

The only word I can relate closely to is remorse, because my parents now have to look after my children while I am incarcerated. I told myself that it is time to change for the better, and the first step I took was to renounce from my Secret Society as it was an opportunity to show my children that I am remorseful for my unwholesome actions.

I completed my rehabilitation programmes in A1 and was given multiple opportunities to be an inmate trainer there. Through those experiences, I learnt how to better listen to others. These helped me to communicate better with my family and over time, they were able to see virtuous improvements in me. I end off with a quote, "A smart person would want to change the world; A wise man would want to change himself."



# MAMA'S TEARS

Mama looked me through the glass pane,  
Eyes red clearly filled with all the damn pain.  
I ain't even shed a tear, but I still felt my heart wrench,  
Damn I'm just another white shirt sittin' on the bench.

Now I'm sayin',  
"Mama, wipe them tears from your eyes,  
Your kid fine, he don't wanna see you just cry."

But she ain't even stoppin', she still ain't sayin nothing,  
I'm pleadin, "Please Mama please talk to me",  
& she did stop cryin', she did start talkin',  
& the words she boutta say really did mean somethin'.

"You used to be a good kid, what the hell happened,  
Used to heed my words, now what the hell happened,  
How you got to violence? How you got to drugs?  
How you do them things, that you once frowned upon,  
What I do wrong son? Where I gone wrong?  
It's probably all my fault, yea I know it's all my fault  
Please leave this life behind, baby before you come back home,  
Please leave this life behind, baby before you come back home.

Now I'm sayin,  
"I'm sorry mama, I never meant to hurt you,  
If I could turn back time, I would undo all my crimes,  
I don't wanna be a druggie, I don't wanna be a thug,  
I Just wanna be in your arms, drowning in your love,  
Mama,  
I'm sorry Mama."



# WHAT IS FAMILY?

"Family is Loyalty" They're there for me in my darkest hours.

"Family is Sacrifice" They visit me, write letters to me, send me books & care for me, even when they have other things to do.

"Family is Forgiveness" They believe in me even though I've messed up many times before.

"Family is a Choice" They choose not to give up on me.

"Family is Pain" They scold me and many discipline me when I am wrong.

"Family is Human" We may have had problems or fights in the past and times of unfairness, but they are only human.

"Family is Love" We forgive each other and try to be there for each other through good and bad times and we keep moving forward.

Blood is thicker than water, and I love my family.  
Thank you, Mum & Dad.

**THANK YOU FOR READING THIS ISSUE OF #EVERYONE'S COLUMN!  
THIS PUBLICATION IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY DRC(S1) CRSES.**