

#EVERYONE'S COLUMN

ISSUE 9A: A JOURNEY OF CHANGE

#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.

TO CHANGE

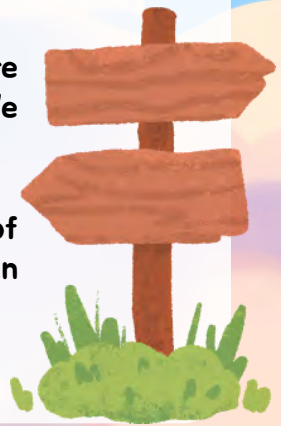
Often times we are prisoners of the past, we let our past become grievances chained on our neck, cuffed over our hands and legs. We allow our past to paralyse our pains, we allow our hurt to simmer, we allow anger to turn into resentment, we allow resentment to grow into bitterness, we allow bitterness to catalyse into hatred. We cannot change our past, we can't go back to the past and start a new beginning, but we can change the meaning of our past. With the courage to change things, we can all start now and have a new ending. We Change!

All humans make mistakes; what determines a person's character isn't the mistakes we made, but how we change those mistakes we've made and turn them into lessons rather than excuses. There is no such thing as bad people. We may be people who've done bad things, but mistakes don't have to be rubbed in. With the courage to change things, we can change our mistakes and rub it out. We Change!

The great thing in life is not about where we are, but the direction we are heading to. The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. We Change!

Change is wholly accepting who we are and realising the enlightened nature of ourselves, embracing change with courage, humility and gratitude. We can change from people of rude to people of grace.

We Change!



MY BIGGEST REGRET

Coming from a middle class family, I was showered with love and attention from my grandparents and mom. I always yearned for my father's presence. I was diagnosed with ADHD at age 5. Because I yearn for my father's presence, and I didn't know my ADHD would impact my thinking, feeling and actions, my father perceived it as me misbehaving. My dad would use violence to discipline me and on days when he was drunk, he would abuse my mom or me violently. My actions only got worse and for the past 15 years, I've spent at least 8 years being incarcerated. My father disowned me when I was 20. For the past 10 years, I've been trying to pull myself back up without the support of my parents or a roof over my head. Life was tough and lonely for most of it.

Last January, my dad got hold of me and talked to me, and asked me multiple times for my forgiveness. Me being me, my arrogance and egoism took the better of my judgment. He passed on in July. You see, my biggest regret in life wasn't the fact that I pretty much wasted my time in and out of prison, or whether I ended up in DRC for drug consumption...

My biggest regret yet is that I wasn't humble; instead, I was egoistic and arrogant to the point where I blamed my dad for who I became, and I did not forgive him. I should have humbled myself and talked to him. Now that he's gone, I've spiraled down into self-destruction because of my childishness. DRC allowed me to self-reflect on my past actions and to think of a better future.



SHIFTING MINDSETS

Back when I first got arrested, I felt like my life was over. Even when I landed in S1, I still couldn't believe I got myself into this situation. Luckily, I was arrested with my best friend, who made time in here feel less dreadful. Unfortunately, luck always seems to run out. I was separated from him and was left to deal with all my thoughts and personal problems alone. It was difficult to cope as we depended on each other for moral support. I felt so alone, surrounded by people a decade older than I was. People whom I felt like I could not connect with. All I hoped for was someone to talk to, to pass the time, and to cure boredom. Not long after, an inmate whom I'd met previously was transferred into my cell. I felt like my prayers were answered, and all my worries and troubles had faded away. It was a good week or so having someone to talk to everyday. Soon enough, that inmate began distancing himself from me and losing his patience with me. It started to dawn on me that I'd put an unrealistic expectation on that inmate. I was treating him as though he were my best friend of 10 years that I got arrested with.

It took me a while to realise that I was very dependent on other people to feel secure in myself, which is an unhealthy trait to have. Seeing how the people around me started to change how they treated me made me realise that I needed to make a change for myself and the people around me.

I started small by thinking twice before I spoke. I also then tried changing my mindset. I put my faith in God/the universe that everything happens for a reason. Slowly, I started to appreciate the time I had in here to better myself. I found that thinking twice before speaking also allowed me to be more helpful and productive. I tended to contribute more in my cell as I began considering other people's thoughts and feelings. I faced countless challenges, like self-doubt. I had days where I felt like no matter how hard I tried to change, it felt like there was no progress. I told myself that it is okay and that I have faith that God/the universe is making me feel this way for a reason.

Oddly enough, on that same night, 2 of my older cellmates talked to me and told me that they saw my efforts in changing, and they appreciated my contribution. That talk alone was enough to make me not stop wanting to become better. It was very reassuring to know that my efforts were not for nothing. The support from others helped me not to give up. There will always be room for improvement, but we should always acknowledge even the smallest of changes. Never give up, even if progress seems slow!



TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY

***this is a submission from RCU**

So long as we are on Earth, there is no finish line as to when we stop trying to strive towards growth. In the same way that if a bodybuilder stops working out, he begins to lose the muscle that he has gained over time, when we stop engaging in our practices, our faith weakens.

It is important to understand that just as there's no magic pill to obtaining the physical body we desire, there is no shortcut to becoming mentally strong. The secret to walking the path is not in pretending to be perfect, but in proclaiming your weaknesses. On a positive note, most of us at some point in our imperfect lives would have liked to change something about ourselves. Be it the unhappiness and/or embarrassment we felt, or burdened moments in life, we would have wanted to transform those moments to become better, more respected, less miserable, if not happier.

A DIFFERENT LIFE.

Many individuals struggle to achieve their goals of change because they think it will be fast and easy. They often set overly ambitious targets and want a quick fix. Always remember that thought patterns, emotions, and behaviours take years to form. By trying to change them 'Fast and Furious', it is not something that can be achieved quickly like studying or completing a school project. I believe in what I want and what we have in our community. RCU is the same – a different life from our past, and that is why we are here, making a stand for ourselves to unlearn and relearn. An individual who can be changed by circumstances, people, and the choices you and I make today. I end with a quote,

"WE CAN FIX PROBLEMS ONLY WHEN WE ARE WILLING TO NOTICE THEM".

METAMORPHOSIS



'To avoid change is to avoid progress'

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