

Bugs

By **ASHLEY CHEVRETTE**

Growing up, my childhood was extremely unstable and unpredictable. My parents had a bad habit of abusing drugs that everyone else knew about besides me. I am one of three children, and somehow it seemed as if, no matter how hard my older brothers and I tried, we could never escape from the chaos in our lives. When strangers would come in and out of my house at all hours of the night, no one was there to care. Every time a rock would be thrown through our windows due to my parents' drug deals, no one was there to care. And every time my parents would slip back into their room for hours, sometimes days at a time, no one was there to care, either. As a child, I felt very confused and was very lonely.

I was 8 years old and in third grade at Roger Sherman Elementary School in Meriden. I loved being a shining Sherman star! I would put so much effort into my schoolwork, hoping, praying, it would bring some peace and normalcy into my household. My brothers were not particularly good at school, but whenever they would bring home a C-minus, my mom would applaud and praise them. I remember going to my parents the first time I got a 100% on a spelling test. I was so proud of myself and thought that maybe because I had accomplished something that night they would tuck me in and kiss me goodnight, instead of shutting their door at 7 p.m. sharp for a long night ahead. I went to my parents with that 100% and, yeah, they smiled. They said that they wouldn't expect anything less from me, but what I really wanted was a hug and kiss from both of them acknowledging how hard I tried.

It was about halfway through my third-grade year when my father had left us. I re-

member that day so vividly; I was sitting on the couch in the living room listening to my parent's drug-induced arguments. Suddenly, my father burst through their bedroom door, walking hastily toward the side door without even a glance toward his baby girl. My mother was screaming and crying about how evil of a man he was and asking how he could do this to us. I ran to the window to watch their fight continue as he revved his motorcycle and drove away without a goodbye.

Ever since that day, things with mom and her habits had taken a serious turn for the worst. Soon after that, more random, scary strangers had started breaking in our house and throwing more rocks through our windows. She pulled my brothers and me out of school, packed up what we could and headed down south to North Carolina. I still hate that day. She ripped me from my school, my friends, my teachers and my community that had supported me and nurtured me more than she did.

We landed in a trailer home in Lumberton County, and I was enrolled into Orrum Middle School. Being the new girl with a funny "Yankee" accent was nothing to be proud of. All the kids made fun of me for having unkempt frizzy hair, for how developed my body was compared to everyone else's and for the fact that the little amount of clothing I had that always reeked because my mom didn't have money to do our laundry. I sat alone at lunch every day while girls came by, hit me and said hurtful things loudly enough for at least three neighboring tables to hear. One day in line, I was in front of another mixed girl with big frizzy hair with a funny "Yankee" accent. They called her "Bugs," because those same mean girls targeted her too, claiming she had bugs in her hair.

Her name was Raven. She sat next to me at

lunch that day and hugged me for about 10 minutes. I cried like a 3-year-old in the middle of our cafeteria, because that was first time I had been hugged by anyone in about a year-and-a-half. She sat with me every day after that,

and I would otherwise only see her when passing to other classes, but a 10-second glance was all I needed. I had felt so alone, betrayed and scared everywhere I went. At 8 years old, I contemplated suicide and had made several attempts before I met Raven. When I told her that, she made me promise to call her every day when I got home. We would talk all night long. Raven was there when I fell asleep every night and there when I woke up every day after.

She was not able to stop my mother's drug habit or stop us from being taken away by the Department of Children and Families again down in North Carolina, but she gave me an outlet and friendship. I do not know if I would have ever gone through with taking my own life, but I thank Raven for why I did not. I was always very grateful to have had her in my life, even if it was only for a short nine months. After being taken into custody by DCF, I never heard from or saw Raven again. I wish that I could find her just to thank her and let her know she helped fix my life.



Ashley Chevette

Family

By **BRIAN GIBBONS**

Blood, genes, ancestors is what comes to mind when the word 'Family' has been used. But what if...what if there's more to it? There must be some deeper meaning to this frequently used word. Things like loyalty, love, building each other up. People who stay, people who care, people who accept you for you. Blood can spill, but love is always there. Family is not a surface level word. There is always a deeper meaning. Loss and longing allows for these deeper thoughts to surface and come to mind. I may be only 16 but I have been through more than you'll ever realize.

Transformation

By **MONICA FIGUEROA**

Transformation
That deep inner feeling
When they're away
No escape
For your own good
Shame on me
I used to think
Blinked
Felt like eternity
But it wasn't me
Young, fully aware
DCF pulled me out for safety
Secured in a new habitat
All so hastily
Who did I become?
Lost in the atmosphere
Still in my high school years
Yes, this was it
Group home to foster home
No fear
I was welcomed
I shed some tears
Joy consumed my soul
Became a college student
Joined an Army's unit
Thank God for every moment
I include supportive workers
The line does not stop here
There are yet journeys ahead to endure
Forever I will solely be me
No fear for sure.

My Name Is ...

By **JAQUAN HARRIS**

Hello, my name is Jaquan Harris. I want to tell you a story. My story. In 2005, my brother and I were officially taken into the Department of Children and Families foster care system after five years of on-again, off-again situations with DCF. However, it's important that you know the whole story. I was born in North Carolina in 1996 to wonderful parents. My mother moved up north to Connecticut when I was only 4 months old, because there were better job opportunities up here. She was an in-home nurse for the elderly. We moved to Hamden and mortgaged a beautiful home on Newhall Street. I spent a lot of time in that house playing and being a kid.

Our landlords, Mr. Bill and Mr. Gates, had already been living in that house before we arrived. They were two nice old men. I remember spending hours with them, because they always had something interesting to say about their past. A while after we moved into our house, our aunt and her two children from North Carolina moved in with us, as well. I loved having this big family to live with. We sat together through power outages, played board games and watched movies together.

This period of my life was good, but it came to an end. I remember the exact moment it died. One day during summer vacation, my mother and aunt got into a stupid fight. After they were done arguing, my brother and I were told to stand in the kitchen, so we did. We watched as my mother took six, 40-ounce bottles of liquor and smashed them on the ground one by one. I was frightened and so was my brother. That day

we left our house to go live with another aunt. I was happy. I was hoping that I could see more of my father, now that I was living with his sister. Similarly, history repeated itself and my family was back on our own. Only, this time, there was nobody to lend a helping hand. By the middle of winter, we were homeless. We ended up at our old house. I remember my brother having to sneak in through a window, for two reasons: 1) I was always a heavy child, and 2) our old house was abandoned, and nobody lived there anymore. We slept on crates. (You read that correctly, crates.) My mother sacrificed and slept on the floor.

The next morning, we left that house and I would never see it again. The house isn't even standing anymore: it's been torn down and made into a parking lot. Anyway, that morning we went to see if a friend would help, and she did. She housed, watched and fed my brother and me while my mom was out searching for a job. Unfortunately, this friend couldn't continue helping us in that way, so she helped in another. She dropped us off at a shelter. We can't remember how long we stayed, but this shelter was just the thing we were looking for, a place to sleep and eat. However, nothing in this world comes for free. There was a strict "no alcohol" rule, and my mom broke it. That same night, I was pried from around my mom and into an office so my mom could be escorted out of the building. I remember being asked, "Is there anyone that we can call?" The only answer I could think of was, "You just carted her out of the door."

Since then, we've been in the foster care system. This is my story. Don't be confused, my

story is a happy one. Although it hurts the child that lives in me, the system quite possibly saved my life. I have had the privilege to see 18 years of life, I'm a high school graduate and I'm currently enrolled in college. My brother and I have been living in the same foster home for the past 10 years. None of that would have been achievable, if I weren't in the system.

However, I do want you to know that my mother did everything in her power to turn our lives around. She is one of the nicest people you'll ever meet, and all she ever wanted was to have a happy family. Sometimes it's hard to get a royal flush when you're playing Go Fish. As for my father, the last time I saw him was two years ago. I love my father, I really do, but he deprived me of a fundamental right, which is him. My brother is a wonderful barber. He'll be 20 years old this July.

As for me, I'll keep advocating for youth and going to school. The most important thing you should take away from this is; I'm writing this at 3:30 a.m. with a 10:30 a.m. class because I have a story that needs to be told. Thank you to everybody who has touched my life.



Jaquan Harris

Police Report

By **LINDSAY NOVAK**

A word has been arrested for criminal activity.

Arrest Report
Word Banned
06/23/15, 7:00 PM
Arresting Officer: 7465 L.N.

A young adult has used the word ***restricted*** in the context of being too reserved. I believe ***restricted*** should no longer exist, for the reason that *everyone should express freely however the hell they want and not care what others think or say*. Everyone has their freedom to express themselves and be respected by doing so. ***Re-stricted*** is holding back and not moving forward because they are too comfortable. Therefore, there SHOULD BE FREEDOM OF SELF EXPRESSION!