



Inside: Nobody Girl

From Crisis to Consciousness
Edited & Narrated by Dr. Leanne Levy



Inside: Nobody Girl

Created and facilitated by Dr. Leanne Levy with Tassie Konstantopoulos and Filomena De Santis for Batshaw's clients serving Youth Protection and Youth Criminal Justice Act placement orders, the goal was to empower girls in difficult circumstances to use photography, art and writing to re-frame, re-present, and discuss their own understanding of issues in their lives, and re-consider their options. In the spirit of belonging and generosity, we created a non judgemental safe space sisterhood to share and explore our lived experiences, to foster deeper sense of selves, to nurture the confidence and patience to make healthier choices, to build self-esteem, and to facilitate the healing process. Throughout this book the girls demonstrate great insight into their own situations, they recognize that true power resides from within, and they emphasize the importance of teens helping teens. We pay it forward with this book.

Inside: Nobody Girl

From Crisis to Consciousness



Strength-Based Intervention

Inside: Nobody Girl is a therapeutic and empowerment photography, art and writing intervention program for teenage girls serving Youth Protection and Youth Criminal Justice Act placement orders at Batshaw's Jeanne Sauvé. The project was developed and facilitated by Dr. Leanne Levy, in collaboration with Tassie Konstantopoulos, the girls' Educator, and Filomena De Santis, the Program Manager. *Inside* was the main theme for drawing, taking pictures, and writing about them: Inside my heart, inside my head, inside my life, inside the unit, inside the system. All girls present in the unit participated in the project but for the purpose of this book, four stories were selected and all photos and writing was a collaborative curatorial effort between the girls, Fil, Tassie and Leanne. To ensure anonymity all names are changed. Taking ownership of the program, its process and this book, the girls named it Inside: Nobody Girl. *They share their stories with you for personal, social and systematic change.*



The Unit

Jeanne Sauvé is a highly structured secure residential program. The unit provides provisional detention and custody for *Youth Criminal Justice Act* clients. It also provides *encadrement intensif* programming for Youth Protection clients. Encadrement Intensif constitutes a specialized clinical program for youth whose behaviors are considered very dangerous towards her self or others given their gravity, intensity and recurrence. The purpose of the program is to create a context, which favors the progressive integration of internal control mechanisms allowing the client to control dangerous behaviors. This is achieved through the use of dynamic and static measures where the intensity of the measures is modulated by the protection needs of the client and those in her environment. The program offers family-centered services aimed at reducing risk and returning the client to her community. It also includes a high school component, a diverse activity program, group work services, and a secure back-up program.

NOBODY
IN GIRL,
BODY & A



The Girls

Many young women involved with the Youth Protection system and the Youth Criminal Justice Act are victims of different types of abuse including substance abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation, violence, neglect, abandonment, and /or chaotic and unstable family life.

As a result, many turn to drugs to escape their nightmares, to self-harming tactics including attempts of suicide to release their pain, and to the wrong male partners to love and feel loved. However disturbing their individual circumstances are, what they have in common are their faith in others, their hope for a brighter future, their resilience for choosing life despite their hardship, their perseverance to improve their circumstances, their desire to be and feel free, and their fear for their future, once released back into their communities.

EVERY SCAR IS A BATTLE
I'VE LOST.

Melody

I've lost all control

Drawing by Melody

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Melody, 14

Under a Youth Protection placement order



So you want to know all about me?

I am the face in the mirror, only not.

What made me despise the girl in the mirror enough to transform her.
To turn her into a stranger.

So you want to know the whole story?
Why I swerved off the high road, hard left to nowhere.

Recklessly.
Indifferent to those coughing my dust.

I picked up speed, no limits, no top end, just a high velocity rush to madness.



eat well
Love.
Honest.
not Broken.
no scars.
not so fat.
enjoy it.
fun.
HATE.
Bitch.
Broken.
try shooting coke.
Smoke.
asthma.
cut.
fat.
abused.
prostitute?
No.
CON.
Troll.
Selfish.
fish nets - prostitution ring?
laugh.
happy.
Be myself.

There is a lot to say about myself...

I'm 14 years old, soon 15. I haven't been in the system for long but I can say that I have learned a lot since I have been here. I made some bad decisions in my life. I went through stuff that no one should go through. One thing I am learning here is I'm not alone, talking about my past rather than totally ignoring it has helped me to realize this.

I grew up in a lot of confusion, chaos and arguments. I moved a lot during my youth. I went to 8 different schools, I'm now in grade 10, and I really haven't a clue how I made it this far.

Up until the age of 12, I lived with my mom, my brother and two sisters. My siblings and I do not share the same father.



Melody

A Mercy Killing

Drawing by Melody

© Inside: Nobody Girl

Have you had so much to say that your mouth closed up tight, struggling to harness the nuclear force coalescing within your words?

Have you ever had so many thoughts churning inside that you didn't dare let them escape, incase they blew you wide open?

Have you ever been so angry that you couldn't look in the mirror for fear of finding the face of evil glaring back at you? I stared, trying to find some words, any words, to express the terror of those minutes, the horror of this violation, the humiliation of this benediction.

But my mouth closed up tight around the nuclear force building inside, thought after thought churning the evil in my core threatening to eviscerate me.

Would you call it a mercy killing?



Melody

Waiting

Photo by Tassie Konstantopoulos
Photo edit by Leanne Levy

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Feeling good, the biggest problem of all.

You know how riding real fast in a car or a spectacular takeoff in a jet gives you an awesome rush of adrenaline? You know how spotting an eagle cruising low over the treetops, or watching a baby finally master the try-try-again of walking makes you glow all over? You know how singing a beautiful song with a dead-on pitch, or getting every test answer right, including the extra credit brainteaser makes you feel like you could take on the world? You know how waking up to perfect skies, enough sunshine to warm you, not enough to bake you, or watching a silent fall of quarter-sized snowflakes gives you delicious shivers of pleasure?

Somewhere on my stroll with coke, I'd lost these things.



Melody

Georgia in the Mirror.

Photo by Melody
Photo edit by Leanne Levy

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Georgia killed herself when she turned 18 and the system could no longer take care of her. Her name is etched into the mirror that hangs in my room. We obviously shared the same room.

I learned early on about the system because two of my siblings were under Youth Protection placement orders when they were children and I was in kindergarten. I used to visit them in group homes and it made me very sad. As a result, I didn't do very well in school.

At age 12, I started drinking alcohol with my teenage sister and smoking weed and hash with my teenage brother. I soon wanted more than pot and hash so I started doing E and speed on a regular basis. A few weeks went by and I got into coke, crack, ice and acid. Then there were the extras: weed, shrooms, and oxys. Never heroine.

I smoked, snorted, burned, cooked, ate, and shot up.



DSC01117

“Oh, I want you so bad!”

“Bad to the bone?” We laughed but it wasn’t a joke- not for long.

My shirt tore open.

“Wait.”

“I’ve waited for weeks. Put up and shut up.”

Kisses segued to bites. Bruises. Pain rippled through my body.

“Please stop.”

“No. You promised, you damn little tease.”

Off came my shorts. Down went his zipper. I realized I was in serious trouble.

“I’ll scream.”

“Go ahead, no one can hear you but skunks and coyotes.”

Still, as I opened my mouth, his hand slapped down over it. Those sublime muscles hardened.

“Just relax, you’ll love it.”

Had he done it in a different way, I might have responded with excitement. Instead I froze as he pushed inside.

“There it is, oh god, there it goes.”

It went all right, with an audible tear. Pain mushroomed into agony and all I could do was go stiff.

“You weren’t lying, you bitch.”

I laid there, sobbing, as he worked and sweated over me. Stoked by ecstasy, it took him a long time to finish.

“Give me a line, I’ll give you an encore.”

He pulled away, sticky and bloody. Throbbing inside and out, I didn’t move, I didn’t dare look him in the eye.

“What the hell is the matter, honey?”

I stared up at the clouds, gathering into gloom, shrouding to the moon. “My name is Melody.”



Melody

LOVE

Video still and edit by Leanne Levy

© Inside: Nobody Girl

LOVE

Draw me a picture
Draw it with a twist
Draw it with a razor
Draw it on my wrist.
And if I draw correctly, a red fountain will appear
Washing away my sorrow, washing away my fear.

A rusty razor
An empty bottle
A broken mirror
A towel stained with red.
Their emotions in a tangle. The room begins to swirl.
She was mom's perfect angel. And daddy's little girl.

~~Rhythm~~. an easy downhill **flow**. seconds,
minutes, hours, days, a segue of perpetual
~~motion~~ everything in its proper place, at
it's proper **time**. morning **alarms**,
kitchen clatter, bus gears, school bells,
teacher talk. Locker clang, hallway
laughter, **slamming** doors. After-school
queues, homework, music, tv. **commitment**
thrived in **repetition**, routine, familiarity.

But now **nothing**
 felt right
 nothing
 seemed proper
but getting **out**,
 getting **away**,
 getting **crazy**,



Melody

Rythm

Writing by Melody

© Inside: Nobody Girl

Melody

Hanging On

Photo by Tassie Konstantopoulos
Photo edit by Leanne Levy

© Inside: Nobody Girl

As a child, my mom kept my dad from me, until this day I don't know why. But at age 13, I moved in to live with him.

While living under his roof, I didn't go to school a lot. I snuck out of my room and went out to party all night. I would come back home around 6:30 am, clean myself up for 15 minutes and left for school, if I was on drugs. If I wasn't, I would simply sleep in all day and didn't bother going to school at all. I would only go to school high because it kept me awake and that kept my mouth shut for the day.



Melody

Girls get screwed

Photo by Melody
Photo edit by Leanne Levy

© Inside: Nobody Girl

Girls get screwed they are always on the short end of things. The way things work, how guys feel great but make girls feel cheap for doing exactly what they beg for.

The way they get to play you. All the while claiming that they love you and making you believe it's true. The way it's okay to gift your heart one day, a backhand the next, to move on to the apricot when the peach blushes and bruises.

These things make me believe, God is a man after all.



Melody

Cut to feel, heal, and die.

Video still and edit by Leanne Levy
Writing by Melody

© Inside: Nobody Girl

It was hard paying for the drugs because I didn't get a very big allowance, and at first the drugs were expensive because of my bad connections.

After a while, many questions popped up... how was I supposed to pay without money? I came to an agreement to have sex, give bjs, hand or any other sexual favors for drugs. I can't say I wanted to have sex with older guys, but I wanted the drugs more than I cared for my body. It was almost as though I got over-ruled by substances... I didn't care what I had to do to get drugs, as long as I could get high everyday. After "borrowing" drugs from dealers, they'd ask me for their money... and I told them I didn't have any, yet that I could have sex or anything they wanted instead. I would be high during, so that it was harder to remember. I'm still trying to figure out if it was prostitution, in most people's eyes it is, but in mine it somewhat seems very different.



Melody

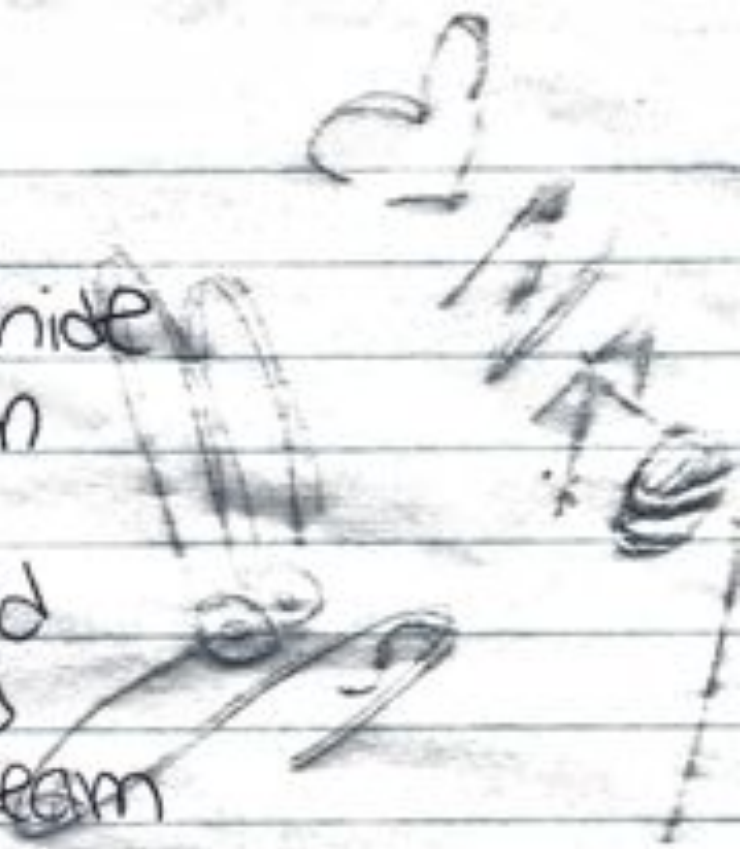
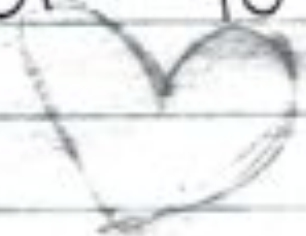
I won't leave you

Photo by Melody

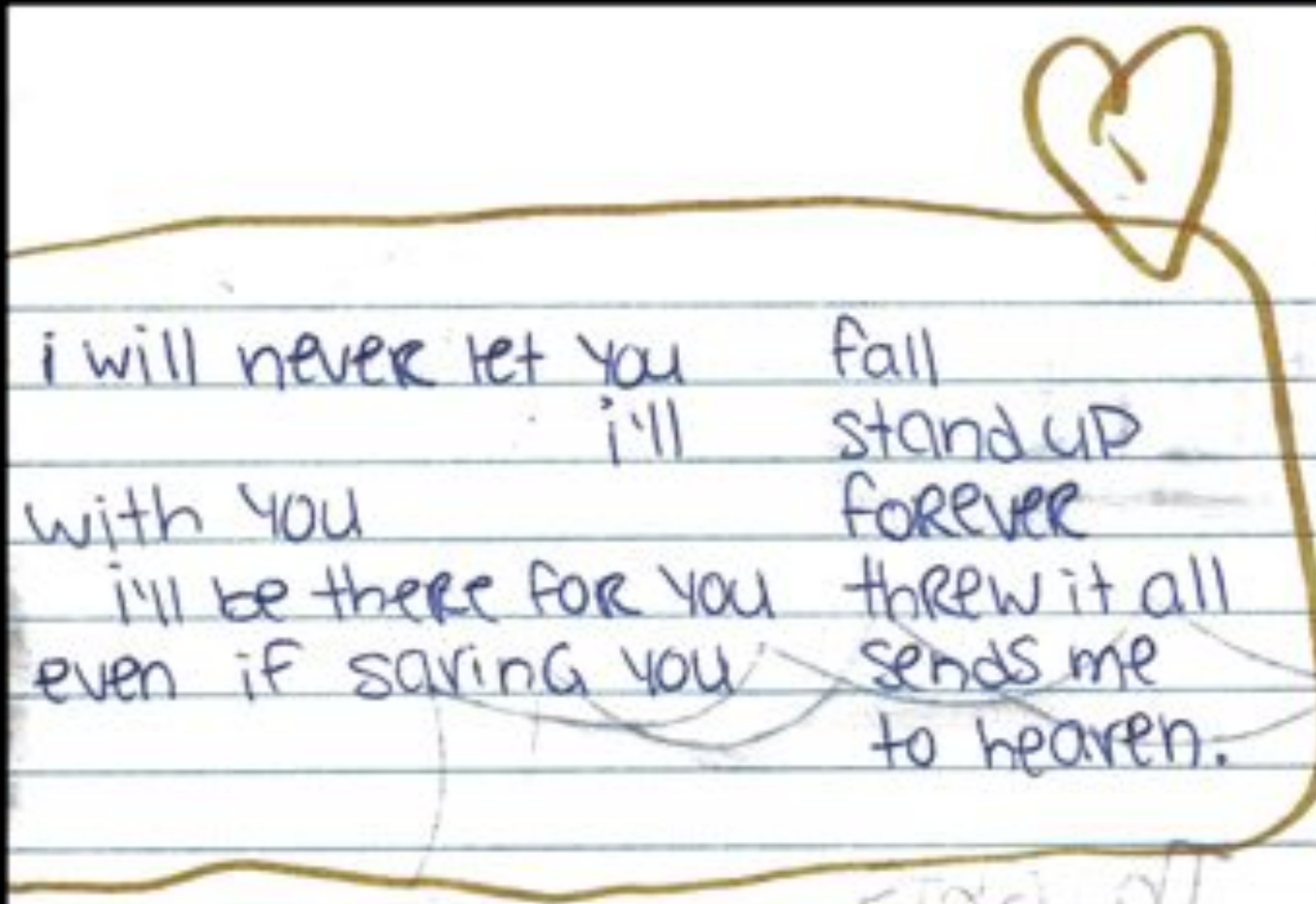
Photo edit by Leanne Levy

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cut your face - to heal inside
cut your shoulder - to try and hide
cut your neck - to stop the pain
cut your chest - to live again
cut your arm - to kill the need
cut your wrist - to let it bleed
cut your waist - to end the dream
cut your hip - to shut the screams
cut your hand - to remember you're alive
cut your thigh - to stop the cries
cut your knee - to let out the tangles
cut your leg - to feel like an angel
cut your foot - to end it all







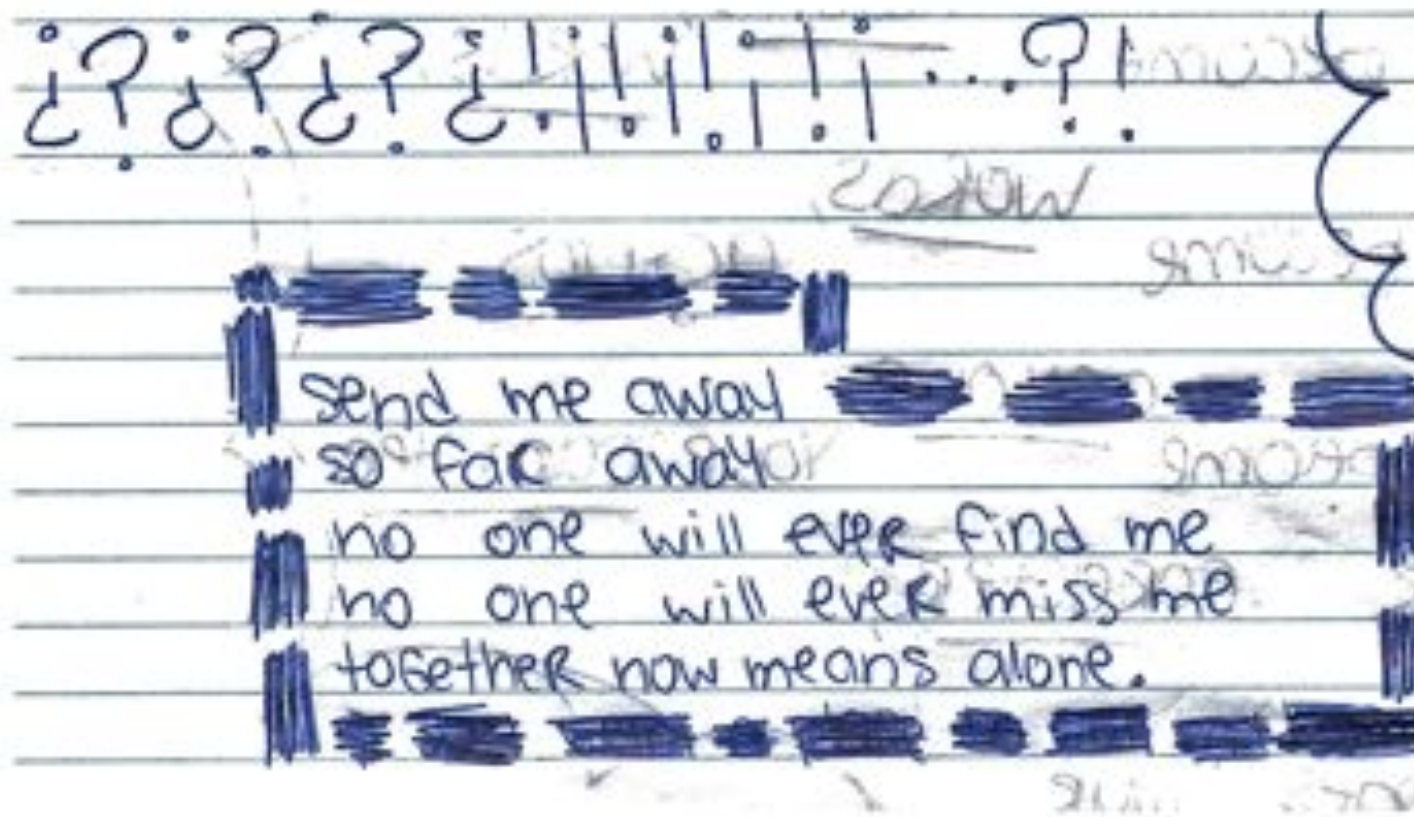
Melody

I'll be there for you

Writing by Melody
Photo and edit by Leanne Levy

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Melody

Send Me Away

Writing and photo by Melody

© Inside: Nobody Girl

Melody

I am stuck, here.

Writing by Melody
Photo by Melody

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Passing out is the strangest thing. one minute you're here, then with a mere cerebral flutter, you're not. part of your brain insists you're dead. of course, you're not. another part says it's better there, in the dark. where, exactly, are you? somewhere, you hear voices, urgent. could you be in limbo? a thin beam of light calls to you. will you reach heaven? brighter now, white and beautiful. you hurry in that direction, your eyes acquiesce, and open to discover...

You're back in hell,
after all.

I should wash these pills down the drain but it seems easier to prolong my pain.

I know going through withdrawal will just about kill me. It seems easier to just go on smoking crack and popping pills all day long, knowing in the end what will be will be.

Yet somewhere deep inside there's a little bit of pride a tiny shaft of light that still reminds me of the girl I used to be when my mind was clear and free.

But I'm not sure I can be that girl again.

Melody

I want to be that girl again

Photo and edit by Leanne Levy

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I lived only for the drugs and my friends. My family was falling apart and I was getting further and further away from reality. I was 89 pounds, 5'5.

I finally gained up to 96 pounds, and I stayed at that weight for 2 years.

I only started gaining weight now, on my way off of drugs. I'm now 118 pounds, 5'6 with a healthier skin, body and mind. I've been clean of drugs for more than 2 months now, I know it doesn't seem very much, but to me it is.

I regret a lot what I have done, but I know I can choose a better path. I need to understand what went wrong and why I did what I did, and then I need to have a plan to protect myself from life's aches and pains so I can move forward with self-acceptance in my heart and a healthy love for myself.

Melody

Penetrated Against My Will

Photo by Melody
Photo edit by Leanne Levy

© Inside: Nobody Girl




Melody developed an unhealthy routine of cutting herself.

This habit began when she started trading sexual favors for drugs. Every time she came down from her high and reality set in, she cut. The cycle went like this: Get high, trade sex, come down, cut.

Before Melody turned to drugs, she had been raped more than once at age 12. The first violent rape was committed by her boyfriend, an older teenager who claimed to have loved her and whom she loved. Until this day, she has yet to tell anyone because in her mind, how can a person who claims to love her, be guilty of rape? A 'friend' with whom she first tried ecstasy committed the second rape. He threatened her life and the lives of her family if she ever told anyone.

The event that landed Melody under Youth Protection was a drug overdose.

A close-up photograph of a person's forearm. The skin is fair and shows numerous horizontal, reddish-brown scratches of varying lengths and depths, concentrated in the upper half of the arm. Below the scratches, there is a black ink tattoo of the word "LOVE" in a bold, sans-serif font. The arm is positioned next to a blue denim garment with white stitching, which is visible on the left side of the frame. The background is dark and out of focus.

LOVE

Was trading sex for drugs...

A way for Melody to take back the control of her body's use as a sexual tool? A way to survive the screams in her head and the pain in her heart? One could call this 'Survival Sex.' Whatever the reasons that led her down this path, every scar on her arm represents a perpetrator who abused her. Melody has yet to place the blame on the perpetrators, instead she blames herself for everything.

Participating in this project provided Melody with a healthy outlet to release her inner turmoil and begin the healing process. During this time, she refrained from cutting herself. Melody is a very beautiful, highly intelligent, mature beyond her years, caring, creative and sensitive young woman.

Victoria

Fragments of Happiness

Photo by Tassie Konstantopoulos
Photo edit by Leanne Levy

© Inside: Nobody Girl



Victoria, 15

Under a Youth Criminal Justice Act placement order

Victoria

Freedom, almost.

Photo by Tassie Konstantopoulos
Photo edit by Leanne Levy

© Inside: Nobody Girl



Victoria was sentenced under the Youth Criminal Justice Act and detained in custody for 11 months.

She had already been at JS for several months when we met.

Victoria was found guilty of 27 counts of assault. Her assaults were usually committed while under the influence of alcohol and cocaine. According to Victoria, the judge gave her many chances, which she admits she took for granted. When her court date arrived the entire community filled the courtroom.

Victoria is known in her community as the toughest girl in her neighborhood who beats up bullies that pick on females. According to her youth care workers they understand her behavior as one of a vigilante.

Victoria

"I Am Cree."

Photo by Tassie Konstantopoulos
Photo edit by Leanne Levy

© Inside: Nobody Girl



“I Am Cree.”

I was raised in a Cree community.

I am 15. I have one brother and one sister, a mother and a father. My parents are divorced since I was a few months old. I have lived with many different foster parents in my community. I was removed from my parents because in my home, my dad used to beat my mother. I remember the arguments and the fights on weekend visits back home to my mom.

I have been locked up for 8 months, and have three months left, 11 months all together. In 8 days I am being transferred to another unit back in my community and I am happy about that because I will be 5 minutes away from my family. Now I am 8 hours away by car and 13 hours away by bus so I don't get many visits but my mom tries to see me as much as she can.



The life that I was dealt, is that of alcoholism, suicide and addiction to drugs. Being locked up helps me to realize what I was doing. I will be more carefull with the choices I make in the future

Victoria

The life I was dealt...

Writing by Victoria

© Inside: Nobody Girl



Victoria

I would like to change

Photo and photo edit by Leanne Levy

© Inside: Nobody Girl

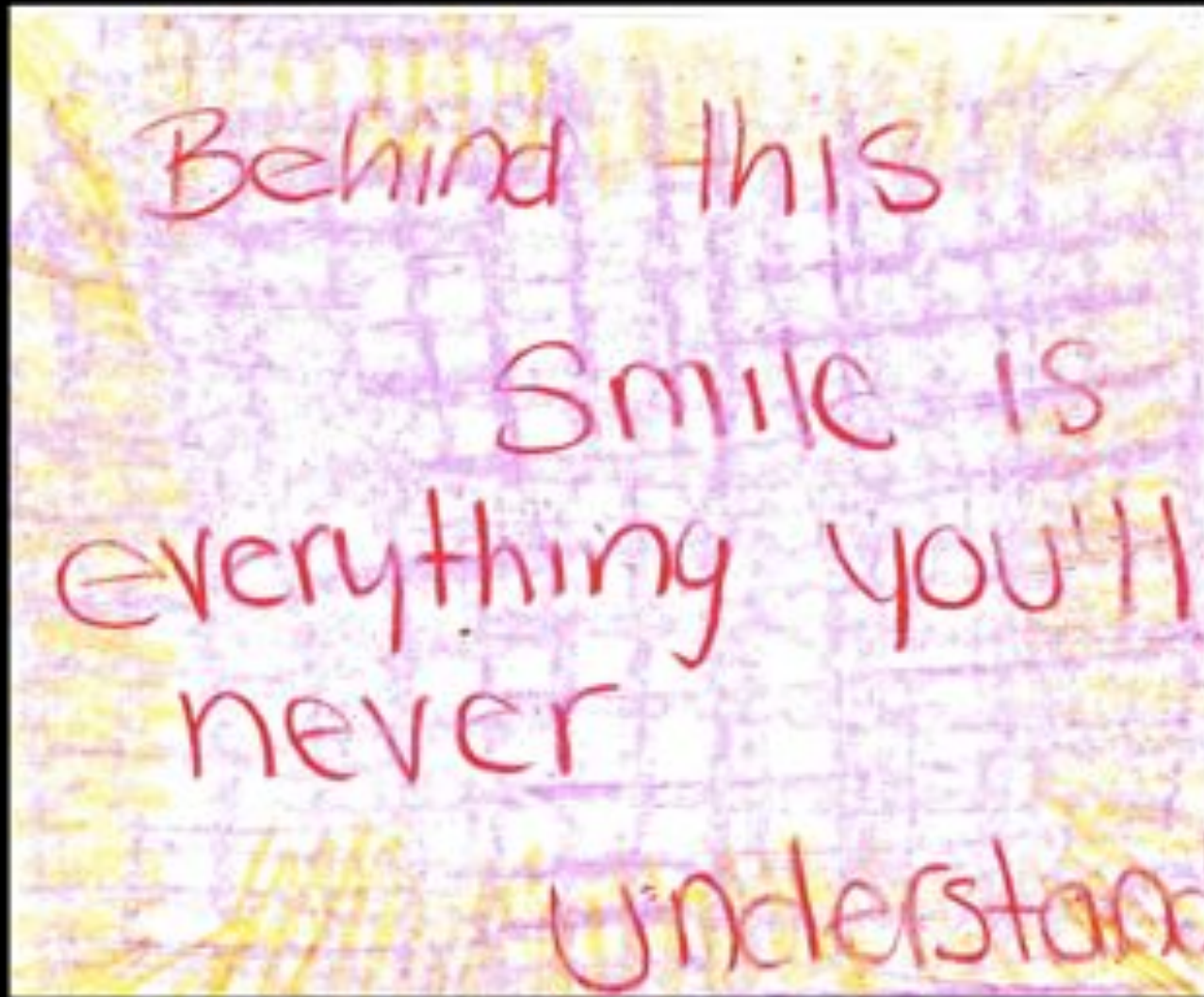
I used to fight a lot because I wanted to be like my dad. I didn't want to be the victim.

I wanted to be the suspect, the bad girl but not anymore because I realize what I did wrong. Every time I hurt someone, I was either under the influence of alcohol and drugs, or sober and angry.

I am working on my anger.

I would like to change.





Victoria

Behind my smile...

Drawing by Victoria

Photo by Tassie Konstantopoulos

Photo edit by Leanne Levy

© Inside: Nobody Girl

Victoria

Locked Up

Photo by Tassie Konstantopoulos
Photo edit by Leanne

© Inside: Nobody Girl



Victoria

Hidden

Writing by Victoria

© Inside: Nobody Girl

Nobody talks to me.
Nobody listens to me.
Nobody loves me.
I could die and no one
would cry.
I could run away and no one
would do anything.
I could disappear and no one
would care.
Maybe I'll drop out of school.
Maybe I'll get pregnant.
Maybe I'll do more drugs.
I never feel wanted.
I never feel love.
I never feel care, or happy.



Victoria

Life

Writing by Victoria
Photo by Tassie Konstantopoulos
Photo edit by Leanne Levy

© Inside: Nobody Girl

The wonders of life, the
pain going through my
head I can't take it
eneymore The screaming,
the crying, all the voices
yelling out, making me
cry with anger Destroying
everything in sight I can't
take it eneymore Sometimes
I wonder why I was
born why do I have a

LIFE!?



I often miss this little girl,
whose dreams had no barriers,
and believed that anything
could come true, with a
heart left full and

UNBROKEN.

Victoria

Unbroken

Words by Victoria
Photo by Tassie Konstantopoulos
Photo edit by Leanne Levy
© Inside: Nobody Girl



Victoria

My tears

Writing by Victoria
Photo by Tassie Konstantopoulos
Photo edit by Leanne Levy
© Inside: Nobody Girl

As tear by tear is rolling
down of my face, my knowledge
still is growing as a result of
my mistakes. I can handle
what they give me, I can
wipe my fears to see, and as
I stand there hoping that
someone will set me free
I realize time and time again
that someone must be me.
Without my pride, without my
strength my life would be but
none. So when I'm looking for
calling for my savior, I'm the
one. And now when a tear is
rolling down of my face, I let it
keep rolling cause I know it
will make me

STRONG!



I am tired of waking up to the same old routines everyday (sweep room/mop/brush/shower/breakfast/smokes/program).

What did I DO!?.....

Still waiting....behind the bars!.

Victoria

I am tired

Writing Victoria
Photo by Melody
Photo edit by Leanne Levy
© Inside: Nobody Girl

Victoria

Broken-Hearted-Girl

Drawing by Victoria

© Inside: Nobody Girl



Victoria

The puzzle of my life

Writing by Victoria
Photo by Tassie Konstantopoulos
Photo edit by Leanne Levy
© Inside: Nobody Girl

I don't know why I'm in this planet. I don't know why I even deserve to live. But I guess if I wasn't here I'd be lying in some hole, fried out of my mind. I'm starting to find the pieces, the missing pieces to the puzzle of my life. I hope the puzzle is soon finished.



. Shy and unsure.

I used to be a little girl, Now I
am a young lady, I used to be
scared, Now I am sure, I used to be
lost, Now I am found, I used to be
quiet, Now I am better, I used to
be loved, Now I love .

Victoria

Shy and unsure

Writing by Victoria
Photo by Tassie Konstantopoulos
Photo edit by Leanne Levy
© Inside: Nobody Girl



When we had our first interview together Victoria was very shy and unsure as to what and how much she wanted to share.

Victoria admitted that she never liked to talk about her feelings and never shared with others the details of why she was detained. In her eyes, talking about her feelings meant she was weak. In her mind, she saw only two ways to live her life, hurt or be hurt. Having already been a child victim, separated by her family growing up in foster care and unable to protect her mother from her father, beating up others was her stance against victimhood. But no matter how many people she beat up, she couldn't make up for the damage already done.

During our interview Victoria confided that she tried to kill herself with an overdose of pills. She took many ecstasy pills and woke up in the hospital. It was at that moment she realized she was in this world for a reason and no longer wished to die.



One month into our project Victoria transformed before my very eyes.

As we all sat around the table, Victoria began to open up and share the details of her life. This was when I came to learn from Melody that Victoria had only learned to speak English these past months during her stay at JS.

Victoria and Melody became very close during our time together and the two of them often helped each other with their writing, drawing, painting, and photography. They also developed concern and empathy for one another and brought the other up when one felt down. It was beautiful to witness this friendship in bloom. Despite her tough facade, Victoria has a sweet smile and a feminine attitude. Although she was quiet during most of her stay at JS making art became her voice to express herself and connect with others. When she left she turned to Fil, the unit manager, and said, “Is this place a therapy centre?”



Suri, 15

Under a Youth Protection placement order

Love By my mother
By my unde

Suri was abused, sexually,
emotionally and psychologically
by her uncle.

As a little girl she claims he raped her repeatedly and made her perform sexual acts on him. She claims he did the same to other family members. Suri is now 15 and exhibits traits of a personality disorder. She's takes medication to help her cope with her trauma.

What hurt the most



When Suri drew this picture she spoke with each stroke.
As she drew all four corners of her bed post and over her body,
she screamed,

“Tape, tape, tape, tape, tape, tape, tape...it was silver duct tape he used to tape me down to the bed to do nasty things to me.” After explaining the meanings behind her drawings, Suri spoke into my video camera and said, “I wasn’t always this sick you know, he made me sick.”

Suri loves taking photos and using the video camera, and has a natural talent for framing her shots. She also adored having her makeup done by Melody, being the subject of many photographs, and becoming a body canvas for Mel’s poetry. During their photo shoot, Suri led the group and directed most poses. Despite her enthusiasm for the project, not much writing accompanies her photos because Suri has difficulty spelling and concentrating on one task for too long. Nevertheless, her pictures speak a thousand words.

Suri

He smoked weed before he did nasty things to me.

Drawing by Suri

© Inside: Nobody Girl



Suri

I was in a very bad place.

Photo by Tassie Konstantopoulos
Photo edit by Leanne Levy

© Inside: Nobody Girl





Suri

I suffered so much loss in my short life.

Photo by Tassie Konstantopoulos
Photo edit by Leanne Levy

© Inside: Nobody Girl

Suri

I feel like dirt.

Photo by Suri

© Inside: Nobody Girl



Suri

It's time to change.

Photo by Tassie Konstantopoulos

Photo edit by Leanne Levy

© Inside: Nobody Girl







DONT EVER Let NOBODY
BREAK YOU DOWN GIRL,
DONT EVER Let NOBODY TAKE
YOUR WORLD **APART**. LOOK IN
THE MIKROOR AND SEE WHO
YOU ARE, BEAUTIFUL
YOU ARE!





Brooklyn, 16

Under a Youth Criminal Justice Act placement order



From an early age, using and dealing drugs was a way of life for Brogyn and her family.

Although her parents are divorced she maintains close ties with both her mother and father. Brogyn is 16, Native, and raised in a Native community.

Today, Brogyn has a serious addiction to Oxycodone, an opium-derived narcotic, which acts as a pain reliever. She explained that the cheap drug found its way to her community five years ago. Today, many people in her neighborhood have developed an addiction to it.

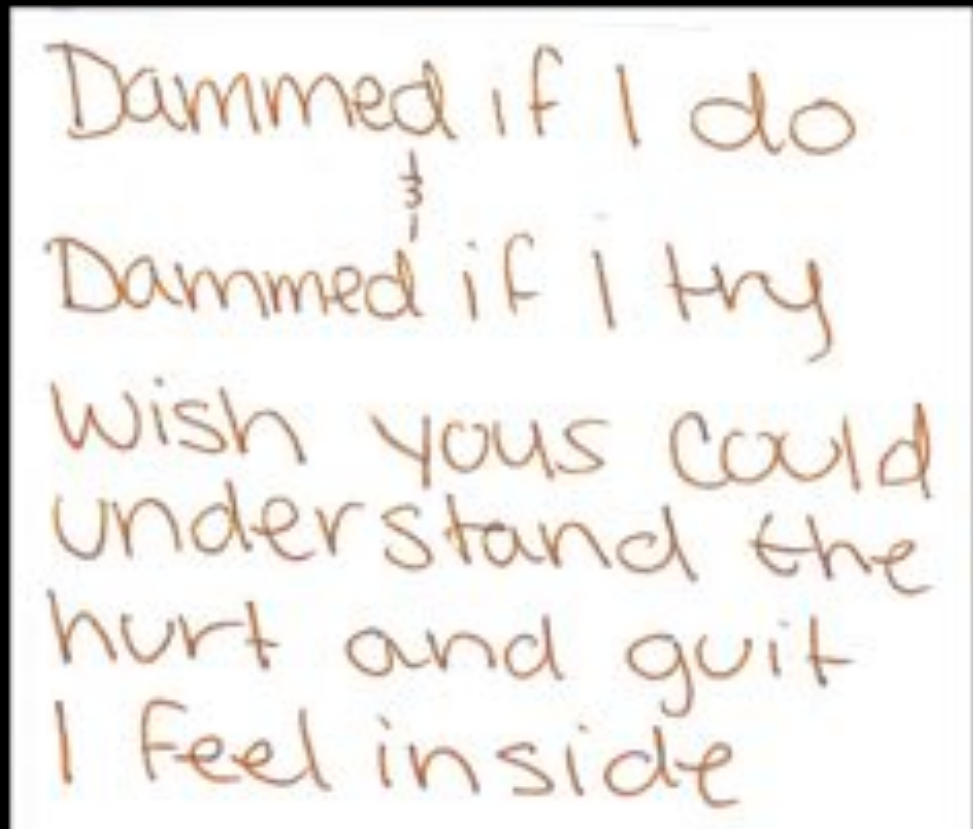
Brogyn was involved in a drug rehabilitation program but ran away from the treatment centre. While on AWOL she continued to do drugs and tried killing herself by slashing her wrists. When the authorities picked her up, they sent her to JS.

Brogyn

Damned if I do

Photo by Brogyn
Photo edit by Leanne Levy

© Inside: Nobody Girl



Damned if I do
Damned if I try
Wish yous could
understand the
hurt and quit
I feel inside

WARRIOR

Dashed hopes and dreams.

Is there any hope? Is there an ending cycle?

The flesh and blood.

The thoughts and pain.

Knowing each other just the same.

Trying to come back a brand new me.

I can walk through the flames of agony.



Brogyn

Sick and tired

Photo by Brogyn
Photo edit by Leanne Levy

© Inside: Nobody Girl

Sick and tired of
being Sick and tired

Sick of Stealing
Selling drugz to make
money and to get high
Im Sick of the Crime
but the fear holds me
just the same crying
at night praying for
peace for better or
worse

Im Sick of windows
wit bars and sittin
there the only thing
I could see is
STARS



When I first Met Brogyn she spoke about her boyfriend and how much she missed him.

She showed me a hickie he left on her chest just before she was taken in. Brogyn is lonely at JS but his love temporarily tattooed on her is a symbol she holds to tightly while temporarily separated from the ones she loves.

Brogyn shared with me that she enjoyed the therapeutic value of taking photos to express her self and felt empowered to help others like her. Being involved in this project while simultaneously detoxing from drugs helped her to pass her time in a productive way and connect with others living similar circumstances.



Epilogue

When **Consciousness** is raised **Change** becomes a real possibility. Despite the profound impacts of the girls' early childhood traumas, their willingness to confront their weaknesses to narrate their stories underlies their inner strengths. They chose to participate in this project in the hope that their stories would prevent other young girls from taking the same path and/or help them to recognize their power to make alternative choices. Linking well with the youth empowerment model, the *Circle of Courage*, all activities within Levy's empowerment intervention model *This Is My Body* nurtured and cultivated *Belonging, Generosity, Independence, and Mastery* through three interdependent steps: 1) **Self-Awareness**: *Know who you are and where you have been*, 2) **Conflict Resolution**: *Know where you want to go and how to get there*, and 3) **Social Action**: *Mentor others to make healthy change*. The girls mastered the process: They developed stronger sense of selves and nurtured self-esteem; they demonstrated power to make decisions; they felt a sense of accomplishment from excelling at and completing tasks; they cultivated a healthy concern for the other, and they discovered purpose by helping others in need. In verbalizing their experiences and re-framing them through pen and lens they took ownership of their lives and recognized their power as agents of change. There is no telling what their futures look like but self-knowledge is power, sharing knowledge is empowering, and it's through sharing, articulating, understanding, and empathizing that consciousness is raised and change becomes a real possibility.





About the Editor & Narrator

Dr. Leanne Levy's research, teaching and clinical work is with vulnerable female teen populations. She specializes in childhood sexual abuse, self-injury, eating disorders, IPV, and female sexual identity construction. Dr. Levy has spent twenty years in the field of Education as an advocate for young women's rights. She wears many hats working as a researcher, art and media educator, university professor, documentary filmmaker, and art therapist. Dr. Levy has published book chapters and papers in international peer-reviewed journals, and is the producer of numerous girl-centered activist documentary films: **This Is My Body** (National Film Board of Canada), **Elizabeth Has Three Moms** (Elizabeth House), and **Hidden In Plain View** (Batshaw).



Inside: Nobody Girl

Edited and Narrated by Leanne Levy, PhD

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