

Mockingbird Times

Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth



October 2004

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak out Across the Nation

Volume IV, Issue 10

Visit us online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org

IN THIS ISSUE

Letter from the Editor
Jim Theofelis
Page 2

Letter to the Editor
Page 2

Book Review: *On Their Own; What Happens When Kids Age out of the Foster Care System*
Courtney Konietzko
Page 3

Fall Fashion Corner is Back
Hollis Riggins
Page 3

Mockingbird On the Fly
Page 3

MBT Halloween Special
Supernatural Events—Will We Ever Know the Truth?
Darius Reynolds
Page 4

Movie Review: *Hero* Enthralls the Eye
Courtney Konietzko
Page 4

Poetry Corner: *Mama, Mommy, Mom, Mother, Monster*
Jessie Shoemaker
Page 4

Poetry Corner: *Euterology, 1994*
Jake Paladini
Page 4

Poetry Corner: *The Mask*
Kyle P.
Page 4

Check out our Bonus Articles Section Online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org

Judicial Conference Highlights Foster Care Experience

DARIUS REYNOLDS



THE 47TH ANNUAL JUDICIAL CONFERENCE WAS HELD IN SPOKANE, WASHINGTON THIS YEAR. Echo Speed and I were invited to be part of a workshop called Foster Care: The Good, The Bad and the Ugly, facilitated by Judge Patricia Clark and Judge LeRoy McCullough. This workshop was put together to educate judges about foster care and give them an opportunity to hear from people who have been involved in the system, as well as share their ideas on what judges can do to make more positive decisions for youth in foster care.

I enjoyed being on the panel because it gave me a chance to tell the judges a little about what I went through in foster care and gave me a chance to make some recommendations about what I think works. Each panel member shared their personal story and thoughts about how to make the court experience more effective for foster kids. Panelist Estakio Beltran reported that a stable education is important for foster children, stating that it is important to "stabilize children through a stable education." Other panelist recommendations included foster parents being encouraged to treat foster kids like their own kids, giving foster

kids a chance to voice what they want to happen with their lives and judges taking the time to talk to foster kids one-on-one. After everyone on the panel spoke, the judges in the audience were given a chance to ask the panel questions, like how race is important when deciding where to place a child. The workshop also included a discussion about the juvenile dependency case process, racial disproportionality, as well as a panel who discussed the Braam lawsuit.

At this conference I learned that a lot of the things the state was supposed to do when I went into foster care never happened. Hopefully by telling the judges my story they will make sure the same thing doesn't happen to another youth. I really enjoyed the question and answer part of the workshop because for the first time in my life, a judge was asking me for advice and listening to what I had to say.

They should have conferences like this all across the country because it is important that the judges hear from the people who are involved in foster care, especially the youth.

The youth can honestly tell what is working, and if we invite youth to speak at more of these forums and conventions they will know that there are people out here who will listen.

Make sure to check out our photo gallery from this event online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org. For more information about the Braam lawsuit check out the Attorney General's website at www.atg.wa.gov/braam/releases.shtml



Panel Participants Darius Reynolds, Adam Cornell, Estakio Beltran, Freddie Hamlet, David Stewart and Echo Speed. Photos by MBT Staff.



Panelists and foster parents Freddie Hamlet and David Stewart.



Panelist member Echo Speed. (MBT)



Panelist members Darius Reynolds (MBT), and Adam Cornell (former foster youth).



Alumni Corner: Where Do I Go Now? The Challenges of Life After Foster Care

CASEY BATSON

IF PEOPLE ASK YOU WHO YOUR PARENTS ARE AND YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY, if you feel awkward talking about your childhood, or if you want to cry when people mention memories of their childhood, then you might be a foster child. If you are a former foster youth, someone who has left your state's care system, then you may be experiencing a world many people could never understand.

For young adults who left their natural families as children, the challenges of real life can seem even more overwhelming than they are already. Foster children are considered adults at the age of 18. Thankfully in most states they are currently allowed to finish their senior year with the foster home they are in before being expected to fend for themselves. This has not always been the case; many had to move out before graduation. Adulthood for these youth is an entirely different experience and offers many more opportunities for failure and hopelessness.

When children from middle-income or wealthier families graduate from high school, they usually have a network of support encouraging them and offering financial help. If the child goes to college, many often only pay half of their own tuition or none at all. During Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer breaks these students usually return home while out of school thus postponing the need to find their own apartment until graduated from college. Parents and grandparents of children not removed from their homes send care packages, notes, and little checks to help them through. They often help them move into a dorm or campus housing. Even if a child does not go to college, often parents allow them to stay up to five more years at home with no rent, all bills paid, food and laundry free. None of this happens for foster youth—without some intervention.

ALUMNI CORNER CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Letter from the Editor

JIM THEOFELIS



I RECENTLY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY to provide some clinical consultation to a team of professionals and foster parents regarding a 12-year-old girl who is having extreme difficulty during the bedtime routine. This is not unusual—I frequently provide consultation and training to this age group who know the nightmare of sexual abuse and frequently have difficulty with bedtime and sleep.

If you think of it for a moment, we typically become less and less able to defend ourselves the deeper into the bedtime routine we go. In fact one of the issues these particular foster parents were having is that the little girl did not want to wear pajamas and nightgowns but instead wanted to wear her regular clothing to bed. For this child, her jeans, sweatshirt and day clothing served as comfortable armor in her daily quest to experience a sense of safety and control. Not only were the night clothes less protective, but also the process of changing clothes presented a clear signal that bedtime was near, which activated an anxiety response in itself.

Transitions are often very difficult for any child but for the survivor of abuse a transition typically reflects “change” which so many have experienced as negative. Their *change* from an innocent child to carrying a deeply confusing secret, *change* from living at home with this secret to being “placed” into a “new” home, and the *change* of schools, teachers and friends. Regarding the bedtime routine, the change is dramatic and for many

children and adolescents traumatic—every night. During the day we are active, often protected and even distracted from our fears and anxieties and yet bedtime means being alone in bed with those same thoughts, hopes, fears and anxieties.

Frequently for the survivor of sexual abuse, bedtime is a process that reactivates the memories and fears of being hurt usually by someone in a trusted and loving position. **For many sexual abuse survivors being asleep is the same as being undefendable in an unpredictable world. Who wants to sign up for that?** As a result of the consult a number of strategies were decided upon, including having some discussions with the child about what she needs to feel safe, protected and some sense of control during bedtime (incidentally, she had some very good ideas).

However the most important *change* in the approach of the adults was the their fundamental way of viewing this situation. To their credit, and a testimony of their concern and skill, the foster parents shifted from viewing this child’s behavior during the bedtime routine as one of pathology needing to be fixed. Instead, they adopted the perspective that this child experienced a severe and repetitive trauma that has resulted in her having extra difficulty allowing herself to transition to a place of increased dependency and vulnerability: sleep.

This new perspective has brought *change* to their role during the bedtime routine allowing them to participate with the child rather than the child withdrawing and power struggles escalating. **To the frightened child at bedtime the most important and reassuring assistance is the presence of an adult the child trusts.** To their credit and the child’s benefit these caring foster parents are now able to be that adult for this child.

Jim Theofelis

jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

ALUMNI CORNER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

When a foster youth graduates high school they must have a place to go immediately. They must be going to a college dorm or to their own apartment. If they were allowed to remain in their foster home until school started, they can go straight to the dorm. Otherwise, the student has to save during their senior year for their first place. If they are the fortunate one who does go to school and has scholarships and financial aid, then they still have the two big breaks to think about: Winter and Summer. For a former foster youth there are not too many choices of where to go during these times and this can be very depressing for the young adult. Since the young person left home many years earlier, staying with natural family is not comfortable or would get them in trouble. Even the best foster parents often can’t take in their former youth because someone new is already sleeping in their old bed. That’s one more thing...no place to call home. But just wait—there are more challenges.

For example, if the youth did not save up for an apartment or go to college, they may end up in a group home or a city shelter. Sadly, many individuals reside in these situations inevitably due to personal limitations or lack of support. A successful young person may make it through school with the proper support. Along the way though they need people to help them get their first apartment (co-signer needed since they have no credit history), turn on utilities (plan for all the deposits), and open and manage a checking account (understanding the financial responsibilities). Parents or guardians and other relatives usually do these things for young adults, but the youth out of care is often out of luck.

If you know a foster youth or work with foster children, help them network all they can; offer practical advice for independent living; get them a mentor—a person who will talk them through solutions when problems arise. If you are a foster youth, there are people out there who care, and a church group or foster care advocacy group can be located to help you. You are not alone and you can make a wonderful life for yourself. Let people know who you are, what you need and what they can do to help. May God bless your path.

If you would like your story heard, we are looking for submissions for our Alumni Corner right now! Send your story to: newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Anthony,

As a subscriber to the *Mockingbird Times*, I am writing to affirm your article in the August issue (*Guatemalans Provide New Definition of Wealth*)! Your insight, awareness, and wisdom is powerful. Your words encourage me to keep on being polite, expressing hospitality, and caring. Continue shining your light, treating others with respect and living out your values. This world needs you!

In Admiration,
Biji



Quote of the Month: It may be long before the law of love will be recognized in international affairs. The machineries of government stand between and hide the hearts of one people from those of another.

-Gandhi

THANK YOU’S...

Wild Geese Productions, Joyce Showalter, 47th Annual Judicial Conference Participants, in particular Erica Chung, Judge Patricia Clark and Judge Leroy McCullough, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Senator Thibaudeau, Microsoft, Margaret Ann and Mark LeRoy.

ABOUT US: The Mockingbird Society is a private non-profit organization dedicated to building a world class foster care system and improving the other systems that serve children and adolescents involved in homelessness and foster care. The *Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of Mockingbird Society are paid between \$7.50 and \$8.50 an hour. Youth from across the country submit articles, art work, and poetry. Youth are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of 60,000 copies being distributed across Washington and the U.S.A. We are distributed through several venues, including as an insert inside *Real Change*, *The Seattle Star* and *The Seattle Sun*, our own mailing list and being available online. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values, and success of The Mockingbird Society and, as such, youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. Donations to The Mockingbird Society may be tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated. No part of the *Mockingbird Times* may be reproduced without the written permission of The Mockingbird Society. All contents copyright 2004 The Mockingbird Society.

A Mockingbird Inside Your Mailbox: Make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable youth.

I want to support The Mockingbird Society

Donations may be tax deductible and all donors receive the *Mockingbird Times*. Enclosed, please find my check made payable to Mockingbird Society in the amount of: \$ _____

Suggested Donations:

\$50 a year for one copy per month \$100 a year for 5-15 copies per month
\$150 a year for 20-45 copies per month \$200 a year for 50-100 copies per month

Name _____ Day Phone _____

Address _____ Evening Phone _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Yes, you may use my name on published donor lists.

- Please bill me for the amount indicated.
- My employer will match my gift; enclosed is my matching gift form.
- I am interested in receiving information on the advantages of planned giving.

Please fill out and mail this form with a check or money order payable to:
The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave South Suite 350, Seattle WA 98144

MEET OUR STAFF

Executive Director

Jim Theofelis

MFFCP Coordinator

Shannon Barelo

Administrative Assistant

Lauren Frederick

MSW Intern

Erin Daniels

Staff Reporters

Dennis Fisher, Courtney Konietzko, Darius Reynolds

Satellite Reporters

Shay Denev, J.Eboh, Rico Evans, Ashley Grant, Anthony Guess, Jamica Henderson, Princess Hollins, Echo Speed, Hollis Riggins, Shakura Felder, Misty Cook

Contributing Writers

Jake Paladini, Kyle P., Casey Batson, Jessie Shoemaker

Volunteers

Anna Trombley, Kirsten Hansen-Day, Aleta Kennedy, Denise Redinger



MOCKINGBIRD RECOMMENDED READING:

ON THEIR OWN; WHAT HAPPENS TO KIDS WHEN THEY AGE OUT OF THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

COURTNEY KONIETZKO



"Although Hollywood commonly portrays children in foster care as toddlers clutching teddy bears, nearly one-half are eleven or older." -Shirk and Stangler

ON THEIR OWN, WHAT HAPPENS TO KIDS WHEN THEY AGE OUT OF THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM BY MARTHA SHIRK AND GARY STANGLER IS AN EMOTIONALLY MOVING NON-FICTION ACCOUNT of the lives of eight youth who went through the foster care system and the struggles they face as they try to 'make it' in the adult world. There is a foreword by former President Jimmy Carter and an introduction by authors Shirk and Stangler. President Carter remarks, "The reality is that young people who leave foster care at age eighteen are no more ready to become independent than our own children. In fact, most are probably less ready."

On Their Own evoked various emotions, sometimes not very happy emotions, like in the case of Holly Moffett's story when she describes what child-abuse investigators saw when they visited her home. Moffett recalls that "There was no working shower, and the bathtub was clogged up with puke. The refrigerator wasn't working, and all the food in it was bad. There were maggots in the sink, and dirty clothes everywhere..."

A great feature about *On Their Own* is that there is a conclusion section that includes things you can do

to help foster youth. Stangler and Shirk propose specific strategies in the areas of: education, employment, housing, health care, and personal and community engagement. Here are some highlights:

Education: provide educational liaisons or advocates, help them engage in school life (extracurricular activities), broaden their horizons (helping them connect learning with career), help them get into college, and help them stay there.

"WITHIN A FEW YEARS OF LEAVING FOSTER CARE..."

»Only slightly more than half of these young people have graduated from high school, compared with 85 percent of all youth eighteen to twenty-four years old.

»One-fourth have endured some period of homelessness.

»Almost two-thirds have not maintained employment for a year.

»Four out of ten have become parents.

»Not even one in five is completely self-supporting

»One in four males and one in ten females have spent time in jail."

Employment: expose youth in care to the world of work, help youth in care to get jobs, expose youth to career options, connect youth with proven programs, and educate youth about money.

Housing: helping young people meet start-up needs (furniture and the like for their first place) and helping them maintain their housing.

Healthcare: advocating for Medicaid coverage and linking young people to free or low-cost care.

Stangler and Shirk define youth engagement as "involving young people in the creation of their own destinies." According to Stangler and Shirk, kids who are not in foster care struggle with these same five areas but not to the same extent because they have the support of their parents in more ways than one.

On Their Own gives a face to each name by placing photos with each chapter, and each chapter is devoted to one youth. You get the sense that these are lives that are just beginning and the overall feeling is not one of optimism. I agree that much needs to be done in order for the system to better prepare foster youth to transition better into adulthood.

Stirk and Stangler suggest that more money be allocated for independent living services because right now youth have to fight over slim existing funds that are not adequate. Carter agrees, saying that "In 1999, Congress passed and President Clinton signed the Foster Care Independence Act, also called the Chafee Act, which expanded transition services for older youth leaving foster care. Although the new government mandates and funding are welcome, they are far from sufficient. Ensuring the safe passage of these young people into adulthood will take more creativity and cooperation than has been mustered so far."

Carter goes on to say that, "The question we should ask ourselves is this: If we willingly give our own children the benefit of our support as they struggle to become independent, productive adults, why do we tolerate the abrupt withdrawal of support for youth who are aging out of care?"



United Way Designated Donor: Mark Mockingbird Society as the non-profit organization to receive your United Way Donation!

Fall Fashion Corner is Back

HOLLIS RIGGINS



THE NEED FOR TWEED IS IN THIS FALL. Yes, you heard right, I said tweed! The difference between the classic look of tweed and its new modern appearance is that now it's being mixed and matched to achieve a chic, sexy, funky, or glamorous look instead of the very outdated head-to-tie nightmare.

This season's tweed is very versatile. It can be worn with denim, leather, silk or satin, metallic, even plaids or contrasting tweed if done correctly. The color to wear this season is purple, so if you can take a pair of boot-cut jeans, a purple camisole and throw in a cropped tweed jacket, you will definitely add a little spice to casual Friday.

This fall, tweed is so affordable you can create a celebrity wardrobe on a tight budget. Right now Nordstrom's junior department carries tweed jackets starting at only \$50; designer jackets can run you about \$4,000. Club Monaco's selection includes a tweed blazer timed in velvet (\$199) and cropped jacket (\$179). Next month

GAP is expecting to have a fitted tweed blazer for about \$90; Sears has a black-and-cream jacket and matching skirt for \$64 and \$38 respectively. You can also catch a very hip and functional \$140 version at Express.

Many moderately-priced stores, including Banana Republic and Club Monaco, offer custom tailoring to make sure you get a proper fit--take full advantage of that. Trust me, nothing will make you look better than something that is custom-fit to suit your body type, but that's another article.

One thing you might be wondering is how, once you and your friends have acquired these jackets, to keep from showing up at a party without looking like the girl across the room. The way you avoid that is to decorate your jacket to show who you are. It's simple to do--all you need is a few vintage buttons, a new lining or trim, or you can even dress it up a bit by using a synthetic flower blossom.

Just remember that no matter where you buy your tweed or how much you spend, the most important thing when shopping for a jacket is to choose one that suits your personality or adds your own flavor. Then you too can be this year's fall fashion rave!



MBT's Echo Speed illustrates Fall's latest look.

Mockingbird On the Fly

Do you ever wonder what Mockingbird Reporters and staff are doing when they are not reporting the news? We thought we would let you in on a few of the events and projects that Mockingbird is involved with this fall...

Working with Wild Geese Productions to create a documentary about the Mockingbird Society, the foster care/kinship care system, and youth homelessness, which will be created in part by our reporting staff!

On September 20th, 2004, Reporters Echo Speed and Darius Reynolds participated in the 47th Washington Judicial Conference in Spokane, WA to discuss their experience in the foster care system.

On September 30th, 2004, Executive Director Jim Theofelis and Reporter Darius Reynolds will be participating in a homelessness forum entitled A Denial of Human Rights, put on by the Seattle Human Rights Commission.

On October 14th, 2004, Reporters Ashley Grant, Jamica Henderson, Darius Reynolds and Rico Evans will be giving foster parents advice, feedback and telling about their own experience in the system at the annual conference of foster parents in Washington State, put on by Foster Parents Association of Washington State (FPAWS)

Mockingbird Halloween Special: Supernatural Events—Will We Ever Know the Truth?

DARIUS REYNOLDS

Here is an amazing story for you. On June 30th, 1908, there was an explosion in a swamp area near the Tunguska River in Siberia. The Evenki, a local tribe, claims to have seen an object in the sky with a tail that was 800 kilometers long (497 miles). The Evenki claimed that it made no noise as it passed over them but when it hit the ground there were five explosions. These explosions sent a seismic wave that was felt around the world. They also claim that a huge fire ball went several thousand feet in the air and could be seen for hundreds of miles. This explosion produced so much heat that everything within 375 miles of the explosion was destroyed. Scientists were not able to explore the swamp area until thirteen years later, and there was no sign of a meteor hitting earth. What could have caused this explosion?

Are there aliens stealing planes and boats in the Bermuda Triangle? Do ghosts really exist? Are the rocks in Death Valley, California really moving on their own? Many people believe the answers to these questions are yes. There are also many people who are skeptical when it comes to believing in supernatural phenomena. Scientists can clone a sheep and break down DNA, but if a man claims that a ball of lightning comes into his house and moves around like it has a mind of its own and science can't explain it, then the man must have been crazy, right? Just because science can't explain something doesn't mean it's not real or it didn't happen, it just means we didn't understand it.



Image from www.cognitivedistortion.com

I recently watched a documentary called "What the #*! Do We Know," about Quantum Physics. One of the scientists in the movie said that sometimes when we see something we've never seen before, our mind does not register it. This means that we don't know what we're seeing even if it's right in front of us. This might explain why we can't see ghosts. For centuries people have claimed to see ghosts and UFO's all over the world.

Nova interviewed the Astronomer Carl Sagan, a skeptic of the existence of extraterrestrials. However, Sagan is very involved in trying to find life on other planets and find proof that aliens exist. Sagan states, "There is a claim that a Brontosaurus is tramping through the jungles today in the Republic of Congo. Should a massive expedition be mounted with government funds to find it, or is it so implausible as not to be worth serious sustained systematic attention?" Sagan means that no matter how extreme the reports are, we need to investigate before we can claim them as true or not. I believe that most of the videos of UFO's and ghosts on television are probably fake. However, I also believe that ghosts are real and that we are not alone in the universe. I say that we should stop looking for proof and accept the fact that there are things in this world that we won't ever understand.

Movie Review: Hero Enthralls the Eye

COURTNEY KONIETZKO

THE FILM *YING XIONG* ALSO KNOWN AS *HERO* WAS NOT WHAT I EXPECTED. I went to see *Hero* expecting an action-packed martial arts movie and what I got instead was an exquisitely beautiful 'art film' that enthralls the eye but leaves little to the mind. I think that to understand *Hero* better it would have helped to know the history of China better. *Hero* is based on a true story that takes place when China was divided into seven kingdoms ruled by the Emperor Qin who was trying to unite the seven kingdoms into one. The director, Zhang Yimou takes a spin on this, using it as the baseline for his story adding in three assassins: Broken Sword, Flying Snow, and Sky who are out to have Emperor Qin dead. *Hero* is a story within a story as Nameless, the main character played by Jet Li, comes closer and closer to the Emperor's throne to recount how he killed the assassins, the camera flashes back into colorful pictures of Nameless' journeys. It returns to the tension building between Nameless and the Emperor as Nameless gets closer to the throne because the Emperor suspects Nameless wants to kill him. There are hundreds of candles set up between Nameless and the throne and they flicker according to what is said and felt. Nameless is within ten paces of the throne when things began to get strange...



Image from www.heromovie.org

turn from one color to another until the whole forest and sky turns blood red matching the red outfits of the two women fighting in the forest. The director bathes each landscape in subtle hues and intense colors that are extremely striking, complimenting the shades of the many brightly colored outfits the characters wear. This is the reason to go see *Hero* – the visual appeal. Do not go for action, an easy to understand story line, or with many expectations because it won't be what you expect. I am a big fan of martial arts movies and have never seen anything quite like this. At first I felt sort of cheated, "What? I paid money for this!" In retrospect, it was a good film, a beautiful film; even though it didn't live up to my high expectations. Anything that has Quentin Tarantino's name attached to it has to be good is my logic even though Quentin was only involved in buying the rights to *Hero* and making sure it was shown in the United States.

There's a stellar cast and crew in *Hero* of big Asian names: Jet Li stars as Nameless, a soldier with no name, Donnie Yen of Iron Monkey and Shanghai Knights fame plays one of the assassins Sky, Tony Leung Chiu Wai plays one of the three assassins Broken Sword, Maggie Cheung plays another of the assassins Flying Snow; Broken Sword and Flying Snow are lovers. Zhang Ziyi, known for her role in *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* plays Moon, a servant to Broken Sword and Flying Snow, and Daoming Chen plays the King of Qin.

Hero is the biggest grossing film ever in Chinese history and was released there in 2002 as *Ying xiong*. *Hero* is rated PG-13 and runs an hour and 36 minutes. I would wait until *Hero* comes out on home video if you have a decent sized TV. If not, go see it in theatre if you want to see a visual masterpiece.

The music is very well matched, infusing each scene with emotion which would be lacking otherwise; moody, intense, and melodic, sometimes all at once. The biggest thing that stands out about *Hero* is the director's attention to detail and color. You get to see a sword slice a drop of water in two, one calligraphy brush among hundreds shatter into splinters, the leaves on trees in a forest

POETRY CORNER



**Mama, Mommy, Mom,
Mother, Monster**

JESSIE SHOEMAKER

It's been years, but I'm still codependent as ever. How could your negative influence be my one foundation? How could you, the inconsistent, be my one consistency? I see your face in mine, and in past years that drew from me, self-hatred, disgust, humility, but now? I don't know. I guess now it reminds me of where I came from. It reminds me of who you were, who you are, who you will be, who I was, who I am, who I will be- seeing similarities—and being comforted. The way my eyes look when I hate, the way your eyes look when you look at me. Similarities. You let men love me in ways only a willing woman should be loved. You left me to die. Hogtied. Always hogtied and always whispering, Mommy, I love you, help me. When I grew old enough to fight, to stand my ground, to make decisions, you left me. It didn't matter that the decisions I made were bad, it didn't matter that I was still a baby. You left, and thought nothing of it. You were fluid, intangible; you slipped through my fingers. I need you. You were always moving, always changing. You lost me, you forgot me, you left me. My last statement to you, mama, mommy, mom, mother, monster. I let you go. I let you go.

Euterology, 1994

BY JAKE PALADINI

Note: This poem was inspired by Kurt Cobain lyrics...I know it's cliché but fug it.

My Misery Secretly eats at me
Beat me out of me down with me
Die with me Buy this Heat...I'm a Senseless Apprentice
The Stress is relentless my 357
ends this endless depressive message
that presses my deepest recesses
repetitive Sentences questions my Worth as a Person
But First What's Worse is my Further Excursion
From Birth to Hurst I burn an Yearn For an Earlier
extermination
This eternal internal disillusioned disintegration
My Obnoxious Subconscious pops thoughts an talks this
Non Stop
Propostrous Nonsense

The Mask

KYLE P.

March 1, 2004

To you he seems like a happy guy. He has a date. He has some friends. Sure he has some problems but, doesn't everybody? If only you could see beneath the mask to the pain and hurt he feels. If you knew who he really is you would know a weak fragile little boy caught in the pains of love and loss. He's too scared to love again, but too alone not to. He faces memories nobody should ever have. Lately he cries himself to sleep. His losses are more than his gains. He loses his family and gains a pack of cigarettes. His world is black, yet still he laughs and smiles. When you ask him how he's doing he forces himself not to cry. Every day he dies a little more. Next time you look at him see past the mask and into the eyes of a scared boy, don't see the happy freshman you think you know. He doesn't want your pity; he only wants your understanding. I know his feelings because I am him, so please, next time you see me, look beyond the mask.