

Questions for Jacqueline Montañez on her journal program:

February 2014

1. *Recently you started corresponding to young people about their problems at home and with gangs. Can you describe the program to me? Explain how you link up with kids.*

Yes, I have recently started corresponding with children all over the world. We correspond about everyday problems a child may go through, from peer pressure, bullies, gangs, to issue at home that no one may be aware of such as molestation, abuse, and neglect. The program, I wouldn't really call it that, its just an outlet for children to vent and say things they may be afraid to or don't know how to, U offer my positive advice. Being a child to most of these issues myself, I know how it feels to be afraid and feel alone not knowing what to do about your situation.

2. *Does your program have a name? When did you start? How many young people have you corresponded with by the end of 2013?*

The name of my program is "Jackie's Story Book Project." I started corresponding with children a little over a year and zt the end of 2013 I have corresponded with over 100 children.

3. *Why did you begin to do this?*

I began to correspond with children for so many reasons but the main reason would have to be based on my childhood things I went through, bad choices I've made due to the things that have hurt me. I watch the news and everyday I see about a child being killed or arrested and I know that mostly these things happen due to what the child is going through at home or in their neighborhood. This is usually the outcome of a child having no guidance, lack of love, or being abused in some kind of way. These situations and the children and myself are one of the same. No one care dto help me but I'm hoping to some way help them.

4. *Can you give me some examples of what young people write you? What kind of problems do they have? Do not identify any of them, but give me a flavor of how kids are responding to you.*

Not every child writes me with problems. Some write telling me about their good grades, their hobbies, or just to encourage me to hold on and to let me know that someone cares. Which is my greatest message to them. Some,

sad to say, may go as far as to share with me that they are getting abused and I help in any way I can to help them get out of it.

5. I'm pleased IDOC has allowed you to do this. What has been the response of prison officials at Logan to the program?

I myself am pleased with the response and love I receive from the children. This program is for them and about them. It always has been and it always will be. This facility (*Lincoln Correctional -jmh*) was just opened for women but there are a few prison officials that encourage me to keep my program alive and wish that they can help me in some way.

6. Lots of people will say this is just a hustle to get parole if it's ever offered. What do you say?

Lots of people may say a lot of things and I will not worry about it. I do positive work for the children and myself because NOBODY chose to help me as a child who was being abused everyday. So I choose to help abused children and at the end of the day no matter what anybody may think that I'm trying to do or get I am still making a positive difference in my life and that as well as the children. And that's what matters.

7. Do you need my students to send you journals so you can send them to the kids? What kinds of resources do you need that my students could help with?

It would be greatly appreciated if you and your students send journals, composition books or coloring books of any kind. I respond to the children in them and encourage them to journal and reward them for good grades with the coloring books and journals. That would be more than enough for I am receiving letters on a daily basis at this facility. I can receive no plastic covers.

8. Is there anything you'd like to say to my class? We discuss your case every year.

I would like to say to you and your students, Thank you for your concern and support. I am touched by your interest in me. I hope positivity is learned even from a negative situation. I ask that you reach out to a child in need, it could make a lot of difference. I appreciate you all.

Thank you,

Jacqueline