

## *Growing Up*

I didn't grow up the way I should have,  
Technology has controlled every aspect of me.  
Television taught me so much because mom wasn't  
around,  
Videogames drained my brain cells and have made me  
lazy.

I was once athletic and loved sports,  
But depression took over and I no longer put effort into it.  
My mom had me when she was young with an older man,  
A teenage mom with a father in his 20s drug dealing.  
I didn't have much of role models to be honest,  
But that's another story for another time.

I don't care to go outside most days and chill with friends,  
Growing up into a man so early wasn't part of my plans.  
Here I am in my 20s, living with my mom still,  
Somehow we are still in this apartment, I used to wonder  
how.

My mom has aged a lot because of the drug addiction she's  
had,  
Hoping and praying she makes it through a lot of nights.  
I surely don't want to wake up and she overdosed,  
By the graces of hope and faith, she'll eventually get it to-  
gether.

I had toys as a kid, I didn't play with them,  
I cared about what was on my television instead of my  
toys.  
Too busy watching music videos and watching movies I

shouldn't have seen,  
Walking out of my door into a cold world, making adult  
decisions at age 7.  
My childhood went goodbye when my dad left, my mom  
became depressed,  
It was me and my little brother fighting to survive from  
day to day.  
Some days I can go to my grandmother's house to eat  
food,  
And get a warm bed to sleep on for the night.  
She was really aging herself, in her 80s as she had a lot of  
kids,  
I have a few aunts and uncles who are spread out around  
the state.  
I'd surely do my childhood all over again, too many bad  
memories,  
My innocence was lost when police sirens showed up to  
my building one night.  
The sound of gunshots rang through my hallway staircase,  
A drug deal gone wrong, my homie died over money owed  
to someone.  
I knew who it was and who shot my homie but there was  
neighborhood code,  
Don't cooperate with the police, snitches get stitches, sad  
mentality.  
The police were here to solve a crime and here I was a  
teenager scared as hell,  
Of the repercussions if I opened my mouth and talked.  
Life in the ghetto, don't know how to deal with it, it takes a  
toll,

Going to school and taking care and protecting my little brother.

He eventually made decisions on his own and ended up in the streets,

Incarceration or death waited for him and now he's doing a few years in prison.

The feds were watching him so he's far away in the middle of nowhere doing time,

No time to drive or take a flight to go see him so he gets letters.

I couldn't write well for a long time, I speak with a lisp and I was illiterate,

I had to learn a lot of things on my own or have friends teach me.

Teachers passed me in school after so long,

Just so they can make their numbers and keep their jobs for next year.

Growing up, nope, didn't get to do that really,

So parents, do what you're supposed to and be there for your kids.

I love my mom to death but she really wasn't there,

I'm her only son now, depression has deteriorated her mind, body and soul.

She was once a sex symbol in the neighborhood and had a modeling career ahead,

Life took a toll on her all of these years and her skin has diminished off of her face.

I find happiness in eating junk food, watching television and playing videogames,

I never ended up on drugs, I guess seeing my mom on it, I

couldn't bare doing it myself.

Growing up was hard for me, I somehow made it to where I am,

Trying to get my life together, it's a battle one day at a time.

With a GED in my hand, now I need to figure out what to do with myself,

I guess get my penmanship better and hopefully apply for college.

I long for my toys that I used to have that I trashed as a kid,

Because I cared for unnecessary things such as clothes and sneakers.

I did my selling of drugs in the neighborhood at age 13, I'd sneak out at night for a few hours while my brother was sleep and my mom high.

No one knew I was gone, my brother slept through the night,

My mom was too high off of heroine or coke to even know I was gone.

Don't get me started with family members, all of my uncles were in the drug trade,

My aunts were too busy pushing out babies from fake thugs who got shot up in a raid.

My aunts are now washed up older women who live with plenty of regrets,

As they have shitty jobs living day to day, watching reality TV and doing twerk videos.

My family members are all dysfunctional with a bunch of personal problems,

Living with inner demons inside of their souls lost in a cloud of years of drug intake.

Rehab has helped a lot of them but the withdrawal kills them,

Which happened to my mom and I hope I never have to bury her this young.

Environments truly shape who you are and what you can be,

But if you want to break the cycle, it can be done and it'll start with me.

I have little cousins who are barely making it at this point, They grew up like me but I'm trying to help them make it. Making it isn't me being rich which is what I thought was making it,

It's a sad reality what society says is "making it."

My mind has been jaded full of idiotic thoughts for years, At least I learned that I was thinking wrong, certain people taught me the right way.

Now I'm sitting here improving my life and writing my story,

But this all took time to start releasing all of what's in my heart and mind.

I'm a struggling man born in a tough environment, Trying to teach and tell others that life is surely what you make it.

You are trying to figure out my race as I write this right now,

But worry about the story and where this is taking you.

You can make me whatever race you want me to be,

But I want you all to understand that this is about human

struggles in life.

We're all perfectly imperfect human beings and I want you all to see,

This is about humanity, bettering ourselves and opening our eyes to daily struggle.

My friends in school never really knew all of the battles I went through,

This is why we all need to be a little more kind to each other.

We all have pressures of our own that we have to fight through,

And enough insecurities to force us to rebel a lot of times.

My family loves me but I question that a lot of times, I honestly don't think they even love themselves.

I've never seen my aunts and uncles hug each other or even my grandparents,

Don't ask me about my dad's parents because I don't know them much.

Vivid memories of them as a little baby, my mom would have to tell me,

I never asked for my dad when he left us, it just was what it was.

Crazy because I never wondered where he was or if he was coming home,

Until I got older and saw him back in my neck of the woods.

I knew he was my dad because I was a spitting image of him,

It was crazy genetic wise but I really didn't have much to say.

I wanted and needed him as a father, I call him dad,  
Or even sperm donor for good measure since he wasn't  
around.  
I'd kill to rewind time and relive my childhood the way it  
should be,  
Parents don't understand how much being there for a  
child means to them.  
I didn't really have my mother's love, her saying I love you  
meant nothing,  
Especially since she never hugged or kissed me but  
hugged the hell out of a needle.  
She hugged that bag of cocaine and her nose loved it,  
Going straight through her nostrils after her mouth was  
filled with sexual juices.  
I knew what the deal was, I learned things quickly,  
Parents do what you can to protect your children.  
I wish I didn't have a care in the world as a kid,  
But I had to care, about everyone around me but no one  
for me.  
My childhood is tattooed all over my body,  
Ink of where I come from, where I've been and what I  
want to be.  
Memories and reminders to break the cycle of pain,  
And be the man that I should be in this cold world.  
This poetry is a way to release the anger and pain,  
Because telling a drug addicted mother and selfish family  
members won't help.  
Wondering if therapy will help calm my soul of all the an-  
guish,  
Thinking that maybe it will since I can't maintain relation-

ships with women.

More interpersonal issues that stem from my childhood,  
Too many things I wasn't told that I learned on my own.  
Feeling guilty if I decide to be selfish and get on with my  
life,

Right now trying to figure out what job I want to apply for,  
for the time being.

Needing something part-time so I can apply for college,  
Just an inner-city kid trying to make it and give back to so-  
ciety.

I can't change the past or get back what I lost,  
These experiences have allowed me to grow and make me  
stronger.

Parents whatever you are going through, be there for your  
kids,

They will always need you no matter what.

Spend time with them, quality time, not the television,  
Limit their television and videogame time.

Take them places, let them see the world for what it is,  
Teach them the morals and values needed to make it in  
life.

Love them unconditionally through thick and thin,  
When kids fall, they will always need a hand to pick them  
up.

These are things I wish that I had as a kid,  
Let your kids be children, they only get one childhood.