

# I Won't Foolishly Repeat Mistakes

By James, FM Friend

I've been sentenced to prison six times, and *I'm tired of being a failure!* I was born and raised in Florence, SC, and now I live in the nation's capital, Washington DC. While growing up I took my education for granted and only made it as far as the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. I have, however, obtained my GED. And I would like to further my education by attending junior college. I began using drugs and hanging out with negative people as an early teenager. As well, I began to drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes at the same time, which are also addictive and very unhealthy habits. By God's grace I've quit smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, and using drugs since June 15<sup>th</sup> 2010. It's wonderful to live clean and sober, and I know wish to reach out and encourage children/young people to stay in school and away from alcohol and drugs that will ruin your life! I have three books of poetry registered with the Library of Congress copyright office to protect my poems from plagiarism. I am a forty-four-year-old African American male who is determined to find a wife, publish my poetry books, and succeed in life. As long as I stay focused, I won't foolishly repeat the mistakes that have brought me so much misery and disappointment in life. Here is a poem about my father that I think you might connect with:

## If I could Bring Him Back

It's late but I can't sleep as I lay here in my bed;  
Thinking about my father, though for many years he's now been dead.

And the reason is quite evident. I'm consumed with utter regret;  
Some things I did to him, I can simply never forget.

I can recall the times I'd curse him, wanting to start a fight;  
Being totally disrespectful, yet within it felt so right.

I was subjected to unwanted neglect, not to mention senseless abuse;  
He often shunned his responsibilities, and his drinking was his excuse.

However, today I've come to understand, now that I'm fully grown;  
The bottle became his crutch, and eventually him it owned.

And sad to say, it also killed him—the very thought cuts like a knife;  
His health gradually diminished, the alcohol cost him is life.

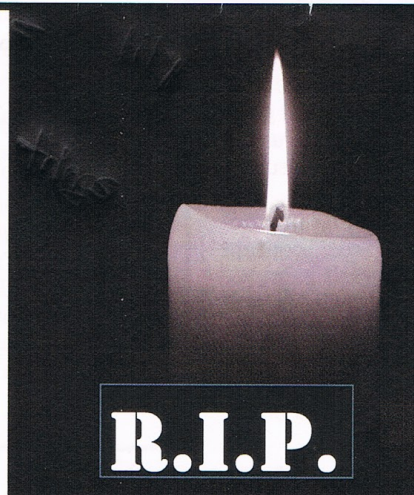
God knows I truly miss him, for no longer can I deny the fact;  
I can now accept Dad's weakness, but I cannot bring him back.

## Did you know?

Free Minds members  
read 4,750 books each  
year. That's  
approximately  
1,187,500 pages of  
reading!

## Next Connect: A Tribute Issue to Lost Loved Ones

Next issue is a chance for you to reflect on your personal experiences and on people you know who have been directly affected by gun or street violence. Send us your memories, stories, poems, tributes, and drawings of loved ones or friends who have been killed on the streets. How many people do you know who have been gun victims? What were they like? What do you miss most about them? Describe your favorite memories with them so we have a clear image of them in our minds. You can also send us your thoughts about what we can do as a community to address this problem and stop the cycle of violence.



*You was the quarterback  
You led us all together  
You know I'm missing you man  
I wish you neva left us  
We know it was a blessin'  
And now you up in heaven  
But Ma she still be stressing  
But know everyday is a day she  
getting better*

—IS, Free Minds member  
on the juvenile block