

Dear Contributor:

Thank you for your interest in being part of this phenomenal written experiment, (tentatively titled) *Love Letters to My Daughter*. The idea for this publication was spawned after sharing a poem with a few friends via a video on Facebook about my personal sexual history and its impact on my present life. The feedback was encouraging but gave the sense that something was missing in the connection between mothers and their daughters. It is my belief that many young girls are experimenting with sex before they are ready because they do not have a sense that they can be open and honest with Mom about what they are dealing with.

The purpose of this book is to have a tool available that mothers can share with their young daughters, allowing them to see that there really is no “them” and “us”. We were once “them” and soon enough they will be “us”. To effectively bring adult and young women to a level playing field allowing them to see one another as human. To understand that we have dealt with the same pressures and faced the same life altering choices as they do. To open or detangle those lines of communication, freeing young girls to speak to someone other than their peers when making important decisions about sex. It is not to take away the all too important “birds and bees” conversation but to add value to it and strengthen those bonds.

Submissions for *Love Letters to My Daughter* can be in any written form (i.e. poem, essay, narrative or letter) and should be as open and honest as possible. However it is requested that contributors refrain from unnecessary use of profanity and graphic detail. You are not the audience, your daughter and her friends are.

Submissions deemed explicit will be rejected.

Here are some questions to ask yourself to assist in preparing your submission:

- How old were you when you lost your virginity? If you were very young, how do you feel that impacted future decisions regarding sex and intimacy?
- Would you prefer to have waited? If so, why?
- Do you feel you were ready? What, if any, ramifications did you deal with as a result of having sex before you were ready?
- What were the circumstances surrounding the loss of your virginity (did you feel like you were in love? Did the relationship last? Did you get pregnant? If so, did you give birth/abort/miscarry? What was the emotional impact at the time?)
- Did you/do you practice safe sex?
- If you are now married, do you feel that your sexual past in anyway impacts your marriage? If yes, in what ways?
- Did you typically engage in sex because you wanted to or because you felt pressure or an obligation to?

- Was there a traumatic incident in your past that led to your sexual activity? Were your behaviors/decisions influenced by the women around you? If yes, in what way?
- If you have an active sexual past, do you feel that it has added any value to your life? Do you feel that you'd be in a better place/a better woman had you waited?

Remember, this is not a questionnaire. The purpose of these suggested questions is to get you to think honestly about your sexual past as it relates to your present. When preparing your submission, understand that the goal is not to instill fear of intimacy in young women; it is not to make the idea of sex negative and scary but to rather inspire them to make more informed decisions and open a dialogue between parent and child. This is your opportunity to potentially impact the sexual choices of young women all over. Approach with heart, truth, and clarity. The only requirement is to be honest with yourself so that you can be true to the young women that we hope to reach.

Submissions are open to all women ages 18 and up of all cultures, backgrounds, and ethnicities, writers and non-writers, mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, and cousins. This issue stretches beyond our own backyards. It is important to show a united front when trying to reach out to our young girls. Per a 2008 MTV study, 1 in 4 teen girls has or have had a sexually transmitted disease with the highest prevalence being African American teen girls.

It is alarming and we need to take drastic matters to reach out to our youth. Remember what we are up against. Sex is out in the open (think music, videos, movies, books, commercials, etc), so why not us? Telling your teen daughter not to worry about boys, concern herself with grades is appropriate but does not erase the feelings stirring up inside. She cannot be bullied into retaining her essence as a young woman and there is a much better chance of halting her by talking openly with her than ignoring it and hoping that it will go away. I am not saying that this is certainly *the* answer but whatever it is we think we're doing now is not working, so it's time to try something new.

Please review the attached checklist and agreement. Sign and return to attention S Michelle Martin at the above address.

TENTATIVE SUBMISSION PERIOD – April 1, 2009 through May 31, 2009

Sincerely,



S Michelle Martin
Founder





Project Starr Mission Statement

To impact the lives of young women who may have become sexually active or who may be considering becoming sexually active and not only educate them on the value of safe sex practices (including abstinence), but also helping to open the lines of communication between mothers and their daughters.

To teach young women that when it comes to their body, they do have a choice and a voice and encourage them to treasure their worth by maintaining their virtue. If they have not chosen to abstain from sex, challenging young women to make wise decisions and protect themselves.

Ultimately, to create a sisterhood that reaches beyond the boundaries of a young woman's home and immediate community, providing alternatives when the women in their lives are not an option by providing positives examples of how to be a woman (mentorship).

Starr's Thoughts

I lost my virginity when I was 15.

This is the very first time I have said that number aloud. It was 1992...January, 4-months before my 16th birthday so I always fudge history a bit and choose to go with that age instead. I was the girlfriend of the cutest guy at Chicago's Gallery 37. Well...actually, by this point we were no longer together. I came from a dysfunctional home, both parents' drug addicts...living separate lives but engaging in the same ol' that had apparently bonded them back in the day. I was at this guy's house, my ex (who we shall, from this point, call Derrick) because quite honestly, my parents weren't paying attention.

Derrick's mom would allow me to sleep over. She had a daughter a couple years younger than me and she and I got along well. But as cool as she and I were, I was there for Derrick. To see Derrick. To be near him. And to hopefully find a way to get back with him. As an adult, I've asked myself why this woman would have allowed her teenage son's 15-year old ex-girlfriend to sleep over her house.

Big mistake. Teenagers are not to be trusted. It was late...maybe well past midnight. I was up in the living room watching their television, when in walks Derrick touching me and kissing on me in that special kinda way. I'd longed to feel his touch for months...I was on a cloud. When he took my hand in his and began to lead me down the path from the family room to his personal space – my heart stopped. I wanted him to touch me...wanted him to desire me but I didn't know that I wanted this.

I remember holing myself up in the bathroom for at least 5 minutes praying to God for guidance. If he answered, I didn't understand how to hear his voice. I gave in. Maybe this was my last opportunity to get this guy back. After all, the reason he'd broken up with me in the first place was because I was too timid to kiss him, this would certainly make up for it. I remember what was on the radio – Boys II Men's *Uhh Ahh* (isn't it ironic?). When it was over, I didn't feel empowered in any way but rather wondered if somehow I'd find

myself pregnant. I was ashamed and disappointed, amplified by the fact that this act...my sharing my body with this young boy that I felt I cared so much for...didn't in any way impact the status of our relationship. And worst, I suspect his mother soon caught on because shortly after our second attempt at teenage "love" which ended rather abruptly and with finality, she ceased allowing me to stay over at her home.

I ask myself what, if anything, could have prevented my going there that winters night in '92. There were a number of things that went wrong. His mother had no business allowing me to sleep over. She had a duty to send me home. My home was broken but not non-existent. My parents (particularly my father since I was living at his house at the time) completely dropped the ball in allowing me to sleepover anyplace without having any idea of where I was and who I was with.

My mother had always been pretty open about her past so the concept of sex exactly wasn't lost on me. Her drug use and eventual abuse, her sexual history including pregnancies and abortions, to the true purpose behind my conception, all was front page news. But this information was generally given matter-of-factly as though "these things happen". I ponder...had she shared this information when I came of age and began to show signs of being sexually interested but in the form of a lesson, would I have approached sex differently? If we would have talked about the background behind these undesirable choices, why she felt she did them, how they affected her overall to date, could I have viewed sex in a different light? Would that have actually put a face on it, made me see my mom as human and not just "Mommy"? Would I have come to her before crossing that line – or at the very least considered her and the impact similar choices had on her life...the lessons she'd shared?

I'll never have an answer to that question. As of age 15, I lost my virginity which opened up the door to a number of other sexual encounters that I could have certainly done without (my hubby will be glad that despite it all I retain the ability to add them up using my two hands). Whether sharing, when the time is appropriate, your sexual past with your daughter is the answer, I don't know but I do know that as a freelancer who works from home and watches lots of *Maury* and *Tyra*, so many young women who are having sex say that they cannot talk to their mothers about what they are dealing with. Too many girls are dismissed and told to stay in a child's place when they really need an understanding of how to handle these feelings stirring up within them. As a result they are turning to friends or seeking to find the answers on their own. What does that leave us with? Consoling broken hearts, feeding newborn babies, or nursing our little girl back to some semblance of health with Amoxicillin and AZT.

The time for turning a blind eye and pretending that now that you're grown sexual pressures no longer exist is over. The time for sitting high on your horse and looking down your nose at your children and expecting that they will make wiser choices when you yourself did not is done. Now is the time for action. Now is the time to say tradition be damned. Now is our time as women and mothers to step up and reclaim our daughters – by any means necessary.

Miki Starr





Project Starr Anthology Agreement

This contract is made between **Project Starr and ReignStorm Publishing**, whose address is **1381 10th St NW, #202, New Brighton, MN 55112**, hereafter referred to as the Publisher, and _____, whose address is _____, hereafter referred to as the Author.

THE PARTIES AGREE AS FOLLOWS:

Author's Grant

1. The Author grants permission to include his/her story _____, an original work, hereafter referred to as the Work, in (tentatively titled) *Love Letters to My Daughter* an anthology to be published by the Publisher, hereafter referred to as the Anthology.

Rights Acquired

2. This use of the Work by the Publisher entails the assignment of First World Anthology Rights, for publication in the English language anywhere in the world. It is also understood and agreed that the Publisher may use this Work only in the above-mentioned anthology and re-printings of it, and that the Author shall retain all other rights to the Work not specified here.

Author's Copies

3. For the rights granted above, the Author will be entitled to purchase one (1) copy of the Anthology at a reduced rate of 15% off. Author also may purchase additional copies at market price (plus shipping and handling) off the cover price.

Author's Warranties, Representations and Indemnities

4. The Author represents and warrants that he/she is the sole author of the Work, that the Work is original, and that no one has reserved the rights granted in this agreement. The author also represents, to the best of his/her knowledge, that the Work contains no matter unlawful in its content, nor does it violate the rights of any third party; that the rights granted in this contract are free and clear; and that the Author has full power to grant such rights to the Publisher.

The Author further warrants that any and all works submitted under this contract are not in the public domain and are not and have never been published in paper or any other format with any publishing company that may still own proprietary right to the Work.

The Author agrees to hold Publisher harmless and indemnify it from all damages, costs, and expenses directly resulting from a finally sustained judgment relating to any legal actions incurred by the Author arising from a breach of the above warranties.

No Competing Publication

5. In the case of a First World Anthology Rights assignment, the Author agrees not to publish or permit others to publish this Work in any form prior to its publication and appearance in the above named Anthology and for the first ninety (90) days after the appearance of the Anthology.

Submission

6. The Author understands that the publication is for a nonprofit organization and no royalties will be paid to the Author. The Publisher shall donate up to 20% of royalties to non-profit A.I.D.S. foundations/organizations of the Publishers choosing. The remaining royalties will reimburse the Publisher for expenses related to publication, promotion, and expanding the movement of Project Starr. The Author understands that this publication is helping to create a positive impact on young girls and not about the exposure of the Author. The Author also understands this is not a guarantee on their own individual book sales and the publisher is not responsible for any other works by the Author other than the works (Project Starr/ReignStorm Publishing anthology) designated for this contract. The Author understands that the work published is final and nothing will be revised. The Author understands that work may be published anonymously or using a pseudonym.

Publication of Work

6. (a) The Author agrees to deliver to the Publisher, not later than **June 1, 2009**, in two (2) formats, typewritten and computer generated (or on computer disk in a format acceptable to Publisher), manuscripts of the Work in the English language, acceptable to the Publisher in form and substance and ready to set into type. The Author understands that the manuscript needs to be edited and proofread. The Author agrees that the Author shall have retained copies of the manuscript as delivered to the Publisher.

(b) The Publisher will make no major alterations to the Work's text or title without the Author's written approval. The Publisher reserves the right to make minor copy-editing changes.

Copyright

7. The Publisher agrees to list a proper copyright notice for the work in the name of the Author on the first page of the published story unless Author specifies anonymity.

Authors Credits

8. The Author will be credited in the contributors section and at the beginning of the story as:
_____ (author's by-line) unless Author specifies anonymity.

Venue

9. This agreement shall be deemed executed under the laws of the state of Minnesota, United States of America. Minnesota State Law shall be the applicable law of this agreement.



Reversion of Rights

10. In the event that the above-mentioned anthology has not been published within six (6) months of signing of this agreement, all rights revert to the Author, and the Author has the right to sell or arrange for publication of the above-named Work in any manner.

Author or Author's Agent

Name: _____

Title: _____

(Signed): _____

(Witnessed): _____

Date: _____

Publisher

Name: S Michelle Martin

Title: Publisher (ReignStorm Publishing)

(Signed): _____

(Witnessed): _____

Date: _____

Return entire signed agreement accompanied by submission form and hardcopy of submission to:

PROJECT STARR
Attn: S Michelle Martin
1381 10th St NW #202
New Brighton, MN 55112

(Be sure to keep a photocopy for your personal records)





Project Starr Anthology Submission Form

Contact Information

Name:

Email Address:

Address:

Telephone Number:

Is this submission anonymous? Yes No

Your Story

[Email copy of work to submissions@mikistarr.com. Attach a typed copy of work to submission form and return with signed Anthology agreement.]