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# Striving for Freedom: an Incarcerated Existence

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**Regis University**  
School for Professional Studies Graduate Programs  
**Final Project/Thesis**

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## ABSTRACT

### Striving for Freedom: An Incarcerated Existence

Presented in this project is a detailed study of the effects of long term incarceration on inmates and society. This researcher examined the life of a fictitious inmate, through the form of a novella, as he endured long term incarceration. His innermost thoughts and feelings shed light into the criminal lifestyle through the careful examination of his experiences related to: (a) childhood, (b) family dysfunction, (c) socioeconomic status, (c) peer relations, and (d) education. The purpose of long term incarceration prevention should be focused on: (a) prevention, in order to stop at risk individuals from becoming institutionalized; (b) intervention, to try and offer services to help at risk individual to lead a stable lifestyle; (c) rehabilitation, to provide training and educational opportunities for the inmate population; and (d) alternatives to incarceration, for nonviolent offenders.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Chapter   | Page |
|---|------|
| 1. INTRODUCTION .....                                     | 1    |
| Statement of the Problem .....                            | 2    |
| Background of the Problem .....                           | 2    |
| Purpose of the Project .....                              | 3    |
| Chapter Summary .....                                     | 4    |
| 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....                             | 5    |
| Behavior .....  | 5    |
| Family .....  | 8    |
| Family Relations .....                                    | 8    |
| Family Pathology .....                                    | 10   |
| The Inmate and Family .....                               | 11   |
| Education .....   | 12   |
| Inmate Education .....                                    | 13   |
| Judicial Practices .....                                  | 15   |
| Intervention/Prevention Programs .....                    | 17   |
| Real-World vs. Demonstration .....                        | 17   |
| Mentoring .....   | 17   |
| Alternative Sanctions .....                               | 18   |
| The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative ..... | 18   |
| Chapter Summary .....                                     | 19   |
| 3. METHOD .....   | 21   |
| Target Audience .....                                     | 21   |
| Goals .....   | 21   |
| The Writing Process .....                                 | 22   |
| Chapter Summary .....                                     | 22   |
| 4. RESULTS .....  | 23   |
| Goal of the Project .....                                 | 23   |
| Kevin's Story .....                                       | 24   |
| Reflections .....   | 72   |
| The Future .....  | 73   |
| Chapter Summary .....                                     | 74   |

|                                  |    |
|----------------------------------|----|
| 5. DISCUSSION .....              | 75 |
| Findings .....                   | 76 |
| Limitations to the Project ..... | 79 |
| Application .....                | 79 |
| Project Summary .....            | 80 |
| REFERENCES .....                 | 81 |

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

In the United States, the penal system is perceived as a necessary institution, used to warehouse and then mainstream incarcerated individuals back into society. The purpose of these institutions is to punish and possibly rehabilitate inmates before they are reintroduced to society. As reported by Granello and Hanna (2003) and Tonry (1999), there has been a movement a trend in U.S. crime policy to deprive prisoners of all rights and to focus only on the punitive aspects of incarceration and not on rehabilitation. Catchpole and Gretton (2003), in their study of the predictive value of risk assessment, concluded that the over prediction of violence leads to increased incarceration time or stricter probation conditions for the individual as well as a justification of retributive justice. In addition, Tonry reported that there are initiatives in many jurisdictions that place limits on inmate opportunities and worsen their living conditions. Often, elected officials are reluctant to legislate any forward thinking policies because their opponents may label them soft on crime. What are the issues that are faced by the long term incarcerated inmate, and what role do these issues play in their rehabilitation? Can the use of effective intervention programs play a notable role in the prevention of the onset of long term criminal activity?

#### Statement of the Problem

There is little or no uniformity in the U.S. approach to sentencing and corrections in the judicial systems throughout this country (Tonry, 1999). In addition, for the

community of individuals who are at risk for penal institutionalization, there is no uniform structure for intervention and prevention programs. Taxpayers absorb the cost for prisons, which average \$100,000 or more per cell and \$30-50,000 annually per inmate (Shrum, 2004). The societal cost for an adolescent, who drops out of high school and turns to crime, is between 1.7-2.3 million dollars over their lifetime (Granello & Hanna, 2003). The initiation and implementation of new and/or existing rehabilitation and prevention programs should be the focus for the reduction of long term incarceration and recidivism rates and, thereby, the tax burden on the general public would be notably reduced.

#### Background of the Problem

Many citizens in the U.S. perceive the prison system as a *cure all* for social ills. Instead, the focus should be on: (a) prevention, in order to stop at risk individuals from becoming institutionalized; (b) intervention, to try and offer services to help at risk individual to lead a stable lifestyle; (c) rehabilitation, to provide training and educational opportunities for the inmate population; and (d) alternatives to incarceration, for nonviolent offenders.

Schrum (2004) maintained that the utilization of effective programs that prevent individuals from becoming career criminals or that provide positive rehabilitation for offenders may: (a) reduce crime, (b) lower incarceration costs, (c) minimize welfare and social services, and (d) contribute to less prison overcrowding. These factors could contribute to safer communities. The term, long term incarceration, refers to individuals who reoffend after completion of their original sentence and are committed to another

prison term (e.g., 1-5 years), as well as the habitual criminal who serves longer sentences (e.g., 5-20 years to life).

### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to provide an understanding, from differing perspectives, about a possible developmental pathway resulting in long term incarceration and to compare the inmate experience with the current literature. This author wrote a novella, based on the literature as well as personal letters, and discussions with individuals who have been incarcerated, in order to investigate and describe the experience of an inmate who, over an extended period of time, is incarcerated in various correctional facilities. This author developed a fictionalized account of prison life in order to describe the problems, concerns, and overall life experiences of the inmate as he moved through the criminal justice system.

Also, this researcher built upon previous studies (English, Widom, & Brandford, 2001; Garrett, 1995; Gove, 1994; Kelley, 1996; Smith, 2004) and tried to understand the psyche of the criminal mind. He made an attempt to study humanity in the prison system in a review of rehabilitation vs. incarceration. Is rehabilitation the goal of the system? Typically, the focus of crime and punishment is on the punitive aspects in regard to the incarceration of offenders and the treatment of these offenders within the criminal justice system. Searches for causation that lead to criminal type behavior and the mindset of offenders as related to their incarceration over an extended period of time will be reviewed. Some of the factors that were explored in this project are: (a) the



inmate's character; (b) the inmate's family relationships; (c) thoughts of recidivism; and (d) the inmate's feelings (e.g., abandonment, loneliness, etc.).

### Chapter Summary

Presented in this chapter were the statement of the problem and a brief background of the problem as well as the purpose of the project. In Chapter 2, Review of Literature, this author examined the topics of: (a) behavior, (b) family, (c) education, (d) judicial practices, and (d) intervention/prevention programs. Presented in Chapter 3 is the method that was used to develop this project.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this project was to write a novella on the topic of long-term incarceration. It was based on the literature as well as personal communications and discussions with individuals who have experienced the penal system in the United States. The topics addressed in this review include: (a) behavior, (b) family, (c) education, (d) judicial practices, and (d) intervention/prevention programs.

Typically, the focus of punishment for the commission of a crime is on the punitive aspects in regard to incarceration of offenders and the treatment of these offenders within the criminal justice system. In this literature review, the author identified specific elements that may lead to criminal behavior as well as the mindset of offenders as related to their incarceration.

#### Behavior

According to Gove (1994), the sociological explanations of individuals and their actions are focused on: (a) the society in which they live, (b) their location and/or position within that society, and (c) their particular experiences within their social realms. The ideal environment for the proper socialization and well being of a child is a harmonious two parent family. This kind of familial setting provides nurturance for the child's emotional and physical growth and trains the child to act in an appropriate and effective manner.

However, children, who have been abused or neglected, are at higher risk for arrest as juveniles or adults for criminal behavior. English, Widom, and Brandford (2001) identified childhood victimization as a risk factor for delinquency, criminality, and violence; this risk includes females as well as males. The types of abuse include: (a) physical (e.g., bruises, scratches, swollen limbs); (b) sexual (e.g., inappropriate touching or other sexual behavior); and (c) emotional (e.g., psychological terror, humiliation, derogatory behavior). The term, neglect, refers to a child who is: (a) left home alone (e.g., latch key child); (b) not provided proper food or shelter; (c) kept home from attending school; and (d) not provided with medical care (Dombrowski, Ahia, & McQuillan, 2003). Furthermore, children who witness abuse are more likely to suffer psychological and behavioral problems than children who have not (Lawson, 2003).

The issue of poor or low self-esteem creates another barrier for individuals to overcome (Wigfield & Eccles, 1995, as cited in Irvin, 1996). Wigfield and Eccles found that self-esteem declines at age 11 and reaches a low point between 12 and 13. Student academic motivation and self-esteem may deteriorate when school staff emphasizes competition, social comparison, and ability self-assessment.

In a study on self-control, T. Smith (2004) found support for the empirical data (Burton, Evans, Cullen, Olivares, & Dunaway, 1999) that suggested males have less self-control than females. Specifically, less self-control is associated with academic dishonesty (Cochran, Wood, Sellers, Wilkerson, & Chamlin, 1998; Gibbs, Giever, & Martin, 1998). When viewed from a criminological perspective, individuals with less self-control might commit a crime if the opportunity presented itself. Also, low self-control is a predictor of violent offenses (Baron, 2003).

Kemp and Center (2000) identified the influences on individuals' development of serious antisocial and criminal behavior and found a link between poor socialization and criminal history. These findings supported Eysenck's (1997, as cited in Kemp & Center) antisocial behavior hypothesis and suggested that the combined data could be used for the early identification of school age children and youth at-risk for the development of serious antisocial behavior and becoming adult criminals. Such early identification might be in regard to the deviant behavior displayed by some African American male youth who reside in economically depressed neighborhoods (Okwumabua, 1999).

According to Harris (1995), there is an earlier separation from the family for low income African American male youth as they align with and show greater dependence on peers for approval and to depend on them as a support system. Dysfunctional family dynamics, such as father-absent homes, improper parenting strategies, siblings and/or parents who show little affection and use punitive disciplinary measures, prevent close familial bonds and may steer youth toward the rewards offered by peer groups.

In regard to the development of criminal careers, Tubman, Gil, and Wagner (2004) found a correlation between substance abuse and delinquent behavior as it related to a pathway towards a deviant lifestyle. Youth with limited education, poor social skills, and minimal preparation for viable career choices become prime candidates for gang type behavior.

Garrett (1995) noted that gang members acquire a sense of security, self-worth, and respect by preying on society.

Youth with limited educational experiences and poor social skills are more likely to drift toward gang affiliation and display deviant or criminal behavior (Garrett, 1995). Family relations show causation for delinquency because of the tendency for problematic

relationships with parents to foster disorganization with the family structure, leading youth to seek rewards from their peers for deviant type behavior. African American male youths who reside in high-risk neighborhoods exhibit risky behavior, which may lead towards gang involvement (Okwumabua, 1999).

### Family

The family structure receives attention because this is where the socialization and well being of a child begins (McNulty, 1995; Pederson, 1994; Rodney & Mupier, 1999; Vazsonyi & Pickering, 2000). As children develop into adolescents, their behavioral patterns may strain familial relationships as the adolescents strive for more freedom and shift their focus from the family to members of peer groups. Also, the presence of dysfunction within family systems can contribute toward the delinquency of an adolescent as he or she turns to peers, who may be offenders, for rewards and a sense of belonging that may not come from their immediate family.

### *Family Relations*

The development of psychosocial problems in children and adolescents is notably associated with poor parental/child relationships (Pedersen, 1994). Pedersen concluded that “delinquency in a wider sense is related to problematic relationships with parents, and that youths with this kind of problem often come from disorganized families where both care and structure are lacking” (p. 1). Furthermore, the “DSM-III-R mentions rejection by the parents, an inconsistent pattern of upbringing with hard discipline, and growing up in an institution as being among the risk factors connected with the diagnosis of conduct disorder” (p. 1).

Also, Vazsonyi and Pickering (2000) identified the family as an important influence in the development of individual adolescent behavior, including deviance. They documented the effects of parental monitoring and supervision, the parent/child relationship, including discipline, communication, and family conflict. “Individuals who lack a close affective bond with parents, who are not closely monitored, and who do not experience disciplinary actions by parents are also at greatest risk for problem behaviors and deviance” (p. 2).

Matherne and Thomas (2001) reported that the factors of single parent households and broken homes were a predictor for the majority of teenage criminals. In these nontraditional families, it is more likely that this environment makes adolescents more susceptible to delinquency. McNulty (1995) found that 75% of teenage criminals came from single parent homes. Rodney and Mupier (1999) suggested that inadequate parental supervision and/or lack of a father figure contributed to juvenile crime. “Violent children are 11 times more likely not to live with fathers and 6 times more likely to have parents who are not married” (Sheline, Skipper, & Broadhead, 1994, as cited in Rodney & Mupier, p. 1). The absence of fathers does not necessarily predict criminal behavior, but it may be a contributing factor in an unhealthy family relationship, which helps to influence the level of self-esteem in a child.

Family members develop their own restraint system in which deviant or risk-taking behaviors are discouraged (Sokol-Katz & Dunham, 1997). The lack of family roles and relationships can increase the probability of members who engage in risky behaviors because of the absence of control within the family unit. Also, the presence of family child rearing practices, establish structure within family life and the quality of

parental attachment provides positive reinforcement against adolescent engagement in abnormal or deviant behaviors.

The age of adolescence has become a symbolic stage for a declaration of independence from familial ties (Chen & Dornbusch, 1998). The adolescent seeks freedom in the form of emotional autonomy and an escape from parental influence. During this developmental path to maturity, problem behaviors may surface as parental values are shared less by the adolescent.

### *Family Pathology*

The family is a very dynamic unit that constantly evolves and changes according to the world around it as well as the family members within it (Hazler & Denham, 2002; Kingree, Phan, & Thompson, 2003). The inability of the family unit to adapt and provide flexibility, within its own boundaries, may create maladaptive behaviors throughout this system and foster negative or illogical thought processes in its members. Families that exhibit poor problem solving abilities foster an atmosphere that stifles a child's proper development.

Familial boundaries have to be set and the rules of engagement enforced, in order to provide structure and a sense of safety and wellbeing (Kingree et al., 2003). Two-way communication has to be established and maintained between parent and child as the development of the child creates friction in the relationship through natural curiosity and peer friendships.

*The Inmate and Family*

After an offender becomes an inmate, the family dynamics change as roles and responsibilities shift. The incarceration of family members results in tension and constraints on familial ties, and relationships may start to deteriorate without proper intervention or analysis (Hairston, 1998). Visiting prisoners is both psychologically and physically demanding due to the taxing environments of most prisons. Often, visitors are treated as unwelcome guests, or as “intruders to be kept in line through humiliation and intimidation” (p. 4). Frequently, time is spent in lines waiting to be searched before entrance into visiting room facilities that may be crowded, noisy, dirty, or separated by a glass barrier.

What happens when the family fails to support the emotional and spiritual needs provided by letters and visitation? Some prisoners and families may choose to forego regular visits to save themselves the embarrassment or humiliation associated with family contact under these extreme conditions (Hairston, 1998). However, prolonged incarceration without regular visits may force inmates to create new memories of family through fantasy and imagination. When there is no contact to support the familial bonds, these situations can lead to permanent severance of family ties.

Incarceration provides time for thought and reflection, as inmates ponder past, present, and future possibilities in life. Emotions do not disappear upon incarceration in a penal institution, but they are carefully controlled until stressful situations begin to initiate violent outbursts. Visitation from family and friends helps to relieve pressure from the inmate psyche and to foster a sense of relief from any pain and suffering created by their incarceration.



## Education

Many poor and minority youth are inadequately served in the U.S. educational system (Bailey & Paisley, 2004; Heubert, 2002). In schools, where there are large numbers of poor and/or minority students, there are fewer resources and qualified teachers for instruction.

Davis and Jordan (1994) demonstrated that African American males are disproportionately affected by suspensions, many for inappropriate school behavior. School suspensions, as well as special education placements, are usually related to behavioral issues. More than double the number of males (i.e., in comparison to females) are enrolled in special education programs, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (1998, as cited in Kleinfeld, 1999).

African American males have been disproportionately represented in special education programs across the U.S. Also, many teachers are faced with the loss of control in their classrooms because of disruptive individuals. Frequently, these students are sent to special education classes in order to return order to chaotic situations.

Karagiannis (2000) addressed the labels that can be attached to an individual, such as learning disability (LD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Such labels can become a stigma to a youth and help to foster criminal and violent behavior. Students may act out and resort to violence when faced with the disgrace of a derogatory label. In addition, the presence of good communication skills enhance the ability of an individual to react in a positive manner toward stressful events and situations (Segrin & Flora, 2000). However, individuals with poor communication skills

are more likely to become depressed, lonely, or socially anxious when they experience negative events in life.

### *Inmate Education*

According to Hairston (1998), most prisoners are young, male, lack higher education, and are poor at the time of their arrest, and African Americans constitute almost half of the U.S. prison population. Unfortunately, many of the educational opportunities have been removed from penal institutions in the U.S. As a result, upon release, many inmates return to the only way of life they understand, that of a criminal.

Rees (2000) reported that the lack of effective integration programs to provide life skill development for incarcerated adults put them at risk for failure as family and community members. Often, poorly educated and under-skilled offenders are unable to earn a decent wage to provide the basic comforts for themselves or their families, which leads some of them back to the criminal lifestyle.

Recidivism rates remain high despite numerous educational and career programs that are taken advantage of by the incarcerated population (Harr, 1999). The prison environment, an epitome of negative experiences, can be considered a major factor in the contribution of escalated rates of recidivism. "Prisons are breeding grounds for the kinds of aggression and anger that teach life-long lessons hard to unlearn for the majority of those who experience them" (p. 1).

Inmates' access to educational opportunities help to promote positive mental and emotional health and provide experiences that foster understanding and build self-confidence within the inmate. However, Choe's (1999) research findings showed an

alarming trend. From 1977-1995, the average state has increased the funding for prisons twice as much as funding for public colleges. The State of Texas has increased its budget for public colleges by 391% during this time frame, but the prison funding has increased by 2,232% (i.e., almost six times as much). If the same financial plan was used to provide educational experiences, then there may not be as many individuals under-educated and incarcerated.

Staff of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1993, as cited in Shrum, 2004) found that 80% of state prison inmates do not have a high school education, and there is a direct correlation between recidivism and prior education. According to Shrum, the recidivism rate for inmates who received both a GED certificate and completed a vocational trade was more than 20% lower than those who did not complete either of these programs.

Incarceration places the mental and emotional processes of an individual under tremendous pressure as the dynamics of *free-world* behavior become constrained and *inmate living* takes over (Schrum, 2004). Low achievement in the public school system and lack of educational opportunities within the penal institution create hardship on inmates integrating into society.

Life-skill training is necessary before inmates enter their communities or return to their families (Schrum, 2004). The ability to earn a decent wage and provide for themselves and their families may drop the rate of recidivism. Furthermore, life-skills training, coupled with parenting classes, may prevent the next generation of offenders from entering the criminal justice system. The training and education received by inmates allow them to become gainfully employed and pay taxes and be able to provide

a harmonious family relationship which may reduce the odds of their children ending up in prison.

### Judicial Practices

There is no uniformity in sentencing throughout the U.S. judicial system (Granello & Hanna, 2003). Minority youth are incarcerated at a much higher rate than Anglo American youth, even when they are convicted of the same crimes. Economically depressed areas are often used as the only source of targeted criminal activity, thus creating an over representation of poor and minority inmates in the correction system.

Mandatory (e.g., drug) sentences are a major reason for the shortages of space and overcrowding in the penal institutions (Smith, 2004). Increases in incarceration rates are closely tied to: (a) partisan control of state government, (b) gubernatorial election cycles, (c) selected policy decisions, and (d) race.

Often, the implementation of cost cutting procedures at correctional facilities curtail or eliminate prison programs and services that provide support to inmates in an effort to reduce the recidivism rate (Schrum, 2004). However, high risk offenders require intensive interventions if the goal is to reduce recidivism. In a RAND study conducted for the Office of Correctional Education (1994, as cited in Shrum), it was found that the cost effectiveness of graduation incentives, compared to serious crimes, averted per millions of dollars spent, was five times better than the results of the three strikes program.

Gearan (2003, as cited in Schrum, 2004) reported that Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy said that he was in favor of the removal of some of the federal

mandatory minimum sentences. Also, prison wardens (90%) and police chiefs (60%) have reported that alternatives to incarceration, vocational training, literacy, and other educational programs would be more beneficial and less costly to the U.S. socioeconomic system.

Public safety can still be achieved through the use of sentence and/or correction reform without an increase in the number of imprisoned offenders (Smith & Dickey, 1999). The lessons of responsibility and accountability can be taught to children and young adults through their interactions with parents, teachers, sports programs, and other community groups in order to provide alternatives to penal measures

The concepts of restorative justice and community justice offer additional thought processes in regard to crime and punishment (Kurki, 1999). In restorative justice theories, it is suggested that the government surrender its responses to crime to those individuals directly affected (e.g., the victim, the offender, the community). In community justice theories, the roles and/or goals of criminal justice agencies are expanded and redefined to include: (a) crime prevention, (b) address social problems and conflicts, and (c) the involvement of neighborhood residents in the planning process. The premise of these theories is focused on community strength through community interaction to crime and punishment as well as the prevention of criminal activity in the neighborhoods of these concerned citizens.

## Intervention/Prevention Programs

### *Real-World vs. Demonstration*

The use of demonstration projects with inmates has shown a sharp decrease in recidivism rates (Armstrong, 2003). However, when implemented as real world programs, these programs were only half as effective in recidivism reduction as were the demonstration projects. Armstrong concluded that “Those responsible for the delivery of program content in real-world settings may have a greater capacity for teaching concrete skills such as negotiation, interpersonal skills, assertiveness, and communication than they have for leading inmates on a journey of moral development” (p. 685).

### *Mentoring*

Keating, Tomishima, Foster, and Alessandri (2002) reported that the use of mentoring programs has shown positive results in the reduction of problematic behaviors when youth are paired with caring adults (i.e., role models) who help them feel good about themselves. Because many minority youth may experience difficulty in their formation of an identity, because of the conflict between their cultural values with those of the of the dominant culture (Irvin, 1996), the use of mentor programs can provide positive role models and help facilitate self-esteem as the two value systems are carefully negotiated (e.g., dominant culture vs. minority culture).

Often, mentors can expose youth to positive elements outside of their normal environments and allow the participants to be themselves, and not what their peers expect them to be (Irvin, 1996). They can learn from their mentors that it is acceptable to pursue academic excellence as well as athletic superiority. In turn, they may decide to mentor

other young adults and help them to attain higher levels of education and, thereby, break the cycles of poverty or deviance.

### *Alternative Sanctions*

According to Coleman, Felten-Green, and Oliver (1998), an Alternative Sanctions Program was implemented in the state of Connecticut, and it has saved an estimated \$619 million in capital and operating costs by the use of alternatives to incarceration. The Office of Alternative Sanctions (OAS) was developed by the Connecticut judiciary to oversee alternative sanction options for low risk offenders. Evaluations of the program evaluations showed a reduction in offender recidivism as well as financial savings to the citizens and state government.

More than 40,000 offenders have been diverted to this program since 1990 with a positive return on investment (ROI; Coleman et al., 1998). The programs founded by alternative sanctions reinforce the severity of prison terms. If an individual is placed in a program and fail, then the offender is sent to prison to complete the full sentence. The alternative sanction options are for any offender who does not have to be in prison (i.e., low-risk individuals). Extensive counseling, community service, and educational opportunities provide participants with a strong base to help foster a successful reentry into society.

### *The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative*

The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative program was developed by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), in an effort to

address high risk offenders in the juvenile and adult populations (USDOJ, 2004). The goal of the program is to provide funding for reentry strategies that are focused on community safety and the reduction of serious, violent crime. Members of communities work together with DOJ to safely reintegrate returning offenders through three phases of reentry.

1. Phase 1--Protect and Prepare: Institution-Based Programs. These programs are designed to prepare offenders to reenter society. Services include education, mental health and substance abuse treatment, job training, mentoring, and full diagnostic and risk assessment.
2. Phase 2--Control and Restore: Community-Based Transition Programs. These programs will work with offenders prior to and immediately following their release from correctional institutions. Services include education, monitoring, mentoring, life skills training, assessment, job skills development, and mental health and substance abuse treatment.
3. Phase 3--Sustain and Support: Community-Based Long-Term Support Programs. These programs will connect individuals who have left the supervision of the justice system with a network of social services agencies and community-based organizations to provide ongoing services and mentoring relationships.

### Chapter Summary

Presented in this chapter was the information from the literature that pertains to behavior, family, education, judicial practices, and intervention and prevention programs



as they relate to pathways to incarceration. Presented in Chapter 3 is the method that was be used to develop this project.

## Chapter 3

### METHOD

The purpose of this project was to present a detailed study of the effects of long-term incarceration on society in order to develop background knowledge to be implemented later in a creative manner into the author's novella. The researcher examined the psychology, sociology, and human communication characteristics of incarcerated behavior through letters and the studies of other researchers. These findings were applied to the creation of a character within the author's novella. Only the characterization of this single character of the novella was addressed in this study. The researcher hoped to gain a clear understanding of this topic and apply it to the novella in order to present the final work in a credible manner. The results from this study are unique to the author's goals, but could still be reviewed by other consumers who are interested in the topic of the effects of long-term incarceration on society.

### Target Audience

It was this author's intent to reach a wide range of people with this novella. The review of literatures contributed to the overall credibility of the novella and attract those interested in the specific topics covered.

### Goals

The goals of this work were to produce the appropriate background in areas in which the author was not familiar and to provide other investigators with ideas for future

research on the subject matter covered. Through the novella, the developmental pathway that leads to long-term incarceration was explored. Topics that were addressed included: (a) childhood experiences, (b) family dysfunction, (c) socioeconomic factors, (d) behavior, (e) peer relations, and (f) level of educational achievement.

### The Writing Process

This novella was written with the use of computer software. A course facilitator, through the Regis University School for Professional Studies Graduate program, provided editorial expertise and scholarly guidance. The development of this novella was based on the creative writing skills of the author and the use of factual data to create a fictionalized account of prison life.

### Chapter Summary

This author wrote a novella for an audience of readers who would be interested in the effects of long-term incarceration on the mental health and wellbeing of inmates and the financial resources of society. There are many themes in this novella, including loneliness and isolation, that will impact the reader. It is anticipated that the main character's role will have a great effect on the audience. Presented in Chapter 4 is the complete novella; in Chapter 5, Discussion, the author reflects on the contribution of the project to the scholarly literature.

## Chapter 4

### RESULTS

The purpose of this project was to present a detailed study of the effects of long term incarceration in novella form. This researcher examined the psychological, sociological, and human communication characteristics of incarcerated behavior through letters, stories, and other studies, and these findings were applied to the creation of a character within the novella. Only the characterization of this single character of the novella was addressed in this project. The results from this project can be reviewed by other readers who are interested in the topic of the effects of long term incarceration on individuals and society.

#### Goal of the Project

The goal of this project was to investigate the literature in areas in which the author was not familiar and to provide other investigators with ideas for future research on this topic. Through the novella, the developmental pathway that led to long term incarceration was explored. The factors that are addressed include: (a) childhood experiences, (b) family dysfunction, (c) socioeconomic issues, (d) behavior, (e) peer relations, and (f) level of educational achievement.

This novella was based on factual data to create a fictionalized account of prison life. Every aspect of confidentiality was taken into consideration to ensure the anonymity of the data. All names, dates, and events, although based on true information, are fictional. Clarifications to Kevin's story are provided in brackets by this author.

### Kevin's Story

My name is Kevin Washington. I have been incarcerated for most of my adult life. I am in prison because I have been a career criminal as long as I can remember. This is not the life I originally chose, it just happened over time. I cannot fathom being here much longer. I am about to lose my mind. How did I get here? When will I get out? Is there hope for me in the outside world?

Time has become a friend and enemy both. The group Chicago stated, "Does anyone really know what time it is? Does anyone really care?" Well I do care. The start of my latest adventure was 20 years ago [i.e., 1985]. Yes, 20 long years. It seems like an eternity, being locked up while the rest of the society enjoys the many benefits of a lifestyle of freedom.

This is my punishment for pointing weapons [i.e., firearms] at people and taking their possessions. It was my misfortune to rob the wrong person at the wrong time. I tried to stickup an undercover cop. His partner got the drop on me and the rest is history. I could have been shot on the spot. Lucky me, I received a long stretch in the pen instead. My criminal history did nothing to help my cause either. I have a long rap sheet consisting of burglary, robbery, larceny, and other forgotten charges.

Society has been safe from my actions for these past 20 years. However, it's time for me to get out. I do not understand why the parole board does not "set me free." I have done more time than child molesters and some murderers. What is their problem? Every time I see the parole board, they shoot me down. That just kills all of my hope and sends me into a state of depression. Maybe that's their intent, to punish me further. They have to let me out someday.

The first 8 years of incarceration are still a blur. I started out in medium security and then graduated to total lock down, either maximum security or administrative segregation [i.e., ad seg]. Some of the violent acts that I have committed here were not my fault. I had to defend myself. You do not snitch on anyone in the joint, even your worst enemy. That is a label that will get you killed in here. You have to handle your business man to man. This is a world full of predators, and I am one of them. The only alternative is to be prey and that is not happening, not on my watch.

The early years of my prison life were really uneventful, until I tried to crack an inmate's skull with a baseball bat. It happened during a softball game. There is always plenty of trash talking going on during the game, both teams. If you dish it out, you have to be able to take it. The other team's catcher decided to take a swing at me while I was at the plate. That was not very smart on his part because I had a bat in my hand. I managed to get a few good swings on his head before the guards took me down.

I was placed in ad seg and later transferred to another facility. I had been in trouble before [i.e., fighting]. It is very hard to live a peaceful existence in prison. Someone is always messing with you, either guards, staff, or other inmates. You have to straighten things up immediately or get walked on. This is the code of every prison I have served time in. It's like an unwritten rule.

Over time, everyone has abandoned me. My friends, my family, they have all left me hanging. How could they do this to me? I never did them any harm. Why would they leave me all alone when I needed them most? I will never forget these actions if I see any of them again. It is hard enough doing time when you have a support system. Without a support system, you can go crazy.

I have kept a journal since day one. It started out with letters that were returned, unanswered. My original journal was lost, so they say. I know the pigs destroyed it. I had information that I was planning to use in a lawsuit against the prison system. My civil rights have been violated so many times that I have lost count. I started a new journal in 1992. It was my New Year's resolution to myself. I never thought that it would be this full with my notes, thoughts, and letters.

Society wants to severely punish criminals. Well all I can say to society is "you have your wish." I see interviews on TV with people saying things like inmates have too many freedoms. I do not know where they get such nonsense. Prison life has been very hard and tough. Maybe these notes will help people to understand how long term incarceration affects the inmate population. This is my journey through hell.

January 15, 1992

I have been staying out of trouble. I should be on the streets in a work release program in approximately 9 months to a year. My out date is in 1995 now or the end of 1994. So I don't have much time left, and believe me, I have truly learned my lesson. I have seen some stuff here that was enough to make me see the light. I have also done some hard time, hard enough to make me get my act together. I have learned two trades and I am going to computer school so I will be able to cope and make a life for myself and stay free.

January 23, 1992

My family ties are not too tight but I am working on that. My Mom always tells me she is going to do this and that for me, but she never does anything. She has been

sending a pair of shoes for about 2 years. I always send her cards and gifts but she just sends me promises. But they say anything beats a blank.

February 18, 1992

I am doing all right. I still have not heard from my Mom or sister. I wish my whole family were closer than we are. I have tried but I don't know what else I can do, just pray I guess. It's getting pretty bad here because you have crips, bloods, and old timers who don't give a damn about either one. There were a couple of stabbings behind the gangs here. I could not tell you how much violence I have seen since I have been here. But I know how to do time so I get missed with the dumb stuff. Three police have committed suicide since I have been here, but my body is solid and my mind and wit are still sharp.

March 1, 1992

I am dealing with this crap every day. The thing I find most prominent here is stupidity. Not just the police, these convicts don't have brains either. These dudes do so many stupid things. It just makes me leave them alone. I hope Snake writes to me. I have not heard from him for a while, and I do miss him. Sally used to come and see me but she was really sorry. She would not do anything for me. I wrote her a couple of weeks ago, and she has not responded. I might give her one more shot. I graduate from janitorial class this week. I will be certified all over the state upon my graduation and next week I start my computer class. So I just am not floating through here. I am making the best of a bad situation.



March 10, 1992

My own family has abandoned me. I thought that they would be in my corner. I cannot believe that this is happening to me. We are blood relatives.

April 23, 1992

I have not been able to slow down. I passed my test, and now I am finally learning to be computer literate. I would love to get a visit. I don't know why, but Sally has been running around in my head for quite some time. I have not written to her but I will soon.

May 6, 1992

I have not started my computer class yet because I have to go on a waiting list. I wrote to Sally but she has not answered my mail. I have a pretty good cellmate. He is clean, does not mess with my stuff, and has some sense. I will be very glad when I am through with this. I have had my share of it [i.e., prison life] and done way too much time to even think about trying to do any more. I could not deal with all this repression and restraint. I want to be free for the rest of my life, and I have taken steps to ensure myself of not having to ever deal with this any more.

June 25, 1992

Sally is out of my life. I don't have the emotional resources to deal with her. I am just going to concentrate on getting my act together for the streets and not trip on her any more. I have just been lying low and playing softball. My team is kind of sorry but I am going to stick with them.

December 8, 1992

I have only two-and-a-half more years of this crap, and I can come home. I have been studying electrical maintenance and just working really hard to secure some kind of life for me when I do get out of here. But whatever I do, breaking the law is never going to happen again.

May 14, 1993

I am doing better now. These police are leaving me alone and things have calmed down. The pigs can make your life a living hell.

December 1, 1993

I am fine and just trying to finish this time. I have about 15 months to the parole board. I have been staying cool for about 2 years and I should get out. Oh yeah, my Mom moved to Vegas. She did not even come to see me before she left. I don't know if I can parole there. I don't even know if I want to, but I do have time to think about that.

January 18, 1994

My entire family did not even send me a card for the holidays, but I am not tripping. I never had any kind of real family life so I try not to let these things bother me. I wrote Sally to congratulate her on her marriage but she did not return my letter. I still wish her good luck on whatever she does. Snake keeps in touch. He will be getting out soon [i.e., of prison]. I had my boys look out for him while he was locked up. I just hope that he will be all right. As for me, I don't know. But I am keeping my head up.

March 1, 1994

I am doing all right. I'm just getting by sometimes. It seems like I just got here, and other times it seems like I have been here forever. I have learned a lot since I've been here and treating people like I wanted to be treated is a large part of my education. I also don't want to waste any more of my life here. I want to have a real life and do what I can to contribute to society and make a positive impact any way I can.

April 14, 1994

It's getting short, almost down to 1 year. I am just trying to get ready for the streets and trying to stay clear of the man. They have got this place all screwed up. I am just coming down the home stretch real slow. I still want to do some volunteer work with kids and who ever else will have me. I have done a lot of taking in my life, and now I want to give some back. I have learned a lot here, and I can maybe save someone from a life of incarceration.

May 16, 1994

In here the bloods and crips get along real well, but in the free world they want to kill each other over something stupid. I have not heard from Snake in about 6 months, but I am going to write him.

August 4, 1994

I got into some trouble. I was playing softball and got into it with another inmate. I hurt him pretty bad and was put in the hole for a couple of months. It almost cost me

another felony. I did get my job back, but now I have some institutional violence on my record. I may have to stay here for 5 more years. I can't go to a camp or halfway house, but I still see the parole board next year.

September 1, 1994

Well, I have less than 1 year to the parole board. I may get out. Snake should be out by now. I haven't heard from him in about a year now so I don't know what's up with him.

September 14, 1994

I am just working and waiting to see what's going to happen when I go on parole. Just a couple of weeks ago, the crips and bloods got into a great big fight in the yard. I just stood there and watched. I could not believe it. Now there are no more crips or bloods here. They are all in maximum security. To try and kill each other for nothing makes no sense to me. I can see protecting oneself, but behind something stupid, I cannot even begin to understand it at all.

October 6, 1994

I just see so much violence in here. I have been tallying up my time. I should see the parole board in about 6 months and I should be out in about 9 months. I have to admit I am scared to death. So much has changed out there, and I am going to catch living hell dealing with it, but I will be all right.

January 12, 1995

I have only 9 months until my parole board hearing.

February 15, 1995

Snake does not matter anymore. He is not ready to continue our friendship because he was here and had a chance to communicate with me. He did for a while but then he got out and went back to the same old lazy drag. I do not even trip on him anymore because I don't have the time or energy to waste on him. He is not a real friend. My time and energy has been pointed towards staying free and giving back and showing myself that I can make a positive impact in society and lead a straight life.

March 7, 1995

I am just chilling and getting ready to see the parole board. I can't believe this crap is almost over.

April 14, 1995

I will be seeing the parole board in a couple of weeks. I just got off the phone with Sally, and she would like to come see me in May. I could sure use a visit.

May 1, 1995

I am just waiting and hoping. Sally is one of the few people who have not spaced me out. I am taking a small business management class right now. I have learned some skills here, and I may want to put them to the test with my own set up. Man, I can't wait to roller skate again. That is one of the things I miss most of all, especially the people.

May 19, 1995

I am all right. I still have not seen the parole board. My Mom is being slow about getting the paper work back to me so I am going to stay here. I might not get out as soon as I thought. I have done so much time a little more will not kill me.

August 24, 1995

For me, life is crap! I just got my parole board decision, and I am going to be here another year. I don't know how much more of this I can take. For the most part I have stayed out of trouble, did all my classes, and participated in drug treatment, even though I don't have a drug problem. But I just can't figure why I can't get out of here. I don't want to discharge because that won't happen until 2006, and I would be too messed up in the head by then. My best friend has been here 18 years, and I really feel sorry for him. He has life in prison so I don't even cry to him about my time. I really don't understand Snake at all. He has not tried to make contact with me. Sally wrote me a pretty serious letter asking me what I was going to do when I got out. But I guess before she got my reply, she met a man. I am going to close my eyes and dream of "freedom." My youngest brother killed himself in a car crash in Nevada on the 4th of July. He was drunk. I did not get to attend the funeral. This prison has taken my stepfather and one of my brothers from me.

September 12, 1995

I am doing a little better but this crap is still driving me. I can't fall apart now. I have to keep getting up. As far as Snake goes, forget him. He is not real at all. I am going to kick his butt if I ever do get out of here. I don't even care to see Sally either.

She's too fly by night for me. I know she has met some dude and can't be bothered so I won't even trip on her anymore.

When my brother passed, he was buried. When my Mom called, she would not even tell me. It was too late, and I don't know if they [i.e., the prison] would have let me go. I might have tried to escape. I don't know if I would have or not but I sure would have thought about it.

Growing up, my family life was crap. I was always getting beatings when I was a kid. I was afraid to go home from school. When I got to the sixth grade, I started running away and did not stop until they stopped sending back home. Eventually I returned home. Then my parents moved, and the beatings started again. I tried Job Corps but that did not work. So I came back [i.e., at the age of 16], and my Mom told me I could not come home. That's when I started crime. I got good, but as most criminals go, I got greedy and got caught. Now my life is ruined. I have always taken responsibility for the things I have done but I blame a lot of the crap in my life on my family, especially my Mom.

I truly thought I was going to get out so I did not prepare myself to stay here at all, and I am on my last leg financially. I was playing handball this past weekend, and a friend of mine fell out. These sorry police just let him lay there, and he died just like that. I do not want to die here so I stay active, eat vitamins, and most important of all, I do not shoot any drugs, like these other fools.

January 22, 1996

I am just waiting to hear from the lawyer to see what's up. I will keep my fingers crossed. I am going to try to make this my most positive year here and hopefully my last.

February 21, 1996

I have seen better days. I am in the hole now, but will be getting transferred to the new super max. Now how did this happen? A guy got in my mix and started running his mouth, so I hit him. Now they gave me a class-one assault charge, and I have to go for my hearing on Thursday. I am quite sure that they are going to move me. Today, I got a letter from this lawyer telling me she is going to put my case back in court. I just hope this doesn't hurt me too bad. But whatever happens I will deal with it.

March 7, 1996

I am slammed hard 23 hours a day on lock down. I am at the new super max. They took everything from me. I have socks, tee shirts, boxers, and nothing else. My case manager said I would be here a year to 18 months, but it could be longer. It just depends on how I act. I am going to try and be cool, but you never know when some fool pushes you over the edge.

March 25, 1996

I am just dealing with this lock down. Man, this crap is a trip. I stay in my cell 23 hours a day, and every time I leave the room, there are two police by my side. Any time I am outside of my room, I am handcuffed. Even when I get out of my room, I am locked in another room for an hour. When I go to shower, I am locked in there, and the



police control the water. The shower stall is very small. The other day the police put someone in there and left him for about 2 hours. Dude was kicking trying to get the door open, even begging. When they finally let him out and put him back in his cell, he threw feces on the police. The police came and got him and beat him real good. Once you get here, the only time you go outside is when you leave here for good or have some kind of surgery. They have a small hospital here so I won't even get to go outside for about a year. My case manager said I would be here from one year to one-and-a-half years if I stay cool. I am going to be very good. I don't want to be here any longer than necessary.

April 5, 1996

I have had to deal with a lot of death since my incarceration. No matter who it is, it hits me the same way, hard. Death is a part of life, but I hate to hear about it. I have seen inmates stabbed with homemade knives, beaten with weights, and attacked with other hard objects. Sometimes it ends in death. That's just the way it is. People wonder why prisoners are so hard. You will not make it being soft.

I have not heard from my family since Christmas. They were in the middle of moving, and all my letters to them came back. Hopefully, I will hear from them soon. I need to stay close to my family.

I have filed some motions to get back into court because I was supposed to get out last year. As usual, I have not heard back from the court yet.

May 15, 1996

I am just dealing with this lock down and not much else. This place is locked so tight the doctor even comes to your cell. If it is not an emergency, you do not leave the

cell at all. As much as they try to break me down, I will never let them win. At the same time, I am trying to work my way out of here. I will not worry about Snake. I am going to beat him for real when I see him. What he has done is totally jacked off our friendship. I can't say that I have been the best friend to him but, after him being here, I thought he would look out for me or at least write. I protected him while he was locked up and told my boys to look out for him. This is the payback I get from him, nothing.

I see the parole board in September. I can't wait. I hope they don't shoot me down again. I need to stay positive.

May 19, 1996

I don't even trip on Snake anymore. I will not write him crap, because it would just be begging. I have been here almost 7 months, and this place is a trip. The pod I live in has 16 people, and they argue from sunup to sundown.

I have to take anger management classes because I blow up kind of fast. I have learned already that I cannot act like a savage or a tough guy because a savage I am not. I have seen people throw feces on each other and also the police. I am telling you I will never come back here again. I have learned my lesson. Now if I can just control my anger I'll be fine.

August 12, 1996

I do a lot of thinking here about many things from my past. Why couldn't I have had a decent family life? Why did my life get so messed up? How much I am going to have to press to have a life with any kind of normalcy? I am going to do what I have to

when I get out of here. However, all the time I have spent here has alienated me from society. It will be tough to make the adjustment, but I must.

December 2, 1996

I am close to getting out of this lockup. I can't wait. I have had enough. I will just chill until my day comes.

December 12, 1996

I just had some minor surgery done on my back. It hurts, but I am not going to let these fools cut me open again. I was really just trying to get me a trip to the state hospital so I could go outside. I have not been outside since March 4, 1996 almost a year. I should get out of here by May of 1997. It would be nice if they let me out for Christmas. I can tell that delirium is setting in.

January 8, 1997

Hopefully I won't be here much longer. I hope to get some play in court this year, and maybe get out of jail, period. I finally talked to my Mom. She was very sick over the holidays. She has kidney stone troubles but said she would be fine. I sure hope this is true.

I have not been outside in almost a year. I need some fresh air really bad. This place has already been deemed unhealthy by the medical staff. Inmates are treated like scum. We have no rights and get extreme punishment if we lodge complaints.

August 4, 1997

My Mom is coming to town, and I am going to get a visit from her. I am very excited. I might be getting out of here soon. I see the parole board in September.

November 21, 1997

I was taking some college courses here but these fools [i.e., inmates] chased the teacher off. She would come in the pod, and people would ask her for sex, what color panties she had on, and just talk plain crazy to her, so she quit. I thought about it, but never said anything disrespectful to her. Now we're back to square one, no courses. They just don't get it.

I have been in the pen for almost 14 years but these last few years have been the worst. My family and I are not that close. I want to have close family ties, but it never works out for me. Happy images are constantly shattered. Lately, my Mom has been taking steps towards having a relationship with me. I have a sister but she is very mean to the whole family. She doesn't even answer my letters and talks crazy to my Mom. I always get a little jealous when others tell me about family reunions and gatherings because I never experienced any of that.

January 9, 1998

My holiday was just another "prison Christmas." I seem to be quite depressed lately. I am hoping and praying to get out of here in February or March. I received a visit from my lawyer, who said my sentence could be changed. This means I might get out soon. Happy days are here again!

January 29, 1998

I have been in this cell for almost 4 months without a TV. I lost my TV on a gambling bet. The original bet had me loaning my TV to another inmate if I lost the wager. Once the TV was removed, the pigs would not get it back to me. I even spent some of the money I had saved for another one, because my Mom said she would send me more cash. I hope she comes through for me. She has let me down many times in the past.

February 24, 1998

I really have been trying to get my Mom to send me a Bible to read. Since I don't have a TV, I would like to try and learn about God. I have really never given it a chance. As a matter of fact, I have never worked hard at any thing. Being in this room all day, I have only my thoughts and the reality of how much I have missed in life.

March 12, 1998

I have my case on appeal. I will know in the next 4 months to a year what's going to happen. I have not been outside for 2 years. I thought I was going to be leaving here. They are starting a new unit, and it takes 7 months to get out of here now. I still have to be approved to go to the new unit so I am going to be here another 7 to 8 months, maybe more.

March 20, 1998

I am trying to be a religious person. I do believe in God and want to be good. But I must say this. I am very, very, very bitter and full of anger and resentment. I know

I put myself here in prison, but the crap these pigs have put me through has made me hate. I have always considered myself to be full of love for people and life, but now all I think about is revenge, payback, and trying to get back the life these people took from me. Now, over the last few weeks, I have tried to look at this bull from a different view, trying to find peace of mind and some sort of mutual ground where I don't hate so much. I want to be good. I need to be good. I know this much, when I do get out, it's Jesus or jail.

July 6, 1998

I am still waiting for a court date and waiting to find out if I am going to get out of here. I should know this week or by early next week.

Some of these dudes are going to get cell extracted. If you are wondering what a cell extraction is, five police officers rush into your cell wearing football helmets, shoulder pads, kneepads, and thick gloves. They kick your butt, cut your clothes off of you, and then put you in a freezing room.

The reason these guys are doing this is because there are some people who have been here for years and years, and they cannot get out, so they [i.e, the inmates] are trying this as a protest and for possible media attention. I am not going to participate because I am too close to getting out, plus I have action for leaving here. If I get down with this movement, the police are going to charge me with being a part of a riot, and I will never leave here.

You can bet if they don't let me go, I will do whatever I have to do to protest. I should have gotten out of here 2 years ago. The parole board keeps finding reasons to

keep me here. I see them again in July. This riot is supposed to go down the day after my parole hearing.

September 2, 1998

I have been trying to maintain my sanity, but these pigs won't stop messing with me. They took my TV again. This is a brand new unit purchased recently with my hard earned money. I am getting tired of this. Hopefully they will give it back soon. I do not want to be without my TV for months, or even weeks, and they told me I have to send my property home. That move would cost 80 bucks, so I just threw it all away. My Mom is getting sick and old. I just keep praying that I can get out of here before she passes. I really miss all of my family. Even though we were not close, they are still my family.

The pigs just came in and started gassing people. They heard about the planned riot. They did not get me. They just jacked me for my stuff. I would have rather been gassed. As for my release, I cannot say. I have not heard from my lawyer. If I get shot down with my appeal, I will have to be let go in 8 years. Until then, I still see the parole board every year. I just got a year setback in July. If I don't get out of lockup, I won't get out of jail. So, I am going to try and be cool so I can get out of this mess.

October 2, 1998

I was in court, but did not have my hearing because I had no attorney. I will be back in November to hopefully get out.

October 6, 1998

I am just waiting to see if these people are going to let me out. I called Sally. She answered the phone and gave it to her mom. Her mom told me that Sally did not want to be bothered by me. I am not mad at her, but I was hoping we would at least stay friends.

When I do get out of here, I am going to be a great friend. I now know the meaning of true friendship.

I got to go outside for an hour. It was the first time in 31 months that I have been outside. My Mom is doing better. She just has to watch what she eats and exercise.

These pigs put me on strip cell. All you have in your room is your boxer shorts and nothing else for 3 days. This is very humiliating.

October 19, 1998

My Mom is feeling better, but has to watch herself very closely. I still feel protective of her, even though she never protected me when I was younger. My life as a child was very bad, and I mean very bad. I do not know my real father. I have never even seen a photo of him. To this day, my Mom will not talk about him. It makes me wonder what kind of man he was.

I grew up with one stepsister and three stepbrothers. My stepfather was very mean to all of us. I was taught to fear him. He would beat us, including my Mom. My sister said he did some messed up things to her too. She never would elaborate. I could not stay there, so I kept running away. I was really hurting my Mom, but she could not or would not protect me from my stepdad. So I kept leaving home. I was placed in a



group home at the age of 11. When my time was up, the people in the group home took me to my house. My family had moved. When I finally found them, it was the same old crap all over. So I just left again.

I have not seen my mother for over 25 years. The last 7 or 8 years, we have written and talked a lot. We don't talk about the past, but instead are trying to establish a new relationship. That's ok with me, but I really feel for my sister.

I am through breaking the law, I am going to try and square up. It will be tough given the path I've taken so far in life. But I must have a breakthrough if I am to succeed at all.

I talked to Snake's mom. He went to Washington with Ron and Tina. I swear if I ever see him again, I am going to hurt him real bad. I took care of him and made sure he was not messed with [i.e., in prison], and he just deserted me. He will pay for that.

November 10, 1998

I was supposed to go to court on the sixth of November but the lawyer did not write me. Now I don't know what's up. I have not heard from this lawyer but one time. They told me they were going to come see me. That was October 13th and I am still waiting. I am going to write to the court and let the judge know what's going on. I should have gotten out of here almost 3 years ago. My Mom came from Nevada for my court appearance, and I was not there. I was really looking forward to seeing her. She comes here to help some lady with her kids.

My sister and my three brothers don't write at all. I try to call one of my brothers as much as I can. I just got my other brother's phone number. I have two phone calls a

month, so I call my Mom as much as I can. My sister is a very mean and bitter woman. She has a right to her attitude, but I am family and never did her any wrong. If I get a chance to kick it with any of my family, I will.

Even with what I have been through I am pretty much a happy person. I don't stress at all, and I still look a lot younger than I am.

November 27, 1998

My turkey day was kind of sad. I should have been out of this place by now. I have not been back to court nor do I have any idea of when I am going. I know it won't be soon. It's getting very depressing in here. The only thing keeping me straight is that I am going to get out. They have to let me go. They must let me go. I hope it will be soon.

December 8, 1998

I finally got a letter from my attorney. Things are back to square one. I don't have a court date yet, but this is what is going to happen. She [i.e., my new attorney] is going to talk to the attorney who originally worked on my case. Then I will get a date. My original attorney now lives in Ireland, so I don't know how long it will take to contact him.

February 4, 1999

I am doing fine even though I have not heard from the court. I have served my time plus 3 years. I am so pissed off now I don't know how to act. These people don't

give us anything in prison. They sell aspirin and even toilet paper. All of the money I make is \$5.25 a month.

March 2, 1999

I am always saddened by the large amount of black on black strife in this world. I was shocked at the level it is in here. I try and stay out of it because you get called an Uncle Tom, Oreo, and other nonflattering names. I am not a gang-banger. The crips and bloods have both recruited me. But I steal. I don't kill. I am totally against gangs. It is just like genocide.

I still have not heard from my lawyer. I truly think she is conspiring with the D.A. to keep me here. I know that sounds paranoid but this hearing is truly open and shut and should have happened in October of last year. I know they don't want to let me out because I have quite an extensive crime history. I have also done some evil deeds since I have been in prison.

March 28, 1999

About 3 weeks ago I had an appointment with mental health, trying to get out of here. When the cops took me to the visiting room, they put me in a booth where someone had urinated. These booths are very small, about 3 foot square. When I noticed that someone had urinated in there, I told the cops. They immediately took me out of there and brought me back to my unit. The next day I tried to find out why this happened,. I could get no answers. I waited another week or so until the cops that took me up there came back to work. When I finally got to talk to the mental health specialist,

she was very argumentative with me and called me a damn liar. So of course I cussed her out.

Now please understand, these pigs made me stand in someone's urine. Now if I throw urine or feces, which happens a lot here, it's a felony. All I wanted was an explanation and hopefully an apology. But all I got was yelled at and called a liar so, when I cussed this woman out, they took my TV, canteen, and phone privileges, and my level three rating. I was very close to getting out of here, but this bull will keep me here at least another year. I am not an animal. They need to treat me like a human being. I hate it when they take my TV away from me. I really feel cut off from the world even more. It was just returned to me in January, from my last incident.

May 7, 1999

I am nervous as hell about this court date, but still wanting to get out of here by any means necessary.

July 1, 1999

I have already written a couple of people about the lawyer. I got a lame letter today from one organization telling me they could not find her. How is this possible? Do lawyers drop off the face of the earth? It seems that this crap is never going to work out for me. But I am never going to stop fighting for my freedom. So many people have deserted me. One day I am going to get out of here, and someone is going to have to pay for the years of my life wasted. I have been committed to this prison for so long and for the last 3 years I have been in this cell. I need to be able to just get up and go wherever and whenever I want.

I am going to get a job making money without breaking the law. I don't know how I would have made it through this prison sentence without any phone calls or letters. Phone conversations and letters have kept me from being alone and maybe even being suicidal.

July 14, 1999

I am doing the worst I have in a long while. I just got back from my parole hearing, and they set me back for 3 years. I won't even see them again until 2002. I have been in jail for almost 15 years. How could they do this to me?

August 24, 1999

I don't have any news about my appeal because I can't get the court to answer any of my letters. I don't like the fact that my family just does not care or understand what I am going through. I should have gotten out of here almost 4 years ago. But either way, 7 years from now they will have to let me out.

November 8, 1999

I have my interview to see if I am going to get out. I have been here in ad seg almost 4 years. I have done everything they have asked me to do. I feel pretty good about this. I was sentenced in 1985. The court had promised me I would get out after serving 12 years. In 1991, they changed the law, and I was not made aware that this change would affect me getting out. What this all means is that I will probably serve 22 years of my life in prison. Now I will be the first to admit that I should have served some time for my crime, but 22 years is crazy.

December 28, 1999

I got set back [i.e., for getting out of here] for 3 months so I will try again in March. I can't believe my own family did not send me a Christmas card. I just don't get my family's behavior. Maybe the New Year will bring them to me, I sure hope so.

January 19, 2000

I am still working on my appeal. But I have not heard from my lawyer. I wrote to him last week. I have been in prison for 15 holiday seasons, but this was the worst one yet. I was so hurt when I did not get any correspondence from my family. I surely thought I would get at least a card from one of them.

On New Year's Eve, the pigs turned my TV off for 3 days. They enjoy watching me suffer with no TV. It's always a mind game with them. Sometimes the penalty does not match the crime. I never know when they will restrict my TV privileges for days, weeks, or months. So I missed all the New Year's celebrations and bowl games. I don't plan on doing any crime when I get out of here. I have been in prison for so long I am going to have to adjust to life outside these walls. They are starting to break me down.

February 1, 2000

I would like to lecture at schools and juvenile detention centers about my perils in prison. I really think I could do some good. I see so many people get abused and dogged here. Don't get me wrong, I do believe in punishment for crimes, but these people go way overboard.

February 24, 2000

I have just a few more weeks, and I am up to leave here again. If I get denied this time, I don't know what I am going to do. For 4 years, I have been locked down in this room [i.e., ad seg].

I just got a letter from my lawyer. It's a 50-50 chance I will get out. If not, I only have 6 years left to discharge.

I asked my Mom to send me some Christmas pictures 3 years ago and I am still waiting. What a joke my family is.

March 31, 2000

I went in front of the ad seg review board, and they set me back for 6 months. Usually it's only 3 months. I talked to my case manager about my situation. He told me that, hopefully, this should be my last 6 months. They want to see if I go off or get into any more trouble. I am truly going to stay straight.

I got some punk racist across from me spitting that nigger crap at me all day, and I can't get at him, so that makes it worse. I would like to be in the same cell with him so I could break his neck.

May 4, 2000

This bit seems to get harder every day. I went to court almost a year ago and got appointed counsel about 8 months ago. I should have gotten out of prison at least 5 years ago. How much time do I have to serve?

June 14, 2000

I have done everything these people have asked me to and more. I am going to get out unless one of these butt-hole pigs puts his hands on me. If that happens, I will never get out.

June 21, 2000

I asked my Mom to send me photos. Well, after waiting 7 months, she finally sent some. Maybe there's hope after all.

October 23, 2000

Pending a mental health evaluation I am out of here. I will be progressed to the pro unit. It is a 7 month program, then I will go back to the general population. Finally, after almost 5 years in lock up [i.e., ad seg], I will be getting out of here. Oh happy day! And now, I have sad news. My Mom is real sick and is going to have heart surgery very soon. I will pray for her. I am still waiting on my appeal.

November 21, 2000

I am just waiting on these people to stop playing games and let me make my move out of this mad house. I can wait. I've been waiting damn near 5 years.

I am trying to build a relationship with my Mom. She is out of the hospital now so it's all good. I do know this, all of this is my fault so I must deal with it.

December 6, 2000

I got some bad news. In a few months, I was going to get out of ad seg. They told me to get a mental health evaluation, and the woman recommended that I get out of



ad seg. Then the people in charge told me to get another evaluation. The other mental health woman told me, today, that the only way I am going to get out of ad seg is to get out of jail. This means I am going to have to do the rest of my time here.

I see the parole board in 2002 plus I got my appeal so maybe I will get lucky and get my freedom. What I don't understand is why I can't get out. These people have let individuals, who have committed murder, out of here. But I protect myself, and I can't get out. I do admit I have committed some foul acts against people since I have been in prison. However, I have never killed anyone and, therefore, should be let out.

January 3, 2001

I am trying to find a way out and a way to hold on to my sanity. The holiday season is over, but I am truly beginning to hate this time of year. Everything it stands for does not exist for me, no family, no friends. They say it's the thought that counts. Well, all I have are my thoughts, and they don't count for much. It is so hard for me to deal with this. I should have gotten out of here 5 or 6 years ago. I have tried to connect with my family, but it just does not work out for me.

January 17, 2001

All my life, I have been a very happy person, but this year was the worst year I have ever had. The fact that these people told me that they were going to let me out of here and then not do it, has really messed up my head. I always have liked people but now I know I have the capacity for pure hate. The hate I already feel is enough. I don't want to be consumed with revenge. I have seen many people go crazy here.

I sure would like to see this place investigated. There are people here who should be in a mental hospital. They won't let me out, but another inmate committed murder, and he was released. Go figure that one out.

February 6, 2001

I am just plain tired of being treated like an idiot, so I am going to take a stand. I have tried so hard to get out of this place but these fool pigs just keep dogging me out.

February 12, 2001

I have been in this cell for almost 5 years. I have not been outside for almost 2 years. But I only have a little more than 5 years, so I can do it however they choose. They are forcing me to be heartless, merciless, and cruel.

March 1, 2001

I'm just struggling with the pigs. These fools are truly trying to drive me insane but I've got way too much going on to let them get to me. It's all a mental game. I must stay focused.

March 14, 2001

It sucks sitting in this cell all day without anything to do. I work out, of course, but can only do so many exercises in these cramped quarters.

April 15, 2001

My Mom just moved again. She loves it out there in Vegas. The court of appeals ruled that I am time barred. I am still trying to decipher the legal mumbo-jumbo. I see the parole board in March 2002.

April 30, 2001

I got my answer on my writ of habeas corpus. That's my last legal action until the parole board, and I don't think they are going to do anything. At least I tried.

May 22, 2001

I am surprised I have not gotten in more trouble. It is very hard to stay away from confrontations. I am trying to leave this place and might be out soon. Well, at least in the next year or so. I have to depend on the parole board. I see them again in March 2002.

June 6, 2001

Hate. This is definitely a four letter word. I don't even like talking to people who support any kind of hate. I have been surrounded by so much hate while here in prison that I have decided to stay to myself.

The one regret I do have is my family situation. I would change all of that right now if I could. My friend [i.e., who helps me out] got me a special visit with my Mom. She won't come. My Mom told him that she sends me money all the time, but he knew better. Why would she lie like that? I wish my family ties were stronger. I will always

try and get things right with my family. It would be nice if they actually reached out to me on their own. Why do they treat me this way?

July 9, 2001

I never knew so much hate in all my life. I never had to deal with racism or hate of any kind until I came to prison. In the last 6 or 7 months, it has gotten really bad. There's no telling what I might do if I get my hands on one of these racist inmates.

August 5, 2001

I have made one serious change. I got a job cleaning the pod, so I got moved, away from all of the hate. Now I have to deal with a bunch of fools, instead of racists. But ignorance is ignorance, so I just stay to myself. In the pod I moved from, I did not speak to anyone for 5 months. People here make it so hard to get along that I don't even try to be their friend. Instead of dealing with it [i.e., the foolishness] I just do my time alone. It's safer.

Now I get to come out of my cell for a couple of hours and walk around. I have a small slice of freedom. I want the whole pie now. I need to be let out. My Mom won't come and see me. She says she loves me, but is not ready to see me. I am having a hard time making sense out of that.

August 16, 2001

Here I am dealing with the pigs and these idiots daily. I am starting to get stressed. Every day becomes a new adventure with these fools. I am so tired of both groups that I don't know what I am going to do.

I still have my job, that's a good thing. I am trying to earn my way out of here. I know that when I do get out, I am going to have me a good cry. I am not a hard callous person, and I don't want to be. I try and show love to all, but that nigger word just eats me alive. I am proud to be black, and I try not to hate on anyone.

September 25, 2001

I am a criminal by choice but, because of what has happened [i.e., 9-11], I would gladly give my life to defend this country. Now don't get me wrong, this USA of ours has committed some atrocities of its own and will continue to do so. But it is mine and I would fight for it. I love New York City. To see images of planes crashing into the towers was just hard to fathom. If they let me out, I would gladly help them hunt the terrorists.

November 15, 2001

Here I am once again dealing with this cell. I have been here so long that I can paint a mental picture of each brick in my sleep. I am taking a class on getting back to the free world. I only have a few years left to discharge. I see the parole board in May or June, but I have pretty much given up on parole. I just got a new lawyer, and she agrees that I should be a free man, so she is filing a motion for reconsideration of my sentence.

January 17, 2002

Happy New Year! I hope this one is better than the last. As each year passes, I get closer to my freedom. My sister wrote me back in October. Then I didn't hear from her. I found out that she was in the hospital. She is fine now, and she has given her life

to God. She seems to be at peace. She and a brother are the only members of my family that I am concerned about. The rest I can take or leave. When I was a small child, things were great with my family. We all got along and enjoyed the holidays together. I still enjoy the holiday season, even in here.

I see the parole board in May. I am hoping for the best but expecting the worst. They just seem to want to torment me.

February 15, 2002

I am wasting time and praying for some play from the parole board. I see them in May. If I get another setback, I don't think I'll go again. Having my hope shot down all the time really kills me.

I am trying to prepare for my eventual release. When I do get out, I don't want to have to depend on anyone but myself. I also don't want to come out with criminal ideals. I have no intentions of ever coming back to prison.

March 12, 2002

I need to find someone who knows voodoo and have them hit my parole hearing in order to get my butt out of here. Shoot, I've tried everything else. Why not?

March 25, 2002

I am still taking a class here in Psychology. I really like it. But what I really want is a class on integration back into society. The day will come when I get out of here, to face the changes and challenges. This will be a major stepping-stone.

I was thinking about writing a TV station and inviting them to follow me around, just to see how hard life is in prison. People are always complaining about how easy inmates lives are. They don't know what we go through. I only get 2 or 3 hours of sleep each night because of inmates arguing or banging all night.

I promise that when I do get out, I will stay out. In the past, I never cared because I knew I would be getting out soon. But this time, I have seen it all. I have watched people die in here. This place has really changed me. The hatred, racism, and other drama have messed up my head. Once I get away from it, I can become normal again. But I will never forget and never come back. I have learned a few trades and have the gift of gab. These skills will help me to keep my freedom. I will never break the law again, maybe a few hearts but not the law.

April 19, 2002

Each day brings me closer to my freedom, but it also brings the misery that is the reality of this fowl situation I find myself in. All of this is the fruit of my labor so I won't cry or complain. However, I never dreamt that it would be this bad.

May 6, 2002

I went to the parole board today and got a year setback. The last time I went I got a 3 year setback, so I guess the year was a good thing.

June 5, 2002

I am waiting on July to see if they let me out of this cell. These people sure know how to play with hope. I have been hoping, praying, and waiting so long it's like second nature to me. But one day soon I will be free!!!

No matter what happens upon my release, I refuse to break any law. I have forfeited almost 20 years of my life.

June 18, 2002

This racial thing is so sad and such a waste of time. I wish the whole world could see that the enemy is hate and greed. We are all equal, but hate and greed will destroy all of mankind. When I was a free man, greed was my god, and the demon that really hurt me. I can't wait to be free again.

Prison has created emotions I thought I would never have, hate and an urge for revenge. But once I am free, this will all go away. The thing that frustrates me most is being treated like I'm stupid.

July 22, 2002

I finally got approved to leave this lockdown cell. I was watching TV today and tried placing myself in free world situations. I am scared about being free and dealing with society the way it is today. After being in this cell for almost 7 years, I am going to have a hard time being around people. The mental game has been put in motion so I can deal. It will be rough at the start, but my psychology and mental health classes should pull me through. The real world will be the ultimate test. Whenever I think about the real world, my freedom, my life, and what I have done, I get very sad.



October 2, 2002

I have been very depressed because of many things in my life [i.e., past and present], and my future does not look good. But I haven't given up. I just started my 17th year in prison, and it has taken a toll on me. I am finally getting out of ad seg. I have to go through a 7 month program before I am sent back to the general population.

Check this out. There are two white dudes in my pod. They would stand at their door every day and call me nigger. This went on for months. Then one of these fools went home, so the other one tried to be my friend. He must be crazy. These people throw the nigger word around like it is a compliment. This time has really messed me up.

I tried to call my Mom, but the number has been changed or disconnected. Whatever the reason, she has not bothered to contact me. The worst part is I don't really care anymore. However, I do miss my brothers. My Mom ain't s---, if you catch my drift. I know that's a sad thing to say, but to keep it real, I hate her. I have tried so hard to work things out with her, but she's not feeling me at all. It's her loss, that's all I can say.

October 15, 2002

I have been progressed to the Pro-Unit. I am on my way out [of ad seg]. I should be out of here by May, June, or July. I know I will succeed here because I am in a real good living situation. There are no fools on my tier so I won't have to fight. I will be able to come out of my cell and act like a normal inmate, go outside and go to the gym. This is a good thing. I have to complete this so I can try and get ready for the streets.

December 2, 2002

This Pro-Unit is pretty cool. I live with seven righteous people. The day goes like this, at 6:00 PM I get to come out of my cell, play chess, dominoes, talk, and hang out for an hour and a half. But the difference is that there are no handcuffs when I use the phone or come out of my cell. But if I leave the unit, they do put the cuffs on. Three times a week, we go to the gym and shoot some ball. Yeah, I've still got game.

In the 6 years that I've been here, I have been called nigger so many times that the first white dude I saw I wanted to get at him, even though I didn't know him. But I managed to keep my composure. I cannot get kicked out of here because if I do, I know I will not get out of lockdown until I kill my number in 2006. So, I am going to be real cool and deal with this.

January 6, 2003

Another holiday season has passed me by. I have done nothing with my life but make stupid choices. I have had chances to do the right thing, but I always took the easy way out. But I'm not mad. This is the life I chose. However, I am through with all of this stupidity. I have had enough and don't want or need anymore.

All of my life I have used people and done pretty much what I have wanted. I still have my health and will probably live to be a 100 or more. There are so many people who have lived a righteous life who have to deal with one tragedy after another. At times, I think God has a plan for me because I have made some very positive changes in my life. I do not want to solve my problems with violence anymore. I do not want to steal or to use people.

I am doing my best to educate myself to the plight of the Black man. I am currently reading a book by Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*. I think that if the younger generation were hip to our past, they would not be so quick to shoot at each other, trying to kill or cripple each other.

The teacher in our class says I am very bright. That makes me feel worse because so many others have told me that, and I realize how much of my life I have wasted. But all I can do is keep getting up, live, learn, and grow as a person to be the best that I can be. I see the parole board soon. I hope they show me some love.

February 18, 2003

We should be leaving here in the next few days or weeks. I do want to leave here, but I have been here so long that getting used to another cell will be strange. This place is so new and clean, and where we are going is old and beat up. I can't wait to play some ball or do anything outside this cell. They say that we will get more privileges at the new place, and there will be no more chains and handcuffs. And, I don't have to deal with fools threatening my family. I take that very seriously, and it's not a game to me. It is a very dangerous way to talk around here. I could never say that [i.e., family threats] to anyone.

The one thing I have tried not to do is catch a case while in here. I have been very lucky. The situation that got me locked down for almost the past 7 years would have gotten me a felony. But the dude I jumped on went home, so the prison did not file on me. But they did let me know that the next time I won't be so lucky. I am going to chill and try and get my plan together for my freedom. I want to stay free!

Now for some of the sunshine in this joint, the pigs came in and took everything out of all of the cells. For about a week, I had nothing but my underwear. I just got my things back today. I am guessing there is some kind of war going on in the population, and the pigs were reading everyone's mail to see what the inmates knew. I try and stay out of any war that doesn't involve me.

August 2, 2003

I am just getting used to being out here and around people again. It does get easier each day.

October 6, 2003

I think I am finally getting used to being around people. I have been more relaxed and less stressed out so things are getting better for me.

February 16, 2004

I see the parole board next month. That should be good for a few laughs. But I only have a little over 2 years for my discharge.

As usual, drama seeks me out. I hate racism and racist people. There is a grip of racist fools here so the drama always presents itself. The shot caller for the White boys sent some punk to try and put hands on me. Their plan didn't work so well because I ended up with a K.O. He took a swing at me right in front of the police. The pig said that they only saw what I did, so I am in the hole, once again. I really did not want to fight or to get into any kind of trouble, but the dude left me no choice. Why does this happen to me?

I have hurt a couple of people since I've been locked up, and the system has held all of that against me. Hell, I am 45. I have no business getting into fights or anything like that. I missed the Super Bowl because of this. Shoot, I just want to finish my time and get out of here.

I may be placed in segregation again or moved to another prison. I will be fine though. They cannot break me. I won't allow it. The guards wanted me to tell what happened and whether or not it was racial. They know damn well it was. But I refuse to snitch. I am not a rat. I did put the fool down real quick though. That's how I like my fights, short and sweet. It's much faster if you have a weapon. This also lets other inmates see that you are not the one to trip with.

This nightmare will end soon either way because I am short [i.e., on prison time]. The sooner I leave these haters behind, the better off I will be.

As for my family, I haven't heard from them in 4 or 5 years. But I still think of them all the time. My Mom has a block on her phone, and no one answers my mail. That really hurts, but I deal with it. I have no friends in the real world either.

March 6, 2004

Well, I'm in another prison now. When I got shipped here, they put me in a cell with nothing but my underwear for 7 days. Then they were nice and brought me some of my clothes. No soap, toothpaste, or other hygiene items, only clothes. The guards performed a cell shakedown. Now, 10 days later, I still have no soap or toothpaste. At least I can change my underwear.

I am going to fight like hell to get out of this place, but I think I'm stuck for the duration. Being in this room means that I cannot catch another felony. I guess that's a good thing. The last thing I need is another case. I did find out that I have no good time coming, so I am not going to get out soon. This was something that I was looking, hoping, and praying for. Please help me get out of here.

March 31, 2004

Here I am staring at the walls and counting the days. I have 23 months left before this madness will end. I have seen so much brutality that I don't know how or what to think. For almost 20 years, the only resolution to a problem was violence. I have to find a way to leave it all behind. I have to.

June 9, 2004

I have been officially kidnapped and taken to Kansas. I've been here for a week and have only been out of my cell for a 10 minute shower. At least it's better than New York or Jersey. They brought at least 10 of us here. They have broken so many Federal laws and will probably continue to break more. If we had a lawyer, we could file a class action lawsuit and get paid and make money from the lawsuit.

June 28, 2004

I'm still stuck in Kansas. I wish these past 20 years could have been spent chasing women, skating, and partying. There are 21 months left before I can start a new

chapter in my life. We have been here almost a month, with most of it on 24 hour lockdown. By keeping us locked down, they have violated many laws as well as our civil rights.

They have placed rival gang members together. This joint is just begging for trouble. I am not a gang member. I don't understand why one black man would hurt another, especially over something stupid. Over all of these incarcerated years, I have only had run-ins with one or two brothers.

July 15, 2004

This prison has no regard for rules. They just do whatever they want. We are supposed to go outside five times a week. We have been outside five times total in the past 6 weeks. I am not a coward, but I am truly scared of the fools that run this place. I have not seen anyone get beaten but some of the inmates have taken gas by the guards.

I keep my journal. I'm surprised they haven't taken it away from me. I have lots of information that could create problems for the prison officials. They must not be worried about me though.

The food is always cold, and it is hard to sleep because the guards may come and get you at 3 in the morning to take a shower. I am going to make these fools pay, even if I have to stay here.

July 23, 2004

We went on a hunger strike. After 1 day, the pigs decided to listen and give us what we wanted, basic stuff, like recreation 5 days a week. I finally got two-and-a-half hours outside.

Then all hell broke loose. I came back in and was talking to a neighbor when a piece of glass hit me in the face. I had been hearing glass break but I thought it was someone breaking a window. The inmates had broken out of the recreation pens, got their hands on locks and chains, and started raising hell. I still can't believe that 30 guys got out of ad seg and started tearing up the place.

The police started shooting tear gas from the roof. When the other inmates saw what was going on, they started flooding their cells by stuffing mattresses, sheets, and anything else they had in the toilets. Water was all over the place. They called in help from another prison. The riot squad made us strip down naked in front of women after removing everything from our cells. It was very degrading and humiliating. The guards said that they wanted to see who was involved. It doesn't take much to see which cells had the toilets stuffed. But this is their way of trying to intimidate and control the population. The inmates involved all got beaten.

August 10, 2004

So much is wrong here, and it gets worse every day. I feel for people, especially the ones who lose their children for no reason. I really do feel their pain. I have tried to open my heart and mind to the feelings of peace of mind, quality of life, and all that society stands for.

I have always had the capability to love. After I saw the planes hit the towers in NYC, I had to make some changes. So I tried the Bible. I pray and try to study every day. Only the good die young. I will live to be 200. It's sad but true. Maybe God wants



me to relive all of the misery that is my life. I know right now that my life ain't worth two dead flies.

September 1, 2004

I have pretty much been a criminal my whole adult life. Can I change that? I would like to. Will I break the law again? I hope not. In my past, I did not want to work. Now I need to work.

For almost 9 months, I have not seen the news or read a paper. I have been completely cut off from the real world and had a gun pointed at me twice. I have come real close to breaking down. I have tried to deal with everything but this is a rough camp. I have been messed with and shot 11 times with a tear gas pellet gun. The thing tore my skin off, which will never heal. I guess it's better than getting shot with bullets. I am so close to losing my mind, I don't know what to do.

I have been here over 3 months and cannot believe I'm being treated this way. I am locked in a cell 23 hours a day. I am afraid to eat because I don't trust these people. I feel my sanity slipping away.

September 28, 2004

I have never been more frustrated, pissed off, and every other negative emotion that there is. This situation gets worse every day. The sad part about it is that it does not have to be this way. There is no apparent organization, procedures, or any sense of just doing the right thing. This prison is a mess and one hell of a lawsuit.

I am having a real hard time holding on to my sanity. Being locked in this room for 23 hours a day and not knowing what is going to happen to you each day places a

mighty strain on the psyche. Eating cold food and being shot does nothing to promote peace and harmony in one's life either. I suffer from very bad headaches, and after 4 months, I still have no medication.

I lie in bed all day long and wallow in my pain and sorry. This is the year 2004, and we are all treated like slaves. They [i.e., the staff] don't give you anything but a hard time. I am a firm believer in karma. I am either still paying for the things I did as a criminal, or I am going to have one hell of a life when I get out. I am on the brink of falling apart. Sit in your bathroom for 2 hours staring at the walls. Then imagine someone messing with you all day. Maybe now you understand the torment that I face daily in this torture chamber.

September 29, 2004

I have held on to my sanity for the past 20 years, but this place is almost too much to bear. This has to be the most unorganized prison on the planet.

October 17, 2004

I am back in Illinois. They violated every civil right that I had when I was in Kansas. This is going to be rough here, but hopefully not as bad as where I was.

November 10, 2004

Things get better each day. I only have a year left, if I can get all of my earned time. I have a lot of respect for religion, and I try to learn about God all of the time. I will maintain with ease, study my Bible, and grow. I have seen enough of this to know

that I do not want any more of this jail time. But I must admit, it is going to be hard for me. So much is going to have to go right for me to have success when I am released. I have done so much time that it is a possibility that I will struggle at first. I do not want to break the law. I want to be free for the rest of my life!

I wrote to Snake but he never answered my letter. We were supposed to be friends. I just do not understand him at all. I don't get mad as much anymore, but I am hurt by his behavior. I hope I never see him again because I feel like beating him to a pulp, until he tells me why he abandoned our friendship.

November 22, 2004

I am still getting used to being around people again. The last time I got out of lock up [i.e., ad seg], I was fortunate enough to be around people that I knew. This place is very security conscious, so I have to stay on my toes and watch my environment carefully. It gets easier each day. I have enrolled in a computer class and plan on exercising and running to keep my body strong and my mind sharp.

December 25, 2004

It's Christmas again. No cards, letters, gifts, or presents. How depressing. Disappointment has become the one thing that I've gotten used to. My life should not be this fowl. No one should be abandoned. This path of torment and punishment will create a stronger man.

January 27, 2005

Another New Year finds me trying to stay cool and get my earned time so that I can get out of here. I see the parole board in May. Many people are telling me that they [i.e., corrections] may want me on parole. I sure hope so because I cannot wait to be rid of this place. Prison is so messed up. We get nothing but a hard time from the pigs, and this place is one of the worst. I just go to chow and then chill. The pigs mess with people all day long.

I wrote to Sally and found out she was engaged. I am not mad at her. I just wanted to see what was up, especially since I am getting out of here soon. The sooner the better is all that I can say at this point.

I have been doing well in my computer class. These skills will get me a good job when I am released, I hope. I have tried to educate myself the best I could so that I can stay free. So much in the world has changed that it will be a tremendous burden for me. I am looking forward to the challenge. I know that I will succeed at life away from this hellhole.

March 15, 2005

I am not in ad seg but this place is very bad. We have been on lock down for the past 3 weeks because of a murder. Some dude got killed over a seat in the chow hall. For 2 weeks, we had to eat in our cells. Yesterday, the pigs let us go back to the chow hall. However, they are forcing us to sit with people who they know we do not get along with. It won't be long before fights break out. Maybe that's what the pigs want.

If there's a riot, then the entire prison will be on lock down. I do not even want to go to the chow hall again. I know that there will be major drama sometime soon.

### *Reflections*

I am out of prison but still in prison. How is this possible? I have been incarcerated and then further incarcerated by being locked down while in prison. Call it isolationism. The hole, maximum security, administrative segregation, these are all forms of *double incarceration*. You do not see outside, other inmates, or people, and you get treated like scum. I have my freedom from isolation, but not from this correctional facility. I still want out!

I guess I deserved some of the punishment for vicious acts committed against society and other inmates. Now it is time to make amends. I never want to see the inside of a prison again, unless I'm visiting. This time has taken a tremendous toll on my physical and mental health. I have paid for my crimes over and over again.

April 25, 2005

I get to see the parole board in May. Yes, I am still trying to be optimistic. What else is there for me to do? I do not want to give up hope, for hope is all I have left. If they chose to keep me incarcerated, so be it. I will get out of here eventually. I do not want to die in prison.

May 18, 2005

I saw the parole board today. They told me that there is a good possibility of a release date for me. I think they are trying to mess with my head. What if it's true? I am

more than ready to leave this joint. When will they let me know for sure? My heart is racing now. Let me out now. Do not tell me any untruth. My head is in a bad place now. I must stay focused.

May 20, 2005

I am being released next month. I need to plan for my future. I thought I would have another setback. They surprised me again. But this time, it's a good surprise. I have waited over 20 years for this day to come. It is finally upon me. I have lost track of space and time.

### *The Future*

If I can get this stain of hardcore violence from my psyche, I may have a chance for success on the outside. The deck is stacked against me. I have seen others return to prison shortly after release. I cannot become another negative statistic in the *house of corrections*. I have to unlearn this learned behavior if my freedom is to be life long.

The road to long term incarceration is paved with many situations from my past, including my foul family life. My early upbringing set the wheels in motion for my life of crime and hard time. I was destined for prison. The stereotypical causal relationships for my deviant/abnormal behavior manifest within academic journal covers. There is a strong need for multiple counseling programs to drop the rate of recidivism. I have served enough time for three lifetimes. I cannot do any more.

One of my goals upon release is to make sure that young people do not venture down this path to destruction. I would love to be able to tell my life's story, in order to prevent lives from being wasted in prison. Education is a key factor. I never graduated

from high school. Academic achievement at the higher levels would have prepared me for life's challenges. Even vocational training would have given me marketable skills to forge a decent living.

I believe in rehabilitation, not incarceration. Give youth an opportunity to stimulate their minds without having to worry about their safety. Provide havens where learning is the cornerstone and not an afterthought. Stop sending non-violent offenders and drug users to their ultimate demise, mandatory jail time. Prisons sometimes create cynical, revengeful, or frustrated individuals, who may be unwilling to forgive society for [i.e., the inmate's] incarcerated circumstance.

Allow inmates to succeed in life by properly preparing them for release. Fund the programs that provide real life coping mechanisms. But most important, help them to find real jobs that pay real money. This is a much cheaper alternative than the dollar amounts spent to house inmates over long periods of time.

### Chapter Summary

Presented in this chapter were the inmate's views pertaining to behavior, family, education, judicial practices, intimate thoughts, feelings, and other emotions as they related to an incarcerated lifestyle. The material was based on factual information from letters written to this author by an inmate during his term of incarceration. Presented in Chapter 5 is a reflection upon the contribution this novella makes to the literature that is related to cause and effect and their relationship to long term incarceration. Also, limitations to the project are detailed.

## Chapter 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this project was to present a detailed study of the effects of long term incarceration in novella form. The psychological, sociological, and human communication characteristics of incarcerated behavior through letters, stories, and other studies were examined. This author received letters from an inmate, over a 20 year period, and the content of these letters were used to provide a snapshot of his: (a) living conditions; (b) thoughts of freedom; (c) feelings about friends, family, and society; and (d) reflections on the situations that led to incarceration.

The developmental pathway that led to long term incarceration was explored, and the factors that were addressed included: (a) childhood experiences, (b) family dysfunction, (c) socioeconomic issues, (d) behavior, (e) peer relations, and (f) level of educational achievement. It is hoped that the reflections of this fictionalized inmate about will make a valuable contribution to the literature that is related to cause and effect and long term incarceration.

There is little or no uniformity in the approach to sentencing and corrections in the judicial systems throughout the United States (Tonry, 1999). In addition, for the community of individuals, who are at risk for penal institutionalization, there is no uniform structure for intervention and prevention programs. Because the taxpayers absorb the astronomical costs for prisons, the initiation and implementation of new and/or existing rehabilitation and prevention programs should be the focus for the reduction



of long term incarceration and recidivism rates. Thereby, the tax burden on the general public would be notably reduced.

Many U.S. citizens perceive the prison system as a *cure all* for social ills. Instead, in this author's opinion, the focus should be on: (a) prevention, in order to stop at risk individuals from becoming institutionalized; (b) intervention, to try and offer services to help the at risk individual to lead a stable lifestyle; (c) rehabilitation, to provide training and educational opportunities for the inmate population; and (d) alternatives to incarceration, for nonviolent offenders. Schrum (2004) maintained that the utilization of effective programs that prevent individuals from becoming career criminals or that provide positive rehabilitation for offenders may: (a) reduce crime, (b) lower incarceration costs, (c) minimize welfare and social services, and (d) contribute to less prison overcrowding. These factors could contribute to safer communities.

Typically, the focus of crime and punishment is on the punitive aspects in regard to the incarceration of offenders and the treatment of these offenders within the criminal justice system. In this author's review of rehabilitation vs. incarceration, is rehabilitation the ultimate goal of the system? Searches for causation that lead to criminal type behavior and the mindset of offenders, as related to their incarceration over an extended period of time, were necessary components for this study.

### Findings

Long term incarceration places an individual under differing types of stress and causes feelings and other emotions to run rampant. For the character in this novella, were rollercoaster mood swings; the highs included receiving mail and visits, and lows,

no mail or visits. Situations of hope turned to despair and shattered dreams, such as denials by the members of parole board.

Frustration then took over and changed a positive attitude into a negative attitude with unwanted behavior. Fights are started because of short fuses created by actual events or perceived reality. Inmate behavior becomes more deviant, as violence manifests itself in the form of sociopathic acts or gang activity. Criminal personalities show a lack of self-control and social engineering skills when confronted by hostile circumstances (Baron, 2003; Smith, 2004). Stress can lead to anger which, in turn, facilitates an environment where violence is nurtured. Hatred of other cultures can lead to racism and prejudice.

Isolation from family, friends, and the world, in general, help to foster feelings of loneliness and solitude (Gove, 1994). Solitary confinement adds additional trauma to a situation dire in nature. There was the sorrow felt when his brother died, while he (i.e., the main character) was in prison and not allowed to attend the funeral. His thoughts turned to hopelessness and escape, both physical and mental.

What role does family dysfunction play in the development of criminal minds? There was the father who he never knew, a stepfather that was very abusive, a mother who enabled the stepfather, and other siblings. The family was a poor, working class unit. Even though the family life was not good, there were many attempts at familial reconciliation.

Friendship presented positive and negative connotations. There was a sense of joy and excitement, which turned to betrayal and abandonment, possibly due to lack of contact and terminated letter writing and visitation. Economic misfortune created an

environment where lack of resources, both friends and family, fostered mistrust and feelings of ill will.

Lack of education can be used as a predictor of crime , especially when other factors such as low socioeconomic class, family dysfunction, and low self-esteem are added (Hairston, 1998; Shrum, 2004). Employees of social service agencies, as well as school administrators, send mixed messages when an individual is returned to a hostile environment when the young person needed an escape from an unhealthy living arrangement. As a result, the young person is more likely to seek street knowledge vs. a formal textbook education. During incarceration, there is still societal pressure to not provide education for inmates for fear of creating smart criminals.

In addition, there is the criminal justice system, are the decisions and treatment fair and just for all individuals? Does race factor into the equation? Why are there sentence variations between rich vs. poor, African American vs. Anglo American? What role does the political environment play?

Inmate rules and behavior vary greatly, based on the rules and behavior of the guards. There is an inmate code of honor, “you never tell, not even on your enemies.” Inmate rules lead to lock down in prison (i.e., prison inside prison). The different types of security are: (a) minimum, (b) medium, (c) maximum, and (d) super maximum. Each security level serves a purpose. There is a dual role for the members of the parole board; they offer hope and shatter dreams. How does incarceration vs. rehabilitation fit into penal institution programming? The provision of programs that reduce recidivism are priceless in comparison to the funding of prisons.

This inmate's reflections offered a glimpse of humanity within prison life. Religion and God were themes that surfaced time and again. Thoughts of freedom provided an escape and gave hope, as time continued. Remorse and giving back to society proved to be soothing to the mind and spirit.

Communication and perceptions communicated track themselves from early childhood to adulthood. Communication disorders are carefully hidden so as to not reveal any frailties, which could be perceived as weakness.

#### Limitations to the Project

The limitations to this project consist of researcher bias and inmate bias/perspective. The inmate point of view reveals only what the inmate wanted to disclose to the researcher and could be composed of partial truths. In future studies, it would be worthwhile to include additional participants.

#### Application

Those who design and implement community safety and penal institution safety procedures could benefit from this study. Prison guards are subjected to violence, death, and abuse. Guards want inmates to adhere to the institutional rules and regulations without deviant behavior. Do inmate privileges (e.g., weights, movies, recreation) have an orderly effect? The members of society need to be protected and should be able to contribute in the retribution/community service portion of incarceration.

## Project Summary

The problems associated with long term incarceration (e.g., family dysfunction, crime, delinquency, imprisonment, social violence, recidivism, education, etc.) can result in a tremendous burden on societal resources. Rehabilitation, in the form of education and vocation training, as a component of incarceration should not be abandoned. The members of society must expect self-destructive patterns of sociopathic behavior from these predators unless consideration is given to meaningful judicial practices.

Prevention through intervention should start in early childhood and continue through adolescence to young adult programs. Alternative-to-Incarceration Programs and mentoring have proven beneficial in the fight against crime. Judicial practices should reflect the work achieved in these areas, with special insight into lowering the rate of recidivism or re-offence. (Armstrong, 2003; Shrum, 2004; Smith & Dickey, 1999).

Budget reductions in social programs need to be carefully reviewed, since it costs less to educate than incarcerate. There is a strong need for inmate educational opportunities. The current pathway to prison needs to be re-examined, especially for the young, and efforts should be continued to protect children from abuse. No child should be returned to an abusive home situation. Behavior that is learned through early communication within the family (e.g., or extended family, gangs, etc.) may be a predictor of long term incarceration.

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