

TO: AMERICAN PRISON WRITING ARCHIVE  
DIGITAL HUMANITIES INITIATIVE  
HAMILTON COLLEGE  
198 COLLEGE HILL ROAD  
CLINTON, NY. 13323

TO whom it may concern,

I am interested in participating with your program. I got to admit that I am somewhat unfamiliar with the parameters of what may be expected on my part tho'. However if you on your part are willing to read and hear this incarcerated brother out then I will absolutely pour out my heart and soul.

where to begin? I am a latino who was born the year 1976. To a man from Mexico and a woman from San Antonio, TX. I am a product of the 1980's and everything that that means. I was raised and thus exposed to the grimey enviroment of a mexican immigrant underground - the barrio lifestyle. I was a little kid who witnessed all kinds of stuff that would ultimately shape me. prostitution, drug dealing, human trafficking, violence, drug abuse, and all sorts of hustling and american crime!

Don't get me wrong. it wasn't all bad, tho. I had a pretty good life for the most part. a big family and a whole lot of love despite the poverty that drove the constant hustle. as a kid I was all about cartoons, video games and skateboards 😊 by the time I turned 10 years of age I became obsessed with skateboarding and horror-gore / scary movies.

The barrio lifestyle eventually opened up to me.

It went from skateboard buddies to neighborhood homies. from playing games to committing petty crime. from childhood innocence to sexual abuse.

it was only a matter of time especially since I grew up around so many prostitutes. I was seduced by family friends. to me it was normal. I would eventually become a neighborhood gang member. I would have lots of underage sex. with girls younger than me. girls my age. women who were well into adult hood.

I became a hustler.

I committed all kinds of crime. I started making money like the grown folks that I looked up to. the gang lifestyle started to get wild and soon I started handling hand guns. I was becoming a reputable "gee", a "block monster", a neighborhood "star".

I was a stick up artist. I started to commit strong arm robberies, Jackings, I was selling heroin and crystal meth, I began to protect neighborhood prostitutes and became a muscle (armed) pimp with a stable of girls.

I will not mislead you. my life was far from glamorous. I was a regular Juvenile offender. in and out of Juvi-hall. Each and every time I came out of Juvi or a group home I was celebrated and thus my hood star status would grow. my homies were impressed and the females loved me because I was a bonafide gangster. committed and fearless!

I was headed in a destructive direction.

once I got it in to my head that Jail wasn't to be feared. That I could survive it. I became more and more reckless. after years of trouble with the law I soon started to believe that nothing could take me down except death.

Then one day my cousin was killed. after that I kind of snapped. I went around shooting my foes like I had a death wish. I eventually got arrested and sentenced to the California youth authority for shooting a rival gang member. after a year and a half of Jail I got out. once out of Jail again I started all over again.

I handpicked a crew of gang members and developed a criminal crew. all gunners. we pulled robberies, drug dealings, and a prostitution ring. then just as I was planning and plotting to rob a bank - I got into a scuffle that led to me shooting another rival gang member. this time I was looking at life in prison.

I pled out and took 22 years with 85 percent!  
That was in 1997. I was 20 years old. I have been in state prison ever since. Im now 38. Im one of the lucky ones because I will be getting out towards the end of 2010. about 22 months from now 😊

sure I have been locked up for a long time but the upside is that unlike some I will be given another opportunity to live it up with the rest of society.

#4.

When I first came to prison I was a wild ass youngster with a whole lot of anger and violence related issues. I was seriously self destructive. I was at a loss when it came to my chances of ever getting out of prison.

I was only twenty but maturity wise I was even younger. All my life I had been gravitating towards those older than me but still I was the kid. In and out of jail. When others my age matured at a normal rate I was being held in juvenile facilities.

Even now at thirty-eight I am immature compared to the average 38 year olds on the other side of these prison walls and metal gates. Prison preserves those confined within because we do not have the same problems - stresses and obligations!

In the beginning I had no idea of what prison would be like. Then it all introduced itself to me. Best believe prison life in California ain't no joke. Over here we are herded into groups - affiliations designated by established prison gangs/mafias.

From day one I had natural enemies due to my allegiance to "la nuestra familia" as a "norteno" street gang member. I was destined to clash and collide with rival prison gangs and their prison gang allies.

#5.

I would see alot of prison violence. I would experience alot too. It really sucks. especially the psychological warfare part of it. the silence. the loud noises. the sound of metal being scraped on concrete late at night. the scent of melting plastic.

I would do what ever I would need to do to survive this prison system and at the same time I would be threatened by the c.o.'s - I could be locked away in the S.H.U. for being a Prison gang member.

after all these years only now do I see that I am better off with out all the gang shit. like I said I am lucky because I will have another opportunity on the outside. The only way I can hope to be successful is with out the mental shackles of the gang lifestyle.

I have a beautiful family who supports me and I will not let them or myself down.

I have chosen to write to you because if through any of my words I can help someone then that will be awesome. also if by sharing my thoughts I am able to gain a honest and sincere friend then that would be like hitting the Jack pot.

with love and light.

Jose Reyes # K-63712

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