

THE AMERICAN WRITING ARCHIVE ESSAY

My name is Alex I am a prisoner at a Federal Correctional Institution. I have been in the Federal System since September 9, 2009. Prior to this I had only done petty time for state charges and served no more than 15 days in county. It has been very rough being in the Federal System but I came to the point where I now understand that this system is needed. It is very easy to disagree with what I say if you are a prisoner like myself but the truth is lives are harmed by drugs, robberies and violence. I could mitigate my situation by saying that there is no force behind drug dealing because it takes two to tango and the buyer seller relationship is an option of both but that mentality ended me up with a life sentence. I was sentenced in December 5, 2012 and while I was sure that I was in the right legal theory, I was wrong and my approach was somewhat disrespectful. It took this to see what was really going on behind prison walls.

After 39 long and exhausting months in County Jails I was finally sent to Lee-County Virginia and I seen all the inmates with LIFE sentences as myself. Like Joshua and Caleb in the Bible I was going to be that lifer with a different spirit and I was chosen by fellow inmates to be a church pastor. It is not easy living in a violent environment of a United States Penitentiary but by staying in my own lane and remaining positive, programming and educating myself I was able to help myself and many others. In my cell every morning as soon as I would wake up the walls would remind me that I had a LIFE sentence and I would never see the streets or my loved ones was hard to swallow. I would leave all my frustations and fears in my pillow and would simply ask my God Jesus Christ to protect my footsteps and guide my eyes and even my conversations. Gossip is very dangerous in prison so is your look. As far as attitude goes you must always be the same every day no matter if you are recently denied in Court or if a loved one has died your emotions and feelings have to remain the same because failure to do so is weakness in the eyes of others and dangerous at the same time.

I found out there are great individuals that have made serious mistakes that require significant punishment but if in my power to do so I would do all in my capacity to help them, and this because I know who they really are while being in here with them each and every day. I once walked besides a man who was given a 45 year term of imprisonment and I seen in the walk alone that he was given up in life and in his case. As I walked beside this individual I told him to cheer up laws were changing and Obama is granting more clemencies than other president. In response the depressed individual tells me that he was not going to lie to himself that this was reality. I told him reality is temporal and subject to change but TRUTH stands forever.

While at the U.S. Penitentiary I met some great staff members that really do care for the inmate population and would wish that all prisons could have great staff members such as those at LEE-County but sadly even the good staff members run out of patience with the ever demanding inmates that just never know how to take care of those good staff members rather they wear out their welcome by taking advantage of the little trust that they are given. That is why for numerous reasons I say that even though this system is tough on crime but it is very much needed because some people including myself just will not learn until they are humbled by some form of rules or laws. Yes the inmate is humbled when at one point in his life is in charge of his own criminal conduct that has it's payoffs of being a owner of a house of business and even the backbone of the family/as the provider of the house by means of his ill gotten gains, then all of a sudden he is brought to a place where you are told how much money you can spend, what close to wear and what times to eat and sleep. Some days I really desire to wear some nice jeans and nice lime green bright shirt but in it's stead i'm stuck wearing Khakis.

In prison I have had jobs working at the Chapel Religious Services and have dealt with different cultures and beliefs.

Out of 1500 inmates in the Penitentiary only inmates with impeccable record with no sanctions and non-violent crimes can work in the Medical Department and only two inmates at a time can work there. This is considered an honor job and I had the privilege to work there for several months. I have also been a facilitator for ACE courses that help inmates prepare for release by helping them in preparing a pre-release plan, writing resumes, prepare for job interviews, dress for success and several other helpful tools that help the inmates that are near release. I worked as a lead Re-Entry Clerk providing resources.

In February of 2016 I was blessed in being eligible for a sentence reduction under a new Amendment in the Sentencing Guidelines called the Amendment 782 that reduced two levels off my sentence. I was reduced down to 360 months equivalent to 30 years. My breathing is better now, no joke it is a different type of breathing when you wake to a sentence of thirty years which is now a number, rather than to wake up to sentence in letters which is life. You see numbers change but words don't. I was moved from a violent environment to a Federal Correctional Institution-Hazelton and it is way better and safer. The only reason I was at a Penitentiary was because of my life sentence which required for me to remain at a Penitentiary for 10 years but now in a my low points of custody level and reduction of sentence I immediately moved to a medium custody and God willing soon to a low. I thought I would never make it out of the Penitentiary environment and shed tears as I looked back at the Prison towers and walls as I rode away in the prison bus. God is still working through this broken system you just have to have a fine eye to see all this. I still have a high sentence with a release date of 2035 but I know it's down hill from here on out.

I pray this Essay may be informative and of use to others.

With the Abundance of Love and Respect

Alex