

CHAPTER 5

“THE UNORTHODOX TEACHER” [THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIETY V]

UNDERSTAND ME,

As I sit back with eyes open to life,

I've become able to understand the realities of life!

Time has changed, but life remains the same.

*People have to understand the obstacles of this world,
so as to remain free from political wars and government
struggles.*

UNDERSTAND ME!

Open your eyes to the unjust economy.

You're living in a country built on lies and thievery.

*So protect your community, understand your opportunities,
and strive for better against the opposition to proceed on with*

A positive community.

All I ask is that you just,

UNDERSTAND ME!

GENE WHEATON

CHAPTER SYNOPSIS

I've always known I needed more of this world than what my humble surroundings were willing to provide. My stepfather would say I carried myself in a manner which the world would someday be my servant. Somewhere down the road of my past I figured, like many, I'd accomplish this with the drugs, violence, and rules introduced by the streets. Boy, was I so wrong!

Like the majority, I'd been hoodwinked by a set of beliefs garnered by my dwellings. Along this road to nowhere, I managed however to prevail and gain a dire strength and insight to survive that allowed those once perceived opportunities I entertained to become transparent deceptions.

Sadly for so many, including myself, the reality (prison) we now entertain as consequence to those particular beliefs forbids escape from those twisted deceptions once held. Nonetheless, we are now driven by a thirst thrusting against the pull of ignorant quicksand. This place, for few, has become a kind of wicked sanctuary where monotonous circumstances compel leisure to read day in, day out. Undoubtedly, the insights gained become integral pieces of a puzzle to manhood and dreams.

The ensuing chapter oscillates between lessons learned both inside and outside the classroom. The best of both worlds to say, where the essence of knowledge ensues in the most unconventional, yet conventional, means. Where, when class is released for recess, the streets of America's ghetto and prison dwellings become paramilitary institutions of extreme discipline fostered by volatile conditions. Here, the best reads become the company one keeps. The lessons come

hardscrabble where business etiquette is mastered by networking grams, pounds, and kilos. Graduation, it generally commences behind bars where the best reads then become the xeroxed books passed down the tier: Marx, Lenin, George Jackson, Tocqueville, Castro and many others are studied with brutal patience and often in contrast while Tupac, Too Short, and Willie D blur in-and-out of the tiers of Folsom's madness.

So did King's "Dream" benefit or work against me? Or did Malcolm's call for self-reliance compel me to pick-up the dope sack and pistol on account of the "Dream" my elders bought, failed to capitalize and rebuild where racism destroyed? These questions and many others are explored in the up-and-coming *The Unorthodox Teacher*.

EXCERPT

For many *Products of the Ghetto* the value of a formal or higher education is often misplaced in the chaos that ensues in traps which fail to challenge academically. Now, this ain't to say the environment is not demanding with respect to creativity. Yet, when it comes to the immediate needs of the orthodox religions, histories, sciences, and other curriculums predestined to enrich man's spiritual and material life, these properties are either made to appear without incentive or circumscribed by demands for survival. In other words, in this world of frequent violent and impoverishing conditions, the diplomas, degrees, and Bible and Quran pages are meaningless pieces of paper that better serve as crutches and rolling papers for a joint. Again, drawing on the previous chapters, what we have before us has been scripted by our peer's responsiveness to a procreated environment.

As the blind continue to lead the blind, our instructors will school and further mislead us to believe we can get Trump change (\$\$\$) through the vehicles at bay. Provided we have attended a conventional school beyond the elementary years, by the time the average has reached their freshman or sophomore year the burners are full blast with chaos in the house and the 'hood's ailments are clutching at every hopeful

thought to provide relief. This forces us to grow up fast. And there's seldom time for school time activities, except one: *Grinding for tomorrows milk money*. Because moms and/or pops are usually junkies who have exhaled it in a cloud of dope smoke. Or it's one of many other elements common to the environment which fosters the neglect that robs a child of the support that encourages a commitment to higher learning.

As for the conventional curriculum they may have picked-up along the way before dropping-out, it will have little, if any, bearing in an imposing slum life that today has, for example, extended its violence onto the campus grounds. Thus, paying homage to the historical event of President Washington having chopped down a cherry tree becomes useless information in face of the probability of hitting the floor in both the 'hood and classroom. Instead, today's youth, make their own history. Though, it's not built on chopping down fruit trees. For they've long found the subject of Washington and other presidents overrated in an atmosphere of fast money enthusiast striving to stay alive and fed in a "Draped-Up and Dripped-Out" culture.

This culture sprung from the '80s, whereas I was on the frontline running and can relate. When it came to Washington and school, the only president we ever were concerned with in the 'hood was the one on the American currency. As for mathematics, the value of money goes without saying, yet required of us to learn no more than how to count "STACKS," i.e. thousand dollar racks. Science was the least appreciated. Though, for those mixing the cake, depth was not required beyond the chemistry of mixing the right measure of cocaine with soda to cut rocks. This approach to science needless to say carried us a long way when it came to manufacturing drugs of any sort that would bring the president to the dinner table.

Thus, hardscrabble was the game I was on the frontline playing before landing in prison as a result of it like so many who, like me, came before and continue to pack the plantation and will possibly spend a life time of hard-knocks and ups-and-downs. For, we fail to recognize the *Rules of the Game* were scripted by the ignorant who idolize the wealth of Trump, P. Diddy and others, then foolishly attempt to connect the dots between the world we entertain to the one we idolize after down-loading "Get Rich Or Die Trying."

When the ignorance of this down-load eventually ran into prisons brick wall, thereafter a seasoned vet directed me to picture the world through the eyes of my idols. I couldn't, for I quickly came to recognize that the circle I was running with was not exposing me to those vehicles and means necessary to obtain the level of success my idols had achieved. Here, I came to realize that I had paid more attention to the "glitter and gold," instead of how they had achieved it. Specifically, how the institutions of higher learning had played a significant roll in their success, allowing them to dissect the intricacies of capitalism which enabled their material fortune.

It wasn't until I found myself incarcerated facing a capital murder trial in 1995 that I discovered this value, i.e. the value of education and how it opens doors. My world had shrunk to a 20'x 15' space with five other prisoners ever in my company forced to share one sink, shower, and toilet. Never had I realized what grand surprises air and sunlight were until having been deprived of them those 23 months I fought for my life. No commissary, TV, radio, or yard. That was the program—24/7 cell program. Hard time for real! And they starved us so. What we ate for lunch, was what we ate for dinner. And on the two occasions we saw a chicken leg or wing, over that span of time, a couple ole boys came up short. And I was no impressive threat standing at 5'8" and then 135lbs. Yet, those conditions had made me savage inside, as if a puppy caged and starved then constantly irritated so as to make vicious. The fear I harbored walking in, would evaporate, and I came to understand why it was the *so-called* friend, I just happened to be charged with killing, was so raw. He had been a regular in that hell-hole, spending up to eight-to-ten months of each year of his short adult life trapped and shackled like a slave.

When I look back on that experience, it's as if I'm looking at someone else's life or a scene from an old prison movie where the guards (and they did) rack the door in the wee hours of the morning to sick another rabid pup on the unsuspecting. Though, I was primed for the get-down when it happened, for I had long learned to sleep with one eye open, with my steel ready.

Bored, I was forced to pick up a book. Reading had never been my joy, but I sure discovered an escape in doing so while incarcerated; improving my ability at the same time. For in my "reading world" there was no cage, no long hungry nights, no

misery or loneliness. Unfortunately, there wasn't much of a selection in that Barney Fife hell-hole called the Seminole County Jail. But, I read every shit-kicker and book they had on the shelf. During this time I developed an interest for the African history my "racist" school administrators had denied me. My auntie who lived in the Oakland-San Francisco Bay Area paid me a visit, dropped several history books on me and suggested I move to the West-Coast "if" and when I got out.

Those books were a revelation to me and a testimony to the great empires of Africa I had been oblivious to. Often, thereafter having read them, I thought about had I been taught about the rich history of Kings and Queens of Africa when I was in school, I just might have had paid more attention and most definitely would have had more self-respect and dignity to hold my head high in an environment plagued by bigotry. Needless to say, when I eventually moved to California, I further enriched my conscious with a few courses of African history while attending college. The experience, opened my eyes to understand what Sista Soulja was saying, "If you want to keep something from a nigga, put it in a book."

As I sharpened my tools, an epiphany for the value of education would come during this time while preparing for the death penalty trial. When "The Dream Team," as the father and son team of attorneys were nicknamed, took over my case, after I had ran through five other attorneys (firing some, some withdrawing), the situation had long before their appointment became disparaging. Dealing with the public pretenders and the initial money hungry, good from nothing Ervin Box—who was a reputed attorney out of Oklahoma City and renowned legal analyst who covered the O.J. Simpson trial—had forced me to do my homework. Even here, I ran into a road block because the county jail and court officials refused to allow any prisoner law library access. So, I had to have information smuggled in. Fortunately, I was able to gain some insights regarding the legal process. However, I make no attempt to claim I became seasoned in something—the law—that's ever changing. In this particular case it wouldn't take a rocket scientist to put one and two together. And this was exactly what I did with serendipity for my attorneys.

Now, I'm not trying to steal the show here, with "The Dream Team" I'm confident they would've done an excellent job deciphering and discrediting the state of evidence against me. Yet, the fact remains that over that nineteen month period I

had been firing attorneys left and right, I had composed a summary of notes covering every stitch of the state's case; pointing out its deficiencies. At pretrial my attorneys argued some thirty or more motions and 95% of them were granted. When Jack Jr., who had never tried a murder case, took to the podium under the direction of pops, I then had the epiphany of the value of education due to the fact that just about everything I had presented to them in that summary was used during the course of the trial. Most important, were the insights I had managed to gain from reading a forensic science book detailing the modalities of firearms which allowed my attorneys to undermine state witness testimony. The result further validated the epiphany. *KNOWLEDGE KEPT ME OFF DEATH ROW!!!*

In just *four* months we had put together a defense and presented it to a jury whereas each-and-every one of those white jurors declared their willingness to lethally inject upon a finding of guilt fortunately never delivered. Hung, nine to three, in my favor to acquit in self-defense, the twenty-three year-old kid would unknowingly trade his innocence for the compromise which had been based on misinformation regarding the favor. At the time I agreed to the compromise, my attorneys had been misinformed. They were told the favor was not for the defense. So the deal was most appealing, esp. considering it was nothing more than a turnaround at the prison reception center to freedom within months. Never, would I have believed in taking that sweet appearing deal, it would be something that I'd live to regret. Nor, would I in my wildest dreams ever believe, had God himself told me, that I would find myself back under the gun of another capital murder trial. I'd have called God a fool, but turns out I was the fool for not changing the way I viewed the *Game* which allowed me to continue to entertain the vultures and the rats.

In total it would be 36 months of a life altering experience. Eleven months prior to this, my then wife had blessed me with a Queen whose birth had initiated the notion of change. The idea of my shortie looking up to a father who was a drug-dealer wasn't ideal to me. Up until this point of my life, my activities had appeared to make a way out of no way in a community where legitimate opportunities to make Dope-Boy-Magic(\$\$\$) only presented themselves to whites for they owned everything and practiced keeping the wealth in the circle except when they wanted to take a blast.

After the trial, my journey to the free-world would take a spin through a medium security prison in Cushion, Oklahoma. Here, I was fortunate to have made the acquaintance of an elder who had fared beyond well in the dope-game. He had been transferred to the state pen after a short stint in the feds related to a drug seizure in Columbia. Eventually we would become cellies, and the O.G. would lace me with some real "G," i.e. GAME! Up until meeting him, he was what I aspired to be, "A Big Time Drug Dealer." However his life story would further inspire me to pursue another career. In short, his story went like this: 20 years ago (1977) he owned a small janitorial service in Inglewood, California; got a contract for \$250,000; bought 20 kilos of cocaine, and never looked back until his current pinch (55 yrs state). His situation, we observed, was he may die in prison from his 20 years of hustling that in the end would account for nothing more than a slow death in a 6'x 12' coffin and a phat commissary account. He would always say with a sigh, "If I could only give all I have, all I've made (\$\$\$) for my freedom, I'd walk out of here today butt-naked broke and wouldn't think twice about showing the world my naked ass."

He would ever encourage me to pursue a legitimate business and what mother always wanted, for me to go to college. "College!" For what? I used to think when moms would say, "Son, I didn't raise you to become a drug-dealer, go to college...." What cha mean, YOU DIDN'T RAISE ME.... Hello, we broke and you like to smoke coke which drew the neighborhood Nino Browns to the porch like flies on stench come the first and 15th. Yeah, you kept me in school with the encouragement of an ass-whippin when bad grades hit the mail box, and I love ya for that, but Momma pleeease! Come on now! You knew I had that Williams and greedy white man's blood running through my veins. Hustling was in my DNA! And I'm stacking money like legos! College? Yeah Right! So I can learn some more about useless facts that ain't putting bread and butter on the table or Nikes on my sisters' feet? Having ran this down to O.G., he would drive mother's point home with, "How you go entertain having Trump Money & Power, and not know anything about accounting, business law, economics and other money related 'G?' 'You know how to hustle and get block money, but you must learn how to make money make money beyond investing in something other than dope.' 'When I was your age, had I invested the kind of time and resources into my janitorial company as I did moving bricks from state-to-state, I'd be

sitting on top of a multi-million dollar company instead of this bunk giving my hustle stacks back to the man!" I recognized not only his situation but the "G" he was lacing me with was *real talk*.

Along the way to discharging my prison term, I picked up the pieces and direction as to what and where I needed to further gain the insights required to fill the void change would bring. One route I took that would ever change my outlook on life was a Zig Ziggler motivational course. Initially when I enrolled, my objective was simply to get 30 days knocked off my sentence for partaking in rehabilitating programs offered by the administration. Never would I have realized the impact this program would have on carrying me through hard times while in transition. Thereafter my release, I came to understand the challenges I had to face, to which I embraced with open arms, were only temporary adjustments required to get where and what I desired out of life. I often trip on how during this time, I went from 'hood rich to financial aid and public transportation by choice not fretting the ride on my beach-cruiser and the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) to-and-from Los Medanos Community College in Pittsburg, California, and Laney college in Oakland. I was getting that "G" momma for so many years, and O.G., had attempted to put me up on (accounting, business law, economics, etc.).

Awarded, I received praises from instructors, deans and family. Imagine that, an ex-con who was pushed through high school with a 1.5 GPA was now in college maintaining a 3.75 GPA and recipient to an academic scholarship. Moreover, like I told one of my instructors, "I wasn't there (college) to receive a piece of paper (a degree) to become an educated servant, I'm here to get that "G" to empower my family and dreams.

Where I once had blinders on my eyes as to the importance of education, *knowledge if you will*, and how it was so necessary to fuel my dreams, a capital murder trial and prison experience had removed them. These events and the responsibility of fatherhood had assisted to change my worldview. Thereafter, having found myself in the college world, I received what we on the streets call "Boss Game." And I came to find that college wasn't about learning some useless facts, this was about me and what I needed to obtain and breathe life into my dreams. With just the little I learned in those almost two years, it surpassed the "G" I had received from a lifetime on the

streets. However, I must admit that my experiences up until that point, living on the farm and working with my Grandfather as a landscaper, and yeah, dope peddling, had assisted with the hands on aspects of business I chose to major in and further study. These experiences collectively allowed me to peep into the world of my idols success with realistic expectations fueled by education and experience, instead of the miscalculated dreams of the dope sack's allure and perilous expense to my future. I had found a way to feed my family and dreams instead of that I once was so adamant to believe was the only way. I was so relieved having made this discovery after countless nights on my knees asking the creator to keep my family and I from harm's way....