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PEN AMERICA (APWA)

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DEAR READER,

HELLO, MY NAME IS 'KENNETH ANDRE-DONTA BARR'. MY DATE OF BIRTH IS NOVEMBER 28, 1988 I AM 29 YEARS OLD. I AM A PROUD AFRICAN AMERICAN MAN, THAT HAS COMPLETED HIGH SCHOOL, HAS DONE SOME COLLEGE AND HAS HAD NUMEROUS BOOKS, PLAYS AND ESSAYS PUBLISHED OVER THE YEARS. I AM CURRENTLY LEARNING TO READ, WRITE AND TO SPEAK ARABIC AND SPANISH. AND AS OF LAST WEEK I AM NOW CURRENTLY ENGAGED TO MY LONG TERM GIRLFRIEND OF A YEAR. I AM ALSO A SLAVE IN AMERICA.

I WAS NOT BORN INTO SLAVERY, I WAS BORN A FREEMAN IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, IN CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY. HOWEVER AFTER A VERY DIFFICULT BREAK UP WITH MY THEN TEENAGED GIRLFRIEND ANEESA RIVERA. I BECAME EXTREMELY DEPRESSED AND EMOTIONALLY WRECKED TO THE POINT THAT I WAS HOSPITALIZED IN IMPATIENT CARE AT 'MEADOW WOODS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM', A PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL FOR THE MENTALLY ILL.

I TRULY WANTED TO KILL MYSELF AND I COULDN'T FIND ANYTHING TO HELP STABILIZE ME. ME AND ANEESA, HAD BEEN TOGETHER SINCE WE WERE YOUNG TEENAGERS. AND I JUST COULDN'T SEE MY LIFE WITHOUT HER. BEFORE WE GOT TOGETHER, AS A JUVENILE I WAS IN AND OUT OF JUVENILE DETENTION CENTERS AND GROUP HOMES. IT ACTUALLY FELT BETTER IN THOSE PLACES THEN BEING AT HOME BECAUSE OF THE NUMEROUS ABUSES ME MY BROTHERS AND MY MOTHER SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF MY STEPFATHER, CURTIS.

DESPITE WHAT IS COMMONLY THOUGHT BY THE PUBLIC, JUVENILE JAILS AND GROUP HOMES REALLY DON'T TEACH US COPING SKILL OR HOW TO EXPRESS OURSELVES PROPERLY, WHEN WE ARE HURT OR GOING THROUGH A DIFFICULT SITUATION. ON THE CONTRARY WHAT THEY DO DO IS TEACH THE LITTLE KIDS THAT THEY ARE HOUSING TO SHUT UP AND GET WITH THE PROGRAM. NO YOU CAN'T SEE OR TALK TO MOMMY, NO YOU CAN'T PLAY OR BE A KID. YOU HAVE TO MAN UP AND FIGHT FOR YOUR RESPECT. HERE AND THERE THEY MIGHT SHOW SOME PICTURES OF PEOPLE THAT HAVE BEEN SHOT AND KILLED OR USE TO USE DRUGS, TO FRIGHTEN US TO STAY AWAY FROM DRUGS AND THE STREETS. BUT THEY DON'T TEACH THE KIDS, THAT ARE **GROWING UP** IN A HARSH AND VIOLENT ENVIRONMENT, THINGS LIKE HOW TO DEAL WITH HEART BREAK, BETRAYAL, REAL LIFE RELATIONSHIPS AND INTERACTIONS. ALL OF THOSE THINGS ARE ESSENTIAL TO ANY ADULT PERSON SUCCESS IN SOCIETY. BUT CHILDREN THAT ARE FORCED TO SERVE TIME IN JAILS, DETENTION CENTERS AND GROUP HOMES, LACK THESE SKILLS AND THEREFOR ARE HAMPERED AND UNDER DEVELOPED IN THE SKILLS THEY NEED IN HOW TO CARRY ON THERE EVERYDAY SOCIAL

LIVES. AND SADLY THIS PROBLEM CARRIES ON INTO OUR ADULT LIFE.

AFTER I CAME HOME FROM MY LAST JUVENILE STINT AT THE END OF 2005, I WAS A 4.0 STUDENT AND ABOVE MY GRADE LEVEL IN SEVERAL SUBJECTS LIKE SOCIAL STUDIES, HISTORY (WHICH I DIDN'T NEED ANYMORE CREDITS FOR) AND READING. HOWEVER WITH MY NEW FOUND FREEDOM INSIDE OF A 2,900 STUDENT BODY SCHOOL, COUPLED WITH A TEENAGE SEX DIVE AND REASONING. I BEGAN SKIPPING SCHOOL REGULARLY TO HANG OUT WITH GIRLS WHICH WAS NEW TO ME, BEING THAT I WAS SEPARATED FROM THE OPPOSITE SEX FOR SO LONG. SO I HEAVILY INDULGED MYSELF INTO THEIR COMPANY AND ENTERTAINMENT ON A DAILY BASIS. AND SLOWLY BUT SURELY EVERYTHING ELSE THAT I HAD WORKED SO HARD FOR FELL OFF TO THE WAY SIDE.

I OFTEN LIKEN THIS TIME PERIOD OF MY LIFE TO THE COUPLE OF DAYS IN THE YEAR THE SLAVE MASTERS IN AMERICA WOULD LET THEIR SLAVES BE FREE TO DO WHATEVER THEY WANTED. AND THE SLAVES NEVER HAVING EXPERIENCED FREEDOM BEFORE CROSSED ALL BOUNDS AND GOT EXTREMELY DRUNK, PARTYED, AND FORNICATED UNTIL THEY ALL HAD HANGOVERS, VOMITED ALL OVER AND OF COURSE MANY FIGHTS AND BRAWLS ALSO BROKE OUT WHERE PEOPLE REALLY SOMETIMES GOT HURT OR KILLED. AND ALL OF THIS HAPPENED DURING THE COURSE OF THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY TIME. AND IT MADE THE SLAVES DRAW THE CONCLUSION THAT IF THAT WAS THEN THEY DIDN'T WANT IT.

TO BE CLEAR IN THIS WHOLE STORY AMERICA NEEDS TO BETTER PREPARE PRISONER TO RETURN TO SOCIETY. NOT JUST WITH WORK, BUT ALSO WITH THE EVERYDAY SOCIAL SKILLS AND INTERACTIONS SKILLS THAT WE ALL NEED AND USE TO HAVE HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE LIVE BUT WE TAKE LITTLE TO NO NOTICE OF. RE-ENTRY SHOULD INCLUDE SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, TO HELP BUILD A GOOD FORTITUDE STRUCTURE WITHIN THE EX-CONVICTS, SO WE CAN BE PRUDENT IN OUR ACTIONS. WE NEED TO BE TAUGHT TO USE TEMPERANCE AND MODERATION IN THE THINGS WE DO AND USE. ONE OF THE WISEST THINGS A COUNSELOR EVER TOLD ME WAS, "ITS NOTHING WRONG WITH SMOKING WEED JUST DON'T MAKE IT 100% OF YOUR DAY MAKE IT 10% AND BUT NEVER SHOULD IT BE WHAT YOU DO MOST OF THE TIME TOO MUCH OF ANYTHING IS BAD FOR YOU". AND WITH THESE SKILLS WE WILL BE ABLE TO LIVE WITH TRUE JUSTICE IN SOCIETY.

I AM SERVING A 40 YEAR PRISON SENTENCE, WHERE I MUST SERVE 34 YEARS BEFORE I WILL BE RELEASE. I WILL BE 53 AT THAT TIME. I WAS LOCKED UP AT AGE 19 AND I CAME TO PRISON AT THE AGE OF 22, JUST THINK ABOUT HOW MUCH THE WORLD WILL HAVE CHANGED FROM THAT TIME UNTIL NOW. AND THINK OF HOW HARD IT WOULD BE FOR ME TO HAVE ANY MEANINGFUL SOCIAL INTERACTIONS AFTER ALL OF THAT TIME IN PRISON.

MY SECOND ISSUE WITH THE PRISON SYSTEM IN AMERICA IS THE EXTREME HOPELESSNESS IT PRODUCES IN PEOPLE LIKE MYSELF WITH EXTREMELY LONG PRISON SENTENCES TO DO. IT IS NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND MEANING IN YOUR LIFE OR A PURPOSE WHEN YOU HAVE NO WAY TO EXPRESS YOURSELF OR USE YOUR TALENTS, OR DO ANYTHING THAT IS MEANINGFUL. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE FOR PRISONERS THAT HAVE NO OUTSIDE FRIENDS OR FAMILY, WITH RESOURCES. IT IS EVEN WORST FOR PRISONERS THAT WILL NEVER GO HOME. JUST IMAGE HOW SOMEONE WILL FEEL DAY

IN AND DAY OUT WHEN THEY KNOW THAT THE HELL ON EARTH THAT THEY ARE LIVING WILL BE THE ONLY THING THAT THEY WILL KNOW FOR THE REST OF THERE LIVES.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN THERE IS NO HOPE FOR REDEMPTION? WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN THERE IS NO LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL AND YOU REALIZE THAT YOU WILL DIE IN THE PLACE THAT YOU HATE MOST? OR WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN THE ONLY THING THAT YOU WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR IS THE WORST THING THAT YOU EVER DID?

IT IS EXTREMELY SAD WHEN I MEET VERY RELIGIOUS PEOPLE IN PRISON AND I HEAR THE STORIES ABOUT THE THINGS THAT THEY DID WHEN THEY WERE YOUNG AND HOW THEY HAVE CHANGED THEIR LIVES AROUND. WHY DO WE CONTINUE TO PUNISH PEOPLE FOR SOME EVIL THAT THEY COMMITTED AFTER THEY HAVE REPENTED AND CHANGED THEIR WAYS? WHY IS OUR SYSTEM BASED OFF OF RETRIBUTION AND NOT REHABILITATION? WHY IS THERE AN INCENTIVE TO KEEP US IN JAIL AND PRISON?

THESE ARE SOME OF THE QUESTIONS I ASK MYSELF OVER AND OVER AGAIN AND THE ANSWERS THAT I GET ALWAYS VARY. THE MOST COMMON BEING THAT THE SYSTEM IS MORE WORRIED ABOUT THE FEELINGS AND RIGHTS OF THE VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILY. AND TO ME THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT! BUT BEING HOW EMOTIONAL THE VICTIM AND THEIR FAMILY MUST BE AND HOW EMOTIONALLY ATTACHED AND CONNECTED TO THE SITUATION THAT THEY ARE. WHY DO THE COURTS ALLOW THEM TO JUDGE WHAT THE PUNISHMENT SHOULD BE? SHOULDN'T AN UNBIASED PARTY BE THE ONE THAT DOES THAT?

THE ENDLESS SEARCH FOR MEANING IN THE LIVES OF PRISONERS CAN BE BOTH DISHEARTENING AND SELF DEFEATING. IT IS ALL TO EASY TO GIVE UP, WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY ROAD BLOCKS AND/OR IT SEEMS LIKE NOBODY REALLY CARES. I HAVE SEEN PEOPLE LOSE THEMSELVES IN HERE AND QUITE LIFE. I SEEN PEOPLE KILL THEMSELVES TO ESCAPE. AND I HAVE SEEN PEOPLE USE AND ABUSE DRUGS AND EVEN HOUSE HOLD PRODUCTS TO NUMB THEIR MIND OF THE STRESS AND PAIN OF LIFE. OFTEN I REPEAT OVER AND OVER AGAIN TO MYSELF THAT I HATE LIFE.

TO STOP THIS FROM HAPPENING I TRY TO INDULGE MYSELF MORE DEEPER INTO MY RELIGION AND PRAY THAT ALLAH PROMISE IS TRUE AND THAT THINGS WILL GET BETTER. AT OTHER TIMES I TRY TO FOCUS AND STUDY AND EDUCATE MYSELF. AND AT TIMES I CRY MYSELF TO SLEEP. I ALSO TRY TO TALK TO MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS ON THE OUTSIDE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE AS A, KIND OF MEDICINE TO HELP ME COPE WITH LIFE AND TO TAKE MY MIND OUT OF HERE FOR AWHILE.

I CANNOT EXPRESS TO YOU HOW HOPELESS IT CAN BE FOR PRISONERS DOING EXTREMELY LONG SENTENCES. ITS STRESSFUL, DEPRESSING, A MENTAL HEADACHE, PSYCHOLOGICALLY CHALLENGING WHEN YOU SEE THAT THE HURDLES IN LIFE THAT YOU ARE SUPPOSE TO BE MAKING LIKE STARTING YOUR CAREER, GETTING MARRIED, HAVING KIDS, OR NOT SEEING YOUR KIDS GROW UP, BUYING YOUR FIRST HOUSE, TAKING CARE OF YOUR MOM AND/OR DAD. THE LIFE HURDLES THAT MOST NORMAL PEOPLE GO THROUGH. AND IN MY POSITION I DON'T HAVE KIDS BUT I WANT SOME ONE DAY. BUT I HAVE TO REALIZE THAT BECAUSE OF MY ADVANCE AGE UPON MY RELEASE THAT THIS MAY NEVER HAPPEN FOR ME. SO TO THAT EFFECT I SAY THAT PRISONERS THAT ARE MARRIED SHOULD HAVE A RIGHT TO REPRODUCE AND HAVE CHILDREN. TO BE ABLE TO SPEND SPECIAL TIME WITH OUR SPOUSES IN PRIVATE.

MY NEXT ISSUE WITH THE PRISON SYSTEM IN AMERICA IS THE SLAVE WAGES THAT PRISONERS GET PAID VERSES WHAT A NORMAL PERSON WOULD GET PAID IN THE REAL WORLD FOR THE SAME WORK. TO BE CLEAR MORE THEN MOST PRISONERS DON'T EVEN GET PAID AN MINIMUM WAGE SALARY. I GET PAID \$1.40 A DAY FOR CELL SANITATION. THE HIGHEST PAYING JOB IN THE PRISON GETS PAID \$4.50 A DAY FOR SKILLED ELECTRICIANS, COOKS, SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS AND OTHER SKILLED JOBS. ALL OF THESE JOBS HAVE 10 TO 12 HOUR SHIFTS A DAY AND STILL THEY GET PAID SLAVE WAGES.

FEDERAL LAW REQUIRES THAT PEOPLE BE PAID AT LEAST \$6.50 AN HOUR. BUT PRISONERS ARE PAID LESS THEN THAT FOR AN WHOLE DAYS WORK. WHY? THE U.S. CONSTITUTION FORBIDS SLAVERY **UNLESS** A PERSON WAS CONVICTED IN A COURT OF LAW OF A FELONY CRIME. FACTS! READ THE THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT IF YOU THINK THAT I AM LYING. SLAVERY NEVER STOPPED IN THE U.S. IT REALLY AND QUITE LITERALLY TOOK ON THE FORM OF INCARCERATION. THIS IS THE REASON WHY PRISONERS ARE FORCED TO LIVE UNDER HARSH AND UNSANITARY CONDITIONS INSIDE OF PRISONS, WHY PRISONERS CAN BE UNDER PAID FOR THE WORK THAT THEY DO, WHY CERTAIN HUMAN RIGHTS LIKE THE RIGHT TO PROTEST, FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND OTHER NORMS ARE NOT GIVEN TO PRISONERS.

MANY DEFENDERS OF THE CONSTITUTION WILL SAY YES IT SAYS THAT BUT NO ONE TODAY IS REALLY A SLAVE. BUT IF THIS IS TRUE THEN WHY NOT HAVE A VOTE TO REMOVE THIS STAIN FROM THE CONSTITUTION IF IT IS TRULY MEANINGLESS? THE FACT IS THAT IT IS USED IN MANY COURT DECISIONS AGAINST PRISONERS TODAY. FACTS! LOOK UP CASELOG IF YOU DO NOT BELIEVE ME. THIS IS WHY WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE CARE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE. OR MADE WARDS OF THE STATE. IF AMERICA IS REALLY AGAINST SLAVERY THEN VOTE TO TAKE THE WORD OUT OF THE CONSTITUTION.

JUST AS THE SLAVES OF THE OLD TIMES, HERE IN NEW JERSEY STATE PRISON WEST COMPOUND WE LIVE IN A BUILD THAT HAS BEEN CONDEMNED SINCE 1958. BUT THE DOJ KEEPS REQUESTING EXTENSIONS TO KEEP US HERE BECAUSE THEY SAY THAT THEY HAVE NO WHERE ELSE TO PUT US. THERE IS RAT THE SIZE OF CATS THAT LIVE IN HERE WITH US, MUTANT SIZE COCK ROACHES, BIRDS LIVE IN THIS PRISON, THERE'S RAT, MICE AND ROACH FECES EVERYWHERE AND SOME OF THE WALLS IN 7-WING HAVEN'T BEEN CLEANED IN DECADES.

MY NEXT ISSUE WITH THE PRISONS IN AMERICA IS THE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL ABUSE PRISON OFFICERS ARE ALLOWED TO GIVE OUT AT WILL WITHOUT PUNISHMENT. WE HAVE A (PREA) PROGRAM HERE TO REPORT SEXUAL ABUSE AND THE CRAZY PART THAT THE PUBLIC DOESN'T KNOW IS THAT MOST OF THESE REPORTING ARE ON THE OFFICERS AND YET THEY ARE ALWAYS GIVEN A RUBBER STAMP INVESTIGATION THAT JUST SAYS THAT WE FOUND NO EVIDENCE THAT THIS OR THAT HAPPENED.

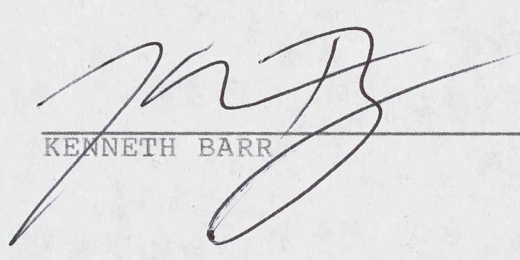
A SGT. HERE SEXUALLY ABUSED A FEMALE INMATE SOME YEARS AGO AND THE FEMALES WERE MOVED OUT BUT THE SGT. IS NOW A LT. AND STILL WORKS HERE. OFFICERS BEAT MENTALLY DISABLED INMATES UP ON THE PSYCHE UNITS ON A REGULAR BASIS. AND THE NURSES AND DOCTORS ARE SO AFRAID OF THE GUARDS THAT THEY DO NOTHING AND DON'T EVEN REPORT IT. AND WORST YET THE INMATE GETS CHARGED LIKE HE HIT THE OFFICER. AND THE COURTLINE OFFICER JUST SIDES

WITH THE OFFICERS NO MATTER WHAT EVEN IF THE INMATE STANDING BEFORE THEM IS ALL BEAT UP.

WITH THAT FAMOUS AND RATHER INFAMOUS 'CODE OF BLUE', IF YOU APPEAL IT TO THE COURTS OR TRY TO FIGHT BACK IN ANY WAY EVEN LEGALLY OTHER OFFICERS WILL TRASH YOUR CELL UNDER THE GUISE OF A CELL SEARCH AND/OR BEAT YOU UP AND CHARGE YOU FOR IT TO MAKE IT SEEM AS THOUGH YOU ARE THE PROBLEM.

IN MY CONCLUSION THERE ARE MANY MORE THING THAT I WISH I COULD TELL YOUR READERS ABOUT THE CONDITIONS WITHIN THE PRISON SYSTEM. LIKE COLLEGE EDUCATION, BUSINESS OWNERSHIP AND OTHER TOPICS. HOWEVER I HAVE USED MY ALLOTTED SPACE AND PAGES. I ONLY HOPE THAT I HAVE GAVE YOUR READERS A GOOD GLIMPSE INTO THE AFFAIRS IN THE PRISONS HERE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. AND MAYBE IF GOD SO WILLS, THIS INFORMATION WILL BE OF SOME BENEFIT TO SOMEONE TRYING TO REFORM THIS SYSTEM. PLEASE ALLOW ME TO THANK YOU NOW FOR YOUR TIME AND HELP IN THESE MATTERS.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED



KENNETH BARR