

The world always seemed so small to me. As if the mountain's terrain we'd pass by on the familiar 91 freeway was all the entire world was made of.

Day dreaming starring out the window. Visionless. Mind secreting images of nothing as we drove by. My mother always drove so close to the dividers; I could envision she some how getting too close and we crashing and flipping over the 100 ft. drop and instantly we all dying, but for the life of me, starring out that window I had never envisioned, pictured, visualized, or thought of anything good; why not?

What happened to the naïvete my innocence should have depended on, should have conjured up ideas of climbing those huge mountains with a back pack, rock climbing tools; what about a motorcycle to take me from A to Z in seconds across their peaks?

SHATTERED!

To not trust people, places or things as a child is truly devastating, and a clear sign of humanities vite disregard for one another.

Why did I de-value my self-image, or view myself as unworthy before I could even read or write?

I was born August 08, 1978. My mother... beautiful woman the color of the filling inside of a lemon pie. She had been my favorite person on the planet until she wasn't my favorite anymore. Vying for her attention was too much for my unstable emotions.

Absentee father who'd promise me the world via telephone. I hated him. I hated me more for believing him each time - each time, sitting and waiting. When he didn't show up it felt like the world was ending, but hey, "I have mamma," until I just didn't have mamma.

My mother loved her three (3) children (at the time). Dysfunction was the normal function in our home. One older sister, one younger brother, different fathers; and me.

Mom bring Don home when I was very young. My young mind wanted to convince itself that he was my biological father. Don't ask me how, but it did, and I loved him, his masculinity and his simply being there - "look, I have a dad too-" Don moved us to something beautiful. He moved us from the grimy grit of Compton to a gated community called Scottsdale in Carson California. He had 23 inch arms, he smothered my brother and I with affection and attention. He called me son, and he loved me. His big brother, Uncle K. was bigger than him and loved us the same. I had already been exposed to the prison elements, and its "machosisms". "50 push ups a night would get your chest big enough to stand a cup up on it."

My mother's brothers also had been to prison more than once, and our home was often times their refuge.

My brother and I NEVER stood a chance. We began to eat "prison spreads" at seven (7) and eight (8) years old; it was cast effective, and my uncles could mix crackers, oysters

and Top Ramen like nobody's business.

Then, one day Don was gone. I did not understand. Shortly thereafter he was sentenced to Death Row. Of course I didn't understand that then, but time would educate me.

My mother's alcoholism and drug addiction increased. She smoked PCP (phencyclidine). She became increasingly distant, and this would begin the journey to so much.

At this point I'm nine (9) years old and have attended three (3) different schools and four (4) different cities/neighborhoods. Mother moves us to another part of Carson; by gated community; cheaper place, new school -

I'm now ten (10) years old on my (4th) school. Fitting in is not the proper descriptive, it had become more than that. With an inability to properly manage my emotions/feelings that tended to dictate my actions, my behavior with each new move, school or city was devastating. I was feeling lost, detached from reality, detached from my siblings, no existing relationship with my mother, and she keeps bringing a new man into our lives who promises he's there to stay - then he leaves. The world doesn't make sense.

Mom says, "pack your things, we're moving." "But mom, you promised..."

"Shut up and pack your stuff!"

"I hate her," my young emotions bring forth to my mind, so I think.

I'm ten (10) still and we move to Lawndale, California, I'm in the 5th grade

and despite my not wanting to move again, this new city is beautiful. "I never want to leave here!"

Government assistance affords us something to look forward to twice a month. I swear on the 3rd to the 1st of the next month everybody is all smiles and happy; on the 2nd the laughter still exists but is winding down and I begin to brace for the depressed, angry and non-communicative environment (our home without the county check). On the 3rd day of the month, and after — "get out my face!" The days go by, now it's the 14th, second county check of the month — the cycle repeats itself — 15th, 16th I'm okay — 17th, 18th I'll be punished, whipped or completely ignored for some reason or another. Addiction is real.

Middle of (5th) grade, I'm skipped to 6th grade. Suddenly the work is harder. What's wrong with me? Why can't I do as good as I did in those other classes?

"Mom, I can't... I don't understand."

"Yes you do, your being lazy."

I can't stand her.....

"Pack your stuff, we're moving."

Good! That was too much effort/work. Still in 6th grade, now we move to Riverside, California. I have no idea what to expect. It seemed thousands of miles away. The mountains seemed so sad as we drove past them — Matter of perspective.

Apartments! What? We had never lived in an apartment. And worse, who's he? Another man who will probably leave any way, And where the hell is my own dad? I met him that one time my mother dropped me off at his mother's house. They were weird. Or maybe it was me because that was the first time I had met my grandmother, and my dad left me there with his mother, and I never saw him again. Yeah, it had to be my weird-self - no one at school, at home likes being around me, that's why nobody picks me to play ball or nothing.

"Whatever," I didn't want to play anyway.

Another elementary, still in 6th grade. I try to act "hard" like my uncles and like Don and ended up getting jumped by two Mexican boys. Months later, mom moved us again. Rubidoux, California, 7th grade, junior high school - the weirdo who's cheap clothes his mother buys - "Why is he always just staring?" - "What's wrong with your brother?" "I don't know, he's weird," my sister responded.

Same school, 8th grade I began stealing more to get what I wanted. I'm 13 years old or so, came home from riding my bike alone on the mountain. My mother and sister were crying. I dropped my bike and began to cry too, "What's wrong?" I asked.

"It's your dad - he's dead." my mother said grabbing to embrace me.

"Oh..." my utter response under my breath.

"Somebody shot and killed him," my sister said through her sobs and snot.

The grief process I had no idea existed. I was hurt and didn't know why. I barely talked to him on the phone — and, and, and... it's mom's fault for moving us so far away where he couldn't reach me, I know he wanted to — I hate her!

9th grade: "pack your s**t we're moving" La Sierra, California. I'm being disruptive as my anger and unmanaged emotions are spiraling... then, then... then!!! — I'm about to turn 14 years old and my freshman year of high school should be promising.

"Momma, why are you crying?" I asked as the tears jumped out in their familiar way —

"Don is dead," she said. She was crushed. This news either of us could deal with. "Shit! I hate this world!!!" My hero! No!!! It's only been a month ago that my biological father was murdered — my mind felt as if it lost the ability to think.

He had committed suicide; hung himself to cope with his problems. He too lied, he was never coming to get me either — "F... all these dumb, lying a... people; I'm in this world alone!"

My heart began to speak for me. I mean, I began to respond to people, places and things based on how I felt. Hateful, deprived; crushed; angry... sad, violent, And worse, there's not one single person I can talk to about everything going on inside me — and I don't want to tell them

anyway, they'll only ridicule me for being me.

"Pack your sxxx we're moving." Still in 9th grade. Now almost 15 years old - Perris California. For the first time in all the moving I realized I hadn't really unpacked as I folded, gathered the little I had. "I hate this f...ing world..." I utter to myself as I do the normal of goodbyes to friends and the girl I liked with the same promise to visit - it never happened.

"BMX bikes, street hockey, motorcycles - I love - Oh my gosh this is heaven!"

"Mom, can you buy me..."

"Hell no. You hanging with them white people doing that white people shit... and I know yo' ass smoking weed too."

"No mom. I told you I've never done a drug in my life. Mom come see me race at Perris Lake, please!"

She got higher and higher and higher as he sold drugs and they used, and Section 8 afforded us the outside appearance as the surrounding suburb, but inside the home deeply, deeply disturbed.

Perris High School, 15 years old and girls like my weirdness, but the girl I want likes those guys - "what's wrong with me?!"

"Hey, can I kick it?" I ask. The introduction to personal gang banging.

I smoked my first joint at 16 years old; my first drink of alcohol a week later, my first sexual encounter still 16 years old - my first arrest at 16 years old.

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"Pack your motherf*ckin' shit, we're moving!" she said. I was oblivious to her and G. had broken up. I hadn't even noticed he wasn't here anymore; or was it me not there? What about the two little boys they've created together now ages 2 and 3 years old? No way is he leaving.

"Pack your shit boy!"

"No."

"Fine, keep your dumb ass out here." they had been together for six (6) years and were done. Mom decides to move back to Compton and I refused to go. Instead, I decided to live in a local crack house in the hills in a city called Goodhope, with my sister's boyfriend. No rules, smoke, drink, commit crime to support me and my new habit — "I love this!!!"

Burglary — arrested. Mom shows up at the crack house to get me. Back to Compton I go. I'm 16 years old June 1995. I'm in the 11th grade and I don't attend much school at this point anyway — "F... her, F... them and F... them all!"

Easy to meet people and meet their needs to meet my needs — approval/acceptance. Learned that with the jocks you have to be good at sports, with the criminals — good at crime — with the tuff guys tuff, but tougher than everybody — regular tough wasn't sufficient to keep their acceptance and approval — you had to "maintain" it by going beyond normal.

Fight. Steal. Lie. Cheat. Laugh and "whatever"
other requirements there may be to keep the
people's vote.

July 1995 one month after moving
back to Compton after being away for so, so
long... I'm "physically jumped in to the gang."

Carelessness, Recklessness, Anger, Revenge seeking,
Submerging desire to prove "I'm down" leads to
an avenue to do what I've wanted to do anyway,
"somehow surpass my so called hardcore uncles,
my beautiful hero who hung himself on Death Row

April 1992, my dad who turned out to be a
crack addict and got shot in his back
twice and died - and FINALLY to have
CONTROL over momma and my own life -
"F... the rules and anybody against this
beautiful gang that loves me, doesn't laugh at
me and accepts me and has proven to
"have my back" and I'll do the EXACT
same for them.

Nobody ever listened to me,
heard me, cared for me - but these guys
love me - my mind told my heart that I'm
responding from.

17 years old. An active gang
member of one of Compton's most notorious
gangs and "I was all in!"

Juvenile hall for the first time
a few months after I joined.

Still 17 years old and my "mentor"
in the gang is murdered. Still 17 years old and I'm
shot by rival members of my gang.

Still 17 years old and two weeks after being shot I'm shot at by the same rival gang - running from the flurry of bullets that made the most soul wrenching sound as they passed by my right ear I break the left arm and lay there praying whatever this new pain is doesn't correlate to death.

The anger has a new face, the rage that the anger has birthed, the hate and humiliation and "this avenue" to act out what's been boiling inside me -

Still 17 years old, a gang member back in Compton 10 different schools and 10 different cities/neighborhoods from the ages of 5 to 17 years old arrested, tried as an adult after being a gang member for approximately 10 months. By the age of 18 sentenced to Double Life plus 44 years.

40 years old now, begging 41 years of age to accept me well in a few months. The most stability I've ever had was in prison.

Uncles, dad, Don, you all lied -
IT'S NOT FUN HERE!

When I made it to prison, it felt safe. I was used to entering a new "society" and acclimating myself. I wasn't consciously afraid. This is what it was supposed to be about. When I got to prison, just like all those cities, schools and neighborhoods, "What do I need to do to fit in and SURVIVE?" skateboarders, bikers, video games, dance crews,

taggers to prisoner who can not be at the bottom of the food chain. Hustle drugs, because that's how you keep "friends"; violence because not only do you now "believe" in the cause, but it's expected of you. "Position yourself to control, you're smarter than others for some reason, George."

Didn't expect to become an alcoholic extremist with an overwhelming tenacity to lie and manipulate.

"What if I took Don's route? He didn't have to do all that time on Death Row in San Quentin — NOOOO! Don't dare think that, George, you'll be okay."

Years later, At 34 years old I almost die after trying to smuggle drugs into the prison. Paralyzed on the right side of my body. My little brother is serving 235 years to life with me (no surprise) and in this environment we can't get along and we're here together with no uncles, no mom, none of our other siblings and I almost kill myself trying not to get caught. The sickness is real!

My little brother who's my cellie after the situation, nurses me back to health after months with an inability to move the very fingers I write with tonight.

At 34 years old, I gave myself the ultimate birthday gift — I was done! August 08th, 2012 on my birthday I left the gang!

By God's grace and His mercy He didn't allow me to die that way. Here I am in 2019, 7 years later, a beautiful Christian man, a certified drug and alcohol counselor (omcp) serving humanity the

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best I can. Now, 40 years old, married and
loving my amazing wife and my beautiful
life — one more MOVE left

— OUT OF PRISON —
I've outgrown this place.

stability. love. hope. guidance. instruction.
attentive. listen. prayer. nurture. the child
needs you.

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—CMC WEST—
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SENDING TO A.P.W.A 08/05/19
THANKS FOR LISTENING!
NOT PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED
THOUGH I'VE SENT IT TO
PEOPLE IN MY LIFE THAT I
WANTED TO KNOW MORE
ABOUT MY UPBRINGING.

(S.B. 260)
23 yrs incarcerated