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TRUTH BEHIND THE STEEL

A product of my environment...a statement many individuals who was afforded the opportunity to achieve and experience values of society's neglect. 21 years of finding self, taught me the essence to those values in society, that those negligent people misunderstood.

America as a whole according to sociology data explains that it is founded on empathy and stewardship. This must be coming from the exact blindfold that the Lady of Justice wears peeking at the disfunction it's system rather not acknowledge, but quick to label as equal. There is no duality to this balance because the affluent, politicians, white collar, etc individuals sit stuck at the top not able to visualize the inner destruction of America's Penal codes and Penal system grounded by its own turf that lies plastered at the bottom.

I was 18 years old and facing two counts of attempted murder in a state that was unfamiliar to me with no help and ignorant to the law. Inside a holding tank surrounded by concrete, smells of urine, feces, and alcohol, the slamming doors resembling the sounds of an underground dungeon engulfs your spirit where all defense mechanisms and survival tactics is at an all time high. This fact leaves us to think, "who can you trust", especially growing up in a environment where trust finds you dead, paralyzed, or incarcerated like me. Bones chattering, teeth clacking, from the ice cold barrier within this concrete dungeon encloses me symbolically representing my first day inside the morgue.

Texas the "Lone Star State", a slogan not comparable to the meaning it portrays. Instead its the "ALONE" star state that sits separate from the flag of America where justice is set through the eye of the dice. I rolled crapping out upon each level and chamber to this underground dungeon until I reached the top. The saying its "lonely at the top", is a paradox, but this evident truth sat at the top floors as I arrived dragging my mattress into the tank that housed 8 bunk beds, two tables, one T.V., one phone, one toilet, one shower, and one small window that separated me from society in which "I" the product had been bought and ready to be utilized within the depth of modern day slavery.

Everyone was sleep with the lights on bright as I threw my mattress onto the top bunk that sat by the television. By the extreme loudness of the television I suspected that these guys had

to be tired or literally dead to the world, but it was a typical day in this new environment. However there was this one individual who stood in front of the T.V. casually looking here and there but his glance keep catching my presense.

Thats when my defense mechanism kicked in, where I confronted him. "What the F@#\$ you looking at." All he said was, "Damn we had all prayed you didn't show up on our tank." And what was so confusing, my case was being aired right then and there on the morning news. Thats a good reason why he would be staring at me the way he was, placing the face to the story he seen all week where they labeled me a monster, a 18 year old kid a monster. The fact to this matter was how could that be when I've never been in any trouble with the law, juvenile, arrest, or possessed a ticket. My first notation was, "where in the hell is this information coming from", thats planting these seeds to harvest in societies minds that my character is that of a monster, until throughout my journey I realized, its only the receipt to give to the people whom they purchased me from. Its their tax dollars spent, so they had to show them my worth. But their notions were all lies, I was only a child that was misguided and a product of my environment labeled a monster.

At that time in 1998 they sold cigarettes...a thing I hated in the streets, but at the time my nerves was so bad I accepted the offer from the same guy I had confronted taking a hard long drag as if my lungs would colapse. You couldn't imagine either about how my stomach felt at first where in that first month each meal made my insides more void instead of filling it, no nutrients or nothing, bland mush. The food was generic and horrible leaving me no choice but to curve my appetite with a cigarette I learned to love and crave for, as it caused me to lose weight declining by the days.

Then one day I heard the sliding and slamming of the steel doors and seen a tall white man with papers in hand coming to check on his deposit into the bank. He served me two indictments which technically was my bill owing society for not having what they founded this country on, empathy and stewardship. I was poor from a impoverished environment and couldn't pay the debt that was charged under two separate instruments of indictments for attempted murder. The sanity I had left was gone because it all seemed as a bad dream. I didn't remember anything that happened

all I knew that I was now sitting in Texas safety deposit box collecting interest for my debt. Later they gave me a attorney after they reindicted me again under five paragraphs of attempted capital murder, two attempted murders, and two aggravated assaults that now carry 5 to 99 to life where my first charge carried 2 to 20 years. This attorney came that one time in the beginning and after I couldn't tell him any details due to me blacking out or what the case may have been I never seen that attorney again for a whole year until days before my trial.

As I awaited throughout these critical days I witnessed fights, crys, laughs, suicides that didn't surprise me, but what surprised me that when they charged me with my reindictment upping the ante raising the value in their stock I had no way to challenge their abandonment of the indictment because I had no attorney. Well I guess Lady justice had both folds over her eyes in a great state like Texas where justice is equally held is a figment of ones imagination. But as time passed inside this steel safety deposit box I heard from no one except the banging of dominoes, card games, chess, fighting, you know the typical things that keeps us stagnant in jail leaving us death, dumb, and blind to the machine of a system they have roaring like a Dodge Demon.

Anyway allow me to flash foward and then later revisit this psychological aspect. I will save time and opportunity, but with respect I had to involve you with the vision that houses the root to the problem. And to be honest, prison is a life style imposed on those who self rehabilitate who can now recognize their problem and try to face its reality to hopefully correct it. But prison here especially in Texas is far from reform or rehabilitation, thats not attempting to correct any problem but only to compound the problem. Now if you would join me inside this quest defined from the belly of the beast that spits out lies and deceit. Caution...your empathy and stewardship that lies dormant within may be awakened from truth.

It was August 1999, stalled at the back gate of what was considered at that time the "Infamous John B. Connally Unit". It was like sitting in a waiting room receiving instructions from the devil's advocates captivated in a state of hell as the scorching sun beat down the buses roof top and walls. After three check points, the final stop lead to me and several other inmates that were shackled hand and hand step from the bus through a sliding electrical fence, in which through the other side was the total turning point of my life and sanity. This is where reform

rehabilitation, change, politics, psychological survival, etc. doesn't exist unless the individual mind is strong enough to break the chains of this bondage and stand with dignity against the systematic epidemic to mass incarceration.

This very day upon arrival the unit was just coming off of a lockdown that derived from two Mexican families where a couple of casualties had transpired. Before I even arrived they spoke of this being a unit that's rocking and rolling (imminent danger). However I was ready for whatever, but I later come to realize the true enemy was the Texas system as a whole. Traffic of inmates swarmed the area as I seen this stocky black guy who looked as if he had some importance, and I ask him, "Say what's up with it over here?" He replied with no hesitation, "we rocking and rolling over here!" That notion only verified what I heard through the chatter on that long bus ride that day.

Later that day I was housed and ran into a guy I was in the County jail with who received a 50 year sentence for murder. Seeing him was like a sense of relief just to be in the presence of someone you knew. I stepped inside a portal called a Salley Port then crossed into what was called the deep space that surrounds the picket area, where the officers of correction sat up high behind glass also surrounded by three sections of 24 cells housing two inmates each that was too surrounded by glass. As I stepped through the section door I felt the stares piercing my back, but I walked with confidence head up high and chest out because being from the streets you had to show no fear. As my assigned cell door opened I went inside and stuffed my belongings I had inside a small confined space they called a locker immediately locking it to return to the dayroom area and prepare myself to answer all calls...meaning the confrontations of prison. I had sat atop a bench at that time sat along the glass wall shirt off, boots laced tight with straight face waiting for my first approach. If I was faced with danger there's no way the correctional officer could save me because although their job consist of them remaining on their duty post that was never the case. But I wasn't worried about no guard saving me I was too busy being conscious of my surroundings as inmates ran around rampant. Then there it was my first call. But strangely he only approached me just to say, "What up black...where you from?" By being on defense I said "Arkansas" with a stabbing alarm that said to him I was or either could be aggressive at any moment, so stand guard.

However the reaction only was a result of him explaining to me that he also had family there. In my mind I started to feel that all that chatter I heard was just all talk and friendlier than I expected, but I was just fortunate. But being fortunate doesn't mean that you're exempt from the problems that comes in all forms and walks of life. Within these walls test comes in all shape and sizes, and if you fail it can determine the comfort you'll have...some worse than others. I remember my first mistake and that was done due to my own vices and desire to drown my sanity I had left running away from reality with alcohol, just as I had done when I was in free society and a product of my environment. I'd never guessed that you could make alcohol that will alter your self judgement, mind and thinking with just a mixture of fruit, water, sugar and many other combinations that would fool the average person if he didn't know any better. But they had this day a squad of shakedown officers who jobs were field officers, the individuals who sat atop of horses in the scorching sun of field with their guns at waist overseeing the inmates as they use aggies chopping gashes into the earth for free in no return of payment...(true slavery). But anyway they had no duties in the fields that day so they were assigned to shakedown the section I was housed. At that point I was called by a inmate I barely met to come to the second row in an emergence. I bailed up their like a ignorant fool and was ask to take a bag of alcohol down to the dayroom with in return a opportunity to drink. I couldn't pass that up, but in the process of my boldness I had got caught and the result was I was sent to medium custody. This is when i found out why the unit was called or referred to "the infamous John B. Connally" (rocking and rolling). May I mind you that I arrived in August and got rolled in October...so my journey started quite fast.

As October flew by I witnessed many incidents that reminded me of that bus ride chatter. However being close toward Mexico in southern Texas I experienced first hand how blatant racism was as I witnessed the first riot to my recollection. It was between two mexican families stabbing one another like angry bandits and blood was everywhere until officers arrived with gas canisters and hog tying all of us belly down to the ground along the dayroom walls. Also this event showed me how protected we were when it came down to these types of situations, because once the dayroom was contained we were all escorted to a small room for questioning of what we witnessed one by one in plastic hand ties. Thats when I knew it was serious and I had to be aware of my surroundings because all the blacks hand ties were tight to the wrist while the mexicans hands

were tied loosely because the officers had a inclination that it could've been a racial situation and gave the mexicans the upper hand, but to the truth at hand they only made the situation more worse for them because their own race was the threats at this time. I just gave thanks to God that it wasn't a racial matter because for the blacks it would've been a unbalanced masacre. Many incidents was memorable, especially the one I'd never forget of a caucasian male that was killed on Christmas day 1999. Goes to show how protected we were as this event happened at the front desk of the building. But lets sat that aside for a moment and explore another issue to ponder.

This institution in Texas is broadly assembled to balance out in favor of the officers who works here seeing over thousands of inmates. But the true imbalance is the rehabilitation that we suppose to be receiving that is equivalent to Big Foot or the Lochness Monster thats only myths. This system is like no other in the world, not just the United States but the world. Here is where we will shine some light into this darkness that devours the tax payers dollars in which they feel that justice is being served for their hard earned money.

That reminds me of my sentencing phse of my trial, the judge looked me in my eyes and said "Mr.Northern...By the time you come up for parole you'll be rehabilitated and fit for society." Well for the sake of clarity I could not seem to grasp that notion, especially once I had first hand experience to this myth. Having a life sentence or anything over 50 years was like sailing in a vessel with no water and a life jacket. The vessel represent (the human body) with the absence of water, as the water is (no opportunity) and the life jacket is the (prominent minds) eager to change and do something diffrent to further a sense of progression. But this system we speak of do not equal up to that notation of what they call REHABILITATION! I received my highschool diploma in 1997, but since the years are passing bye and time evolve along with change I had ask to take a G.E.D. class just to sharpen up on my skills because any other education is not provided for me due to my time. And you guessed it I was denied that request. So tell me then how can a inmate rehabilitate himself if we're not afforded the opportunity? I didn't receive a solid credential here that counts for anything until 2017 upon completion of T.V.C.C college course of Computer Aided Drafting (CAD) a course that wasn't provided for my rehabilitation but because I was fortunate that I had someone cared enough to pay for my furtherence in my education. Before this college experience I took it upon myself to self rehabilitate.

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this college experience I had took it upon myself to self rehabilitate. If an individual don't evolve himself within these walls he will be a product of destruction and 99% repeat his past characteristics. But hey Texas Penal System doesn't care whether you do or not because you are their deposits and we keep their corporation thriving.

You have an estimate of over half of America who has a family member incarcerated. But lets use logic and conclude with the notion that with the exception of their own people, those outside of this we consider them criminals and their own family member a individual who made a mistake. We never have the empathy and see things in its totality and come together as a whole and try to change the cycle. But if we view this in totality underneath the microscope we'll realize we are all victims to the machine. Majority of the free family outside the walls experience daily the impoverished environments that breeds digust, struggle, disease, illiteracy, and so on to be brief which are the essentials to a dysfunctional household which in result leads to single parent homes and inside these homes the male figure are incarcerated causing the following generation to be raised alone by the wman. Although the woman is our strength and back bone in truth it still weakens the community because the duality and balance of a femenine nature and a masculine nature becomes offset leaving the child to adventure and fall victim to the cesspool of a dog eat dog world. And without the opportunity to live in a two parent home we veer off and become the product of our environment, hoping for acceptance and searching for identity of what a man suppose to be but find the misconception of this matter to only find out the cycle of the revolving door inside these prison systems as the currents wash potential successful men down the drain.

Experiencing the great injustice here in Texas after I've rehabilitated myself seeing the broader picture I realize why I've become a bolt and screw that keeps this machine running. And if society keeps being misguided we'll only continue to be a unreformed criminal in the depths of their conscience. The truth will prevail so stay tuned to my next reflection of racism, inhumane living conditions, violence, mistreatment of inmates, etc. that will expose the real world of what we go through daily. In much regards...

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