

LIFE WITHOUT

Imagine a life without hope. Where you're sent to a place of Correction and Rehabilitation, only to be told you are beyond redemption and ineligible for the forms of self-betterment and responsibility necessary to mend the broken person you are. Locked away with your demons as you slowly die of age and regret. This is what most of us experience when faced with a sentence such as this.

For myself I was awash with a myriad of emotion. From confusion about the Felony Murder Rule, how anyone can be charged for murder without taking a life, to the heartache associated with the death of a dear friend. The stark reality that life as I knew it was over hit me like a ton of bricks. And the self-loathing of putting myself in such a situation was almost too much to bear. The pain and disgust I felt in my heart was only amplified in the eyes of the victim's family. Leaving me with the realization that I must change everything about my misguided life. I had to find a way to honor my friends name and ensure that no other life could be ruined in such a senseless way.

Yet upon my arrival to the Department of "Corrections and Rehabilitation" I was informed that my LWOP sentence made me ineligible for any self-help programs, as the priority goes to those with a chance of parole. And furthermore, I would be placed at the bottom of the waiting list for any type of work assignment. Surrounded by negativity, I was left to my own devices. Punished eternally for a moment of indecision without any hope of redemption. Watching friends and loved ones slowly fade away to death or the pursuit of their own lives. Feeling like the Ghost of a person who once was. Stuck in the purgatory of stagnation. Longing for a way to understand my misguided thinking, and peel back the layers of emotional turmoil I've spent a lifetime running from.

The lack of hope can be devastating and the scars of a wasted youth debilitating. It's no wonder so many of us get lost in the abyss of drugs and addiction. Hiding from our feelings in the pursuit of empty ones. Some rebel and lash out. While others seek what creature comforts we may obtain here in order to ease the harshness of the cage we exist in. Some of us check every box on the list and then some in a meager attempt to come to terms with the gravity of our fate.

No matter what path we take to wrap our head around the enormity of our actions consequences, one thing is for certain. We all come to the realization that it is absolutely essential we transcend the men who would commit these crimes and discover our purpose. We gain a hunger for self-betterment, reaching out for self-help via books and correspondence. We challenge the policies and seek to be included in groups and classes. Some of us seek to fill the void by developing support groups aimed at the LWOP EXPERIENCE so that those who come after us know there is hope in the darkness, no human being is beyond redemption, and that freedom IS obtainable; whether it be in the physical sense or the mental and spiritual.

We are confident that society will see the injustice of condemning a man to life without the possibility of redemption. And in the meantime we work... Work, to transform ourselves into the men we were intended to be. By educating ourselves and seeking to repair the emotional deficit that led us to commit a criminal act in the first place. Work, on changing the conversation about what Justice really means. Hoping our voices are heard that we might show the world that change is possible. And that a man is NOT defined by the mistakes he makes, but by how He learns and grows from them.