See, for some of us we still try to not let those walls that confine us define us. We are treated deplorably and have no way to change it. We cannot fight back against the system the way the system can fight against us. Right now as I write this I have been locked in a cell in SHU for 24 hours a day for almost 2 weeks. I have no write up, have committed no infraction of any kind. I haven't been allowed to use the phone or leave outside my cell for rec all because I was sent to a place where "active" gang members are not allowed. I did not ask for a transfer here. I didn't even know I was being transferred. I sat in quarantine at different facilities on the way here for almost 3 months. The cell I sit in has a shower but no way to hang the shower curtain up. It makes it hard to take a shower while female staff are working and they work this unit all day. I don't want to get a write up if they happen to see they seen me exposed to them, so I've been done and there is no way to beat the "shot." It is difficult to clean my cell because they provide little chemicals but no razors or things of that nature to wipe things down so I am forced to have to use
my clothes to clean my cell. I've seen roaches the size of my thumb roaches walking around. They have a button on the wall that is supposed to be for medical emergencies. I guess the buttons don't work because 3 days ago I was having chest pains during an anxiety attack and I pressed the button multiple times and nobody came. I take medication for severe depression and anxiety. Medications. I'm supposed to take twice a day. I haven't been given my medication once since I've been back here. Please forgive me, this pencil is made of rubber and they won't sharpen it for me so I literally have to use it to rip off pieces of wood to get to the lead which is also rubber so my handwriting might be a little sloppy. I have asked them about sharpening it but they told me they can't give me a sharpened pencil and that the only way to sharpen it is to break a razor and do it, funny that this came from a Correctional staff member to a severely depressed individual to break a razor. Huh. Look I know that I committed a crime and deserve some time. Check though I am still a human being. Don't lock me up and throw away the key.
which feels like what has been done. Give me a better way of doing things. Incarcerated individuals once they are processed, should be screened for the needs they have and then placed in a school that is mandatory that teaches employable skills, a trade and a community college level education. This is supposed to be the Department of Corrections but they correct nothing. We learn from the people around us and the people around us are criminals. I want to give my community something better than what I have but these institutions don't want that. My example is this. I was at Atwater penitentiary working on the HVAC crew. I wanted to do the apprenticeship. I met all the requirements and when I applied they said they were denying me because I didn't have enough time. This was in 2005 I don't get out until 2024. Education, Employment and health are the 3 things that should be the main focus of them when they handle us. Us ex felons always get but behind the times, less skilled without a proper health plan and they wonder why we return to
crime, I don't ever want to come back to a jail cell. It killed every good relationship I have ever had. I am always looking for mentors. I am always looking for insight on how to not ever come back here. I've been in and out of some form of institution, youth center or facility since I was 13 years old. I just turned 32 this June 15th. In and out for 25 years and I hate it. I still dream of having kids, of finishing college and putting this all behind me. I know I have to some how find a way to find the right individual or individuals who see the potential in me. I know it is there. That's why I write things like this or poetry to keep sane and to just reach out to like minded people to correspond with. I don't want to be a gang member any more it has caused too much pain and suffering on both ends. I don't want to be known as a felon or even an ex-felon. I just want to be known as me Isaiah HERMAINE Belcher. To be continued.

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