

**From the Desk of JEFFERY A. SHOCKLEY-ES4796**

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*"As I walked toward my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave  
my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison."*

*Nelson Mandela*

## What Does It Mean to Survive?

It is 0438 hrs. and as I lay here in this steel-framed bunk bed; the quietest hour of prison that is allowing for introspection, I pose the question...

What does it mean to survive?

It is to rise above the misunderstanding of others who imply, infer or suggest you are not as good as you may think you are.

That those who choose to remain blinded by their own inadequacy while you see through the transparency some try to hide behind as they say...

That because of what you have done decades ago, which will haunt you until the day you die, literally, you know that does not define the man or woman you are in a world bigger than the miniscule confines of the mind that thinks such things.

To survive is to move through the impossibility others say cannot be done and already from the beginning you have won by the character, maturity and determination of who you have become by what you have done for the glory of [your] God and yourself in spite of the past acts that got us to where we are.

That the physical walls that surround will never keep us bound down for our mind flies freely every second of everyday on Angels wings.

To survive is to take action differently...

By rising above the expectations of the prison environment we stand out to show society that bears upon us in their limited view from mass media that projects biased concepts, we are not who we once were.

For we rise above the yesterday, acknowledge what it was done and give insight so that others can be deterred from being where we are or go through what has already been a devastating experience for so many.

To survive means that by having the scars upon ourselves and inflicted upon so many, in time we can look upon this life and be grateful for the ability to stand and breathe.

We strive to be free where freedom does not exist; remain strong in our weaknesses and love in the hate.

We are survivors: