

FROM ELEMENTARY TO THE PENITENTIARY

By FERMAINE HICKS B.K.A. "THE VERSE"

... but the gun jammed up. Did I pray to God while all this was taking place? Hell yeah I did? God was with me that night. SO was he with my brother and friend because both of them made it through.

What was I going to do? I know that with all the chaos happening on the streets I had to get away before I became a "physical victim" to it all. Leaving the state was my only chance. I thought by "running away" all my problems would be over. SO I went to live with my mom in Florida. Tampa Bay, fl. is a good city. Me and my brother James came to Texas in 1983. My father had gotten out of prison up in Michigan and came and got his two boys. Before my father went to prison we were living in Avon Park, fl. After he left, the state of Florida placed all of my mother's children in foster care. This was in 1984. Life in foster home it seemed to me was all about money, and not the actual loving and caring for kids as it seems. Out of the four foster homes I lived in, I can only remember being loved and cared for by one while living there. I was with a white couple who lived on a ~~large~~ farm out in the Hill side of Florida. Their names were Mary and Jack. and to my knowledge, as I remember, they had kids themselves. They were so sweet to me and my brother (who loved them seriously) we actually cried when we had to leave and go to another foster home. All the other foster homes we lived in seem to be mean old women who only let us stay in their home because the state was paying them to do so. Our very last foster parents beat me and my brother James so bad we could not sit down on anything for about two weeks without being in pain. Linda was

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HER NAME. The old witch held us down while her husband beat us with sticks. This is what made me lose respect for older people who forced me to do things. OR EVEN try to tell me something beneficial. So later on in life I guess the reason why I responded poorly by running away or fighting my father back when he tried to discipline me, was based on how I was treated in the foster homes. Don't get me wrong, I totally believe that foster care is worth it in terms of taking a child out of a situation or circumstance that's damaging and harmful physically and mentally to the child. I am a living example that circumstance of living determines, in most cases, the outcome of a child's future. Choices are based on options. How many options do a child have when his father is on drugs or in prison. Whose mother is basically in the same boat. When all your friends are drug dealers or gang members. When the only time you get a good meal is at school or church. When the streets feel more "homely" than actually being at home. Can you dig what I'm saying? I acknowledge that this is life but is it fair? You may say, "I came from the ghetto and I made it," but how many of your friends made it? How many times have you reached back to them or to your community? How many times have you sent books to prisoners or a letter to encourage them to do better. It is all apart of the struggle in the web of "cause and effect," point being, when you can take a child out of this situation of circumstances of living it's a great thing. What makes it even greater is when you can display your love for them and willing to be there. Teach them about "life" and what they face now and in the future. The good things about foster care. In 2008 there were a total of 2,458 youths housed in residential facilities nation wide. Out of all these juveniles how many do you believe by being housed there they were

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able to work through their problem. 60%, in my opinion, of youths never really had the opportunity to even focus on their problem because of the "problems" they were having "inside the facilities" with other problematic youths around them. For example, when I was in foster homes I was physically and mentally mistreated that psychologically played a roll in my behavior later on in my life. All the way up until I faced my fears and had the power to change my attitude that I actually became someone who's able to maintain in society if I'm ever given the chance. Once the youth goes to prison 95% of them will for-ever be ~~and~~ either uneducated or miseducated and never really know what it's like to function in a normal society. Take a child like myself who could not read or write (spell) until he or she went to administrative seg. (23 hour lock-up for 18 months to "eight years" like I did in seg) and then teaches his or her-self how to read and write. Given a life sentence, having to spend up to 40 years flat in prison, before coming up for parole. Functioning under constant threat of your life or land property with very little help from ~~the~~ staff. When the individual do get out what type of life can ~~be~~ he have? This person has been mentally "fucked-up" as a child into his or her adulthood. This is a reality for most youth who the justice system considers to be adults based on their violent crime. Is there anything else society can do beside forming a career criminal? My point is, many youths never really get the opportunity to work on themselves until their adulthood. In cases like mine, sometimes its too late then. The damage is done.

I along with my brother raved away many times. Mostly because my father was on drugs and there were little food in the house.

Most of the time when we were not living in the projects the lights and gas were cut off due to the bills not being paid. So, we stayed in the streets... (CONTINUE NEXT WEEK 8)

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