



“Children of The Incarcerated”

(By A Incarcerated Parent)



Lately, you can turn on your television set and all you hear is an “Amber Alert!” or “Breaking News!” A child has been missing for an hour or so. Then before you know it, a week or two passes and the body is found mutilated, sexually abused, and beyond recognition. How sad it is for the families to suffer through a crime of this sort!

Now, from a prisoner’s perspective, check out what lead me to the life of crime and how my bad choices and wrong decisions played a major role in my children’s lives. I was raised in watching one of my favorite uncles going in & out of prison, I would admire how the fella’s would show him all this respect in the visiting room, and then how he would be dressed real sharp (pants pressed real nice, shirt military pressed, shoes really shined that you can damn near see your face in them).

This is when I thought to myself, I want to be like my uncle. I want he has. So, as I got older I joined a street gang in the City of Long Beach. I started living a destructive lifestyle and nobody could tell me anything because I had all the answers. I kept finding myself in and out of foster homes, group homes, boy’s homes, juvenile halls, county camps, and then I graduated to the California Youth Authority (what some may consider a junior prison), this is where you become adopted into the state system! I started running and representing Southern California (Surenos), which only lead me in and out of Y.A. until I caught my first prison conviction.

Let me tell you, was this a nightmare in itself! Here I am 18 years old in Los Angeles County Jail looking at ten (10) years for Robbery/Burglary. The stuff I had to see in the County Jail was horrific! An 18-year-old white boy being raped by this 290-pound black guy, in the cell next to mine. That frightened me but I couldn’t show any weakness, nevertheless I was scared! Then when my mother and sister would go to visit me, I would share all this crazy stuff with them and they would tell me to be careful and don’t disrespect anyone and to always remember what my uncle told me about doing time.

My uncle was very forward with me, he clearly explained to me that if I was going to play the game that I needed to be a cold-hearted individual and I couldn’t have feelings for anyone! Did this ever shock the hell out of me, my mom didn’t raise a psychotic kid – but yet here I am making her go through all these changes every time I would get arrested. This was the selfish part of me.

Now, I watch these programs on television and when they pertain to “Children of The Incarcerated”, it rips my heart apart because I have grown children of my own and by me not being there for them, they have turned to that lifestyle I was living when I was out there. My son is 25 years old, serving a 31-years-to-life term and my 28-year-old daughter is strung out on Methamphetamine, walking the streets of Long Beach barefooted, and I recently heard she started selling her body (prostitution). Do you think that hurts a parent that is incarcerated? Of course it does, I get choked up when I think of this! But, all I can say is that I brought this upon myself.

I am serving a 32-years-to-life term on a Three Strike case for Residential Burglary and I now have 18 years in, but I have not given up on hope! All I do everyday is give back to the small community I presently live in (this facility here in this prison). I am very active in self-help programs. I focus on helping the youngsters because believe me, I don’t want them to get out there and repeat the same mistakes I did. They still have an opportunity to change and do something with their lives. I’ve assisted in the implementation of six (6) self-help programs here at this prison and everyday I am involved in one or two groups. No complaint because I really love this type of stuff!

On this note, I will close for the time being, so anyone out there that would like to carry a dialogue of *Children of The Incarcerated*, please drop me a line.

From The Inside Looking Out!
Librado “Chuco” Clemena