

HERE I AM...

BY JAMES GREEN ABB-5441

HERE AM I TWENTY FOUR YEARS LATER IN PRISON FOR A HOMICIDE THAT I DIDN'T COMMIT. I KNOW THAT'S THE COMMON CRY OF THOSE WHO HAPPEN TO FIND THEMSELVES INCARCERATED IN THIS DAY AND AGE OF MASS INCARCERATION. SO, I'LL GIVE A LITTLE BACK GROUND ABOUT MYSELF PRIOR TO ONES UNFORTUNATE, FOREVER LIFE ALTERING EXPERIENCE OF ONE DAY BEING A HIGH SCHOOL DROP OUT/BLEU COLLAR WORKER (WHO'S MEAGER PAY SUPPLEMENTED MY MOTHERS WELFARE CHECK THAT STRETCHED BETWEEN THREE GROWING TEENAGE SISTERS, AND A LITTLE BROTHER.) WITH NO JUVENILE OR ADULT CRIMINAL HISTORY OF VIOLENCE, NOW FACING A 1ST DEGREE MURDER CASE WHERE THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S SEEKING THE DEATH PENALTY DURING THE WAR ON CRIME & DRUG ERA IN 1988.

I GREW UP NEAR ONE OF THE MOST NOTORIOUS HOUSING PROJECTS CALLED "RICHARD ALLEN" IN THE NORTHEASTERN PHILADELPHIA AREA OF PENNSYLVANIA. AT A YOUNG AGE MY MOTHER MARRIED MY FATHER (WHO DIED A LITTLE OVER TWO YEARS AGO), THEY DECIDED TO MIGRATE FROM SAVANNA GEORGIA TO PHILADELPHIA IN HOPES OF ESCAPING THE LONG HELD JIM CROW SOUTH AND IT'S SEGREGATIVE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ORDER.

I GUESS THEY BOTH WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION, AS MANY DESCENDANTS OF AFRICAN'S WERE WHO EXPERIENCED SOUTHERN LIFE, THAT THE NORTH WAS THE PROMISE LAND WHERE HARD WORK AND PERSEVERANCE WOULD EASILY AFFORD THEM THEE AMERICAN DREAM. THOSE LOFTY DREAMS WERE DASHED WHEN OUR WEST PHILADELPHIA HOME CAUGHT FIRE LEAVING THE HOUSE BURNED BEYOND REPAIR, WITH THE LOST OF ALL IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS AND FAMILY MEMORABILIA OF MY MOTHER & FATHER FAMILIES WHOM THEY LEFT BEHIND WHEN LEAVING FOR PHILADELPHIA. BY THE GRACE OF GOD NO ONE WAS HURT IN THE FIRE, HOWEVER, THIS TRAGIC EVENT BROUGHT ON A TURN FOR THE WORST EFFECTING OUR FAMILY STRUCTURE IN A WAY NEITHER MY MOTHER OR FATHER SAW COMING. WE WERE SENT TO LIVE IN A HOUSING PROJECT LOCATED IN NORTH PHILADELPHIA, WHERE IT ALL BEGAN.

