

## MY JOURNEY

AS CHILDREN WE BEGIN OUR LIVES WITH WONDERFUL EXUBERANCE, EXPECTING AND DEMANDING EVERYTHING FROM THE WORLD AROUND US. BUT AS WE MATURE ALL THE KEBUFFS AND SAILORS WE EXPERIENCE SET FIRM BOUNDARIES IN OUR LIVES THAT ONLY GROW STRONGER WITH TIME. COMING TO EXPECT LESS FROM THE WORLD WE BEGIN TO ACCEPT SELF-IMPOSED LIMITATIONS.

IN 1988 I WAS A NINE MONTH OLD CHILD WHEN MY MOTHER MADE THE CONSCIENCE DECISION TO ABANDON HER CHILDREN FOR THE STREETS OF SEATTLE, CHASING A HEROIN HIGH SHE UNKNOWINGLY WOULD DRAMATICALLY CHANGE HER CHILDRENS LIVES FOREVER. HOW AND WHY MY MOTHER CHOOSE TO LEAVE BEHIND HER OWN CHILDREN IN EXCHANGE FOR A DRUG THAT WAS SLOWLY BUT SURELY DESTROYING HER LIFE IS SOMETHING I CAN'T COMPREHEND.

AS AN ADOLESCENT LOVE AND AFFECTION WAS SOMETHING THAT WAS ABSENT IN MY LIFE. BEING RAISED BY AN ABUSIVE FATHER AND WITH A NON-EXISTENT MOTHER I WAS NEVER TAUGHT HOW TO LOVE. INSTEAD I CONSTRUCTED A WALL AROUND MYSELF CONSISTING OF ANGER, HATE, AND DISTRUST. WITH THESE EMOTIONS CAME THE SELF-IMPOSED LIMITATIONS THAT BECAME THE FOUNDATION OF MY LIFE.

WHEN SOMETHING IS LESS ACCESSABLE IT ONLY INCREASES THE VALUE OF ITS PRESENCE. NOT ABLE TO OBTAIN THE ACCEPTANCE, LOVE, AND AFFECTION THAT I CONSTANTLY SEARCHED FOR AT HOME I INEVITABLY TURNED TO THE SAME STREETS MY MOTHER ONCE DID.

IN THE STREETS I SOON FOUND THE LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE I WAS SEARCHING FOR. I SOON REALIZED THAT PEOPLE RESPECTED THE INDIVIDUAL WHO KNEW HOW TO "HUSTLE" AND WHO WAS "DOWN" TO DO WHATEVER. AFTER A WHILE THE STREET LIFE BECAME FAMILIAR AND OUT OF THAT COMFORT MY LOVE FOR THE LIFESTYLE GREW. BEING RAISED NEXT TO THE STOP SIGN THE STREETS SOON BECAME MY MOTHER. SEEING THE OTHER "HUSTLERS" ON THE "BLOCK" WITH THEIR NICE CARS AND SEXY WOMEN THEY SOON BECAME MY MOTIVATION. THE TRANSITION FROM PATTY STREET THUG TO DOPE DEALER WAS AN EASY TRANSITION FOR ME BECAUSE WITH IT CAME MY DREAMS. IN THE "GAME" I FOUND AN OUTLET THAT I BELIEVED WOULD BRING ABOUT MY SUCCESS. THE EASY MONEY WAS A DRUG AND I WAS ADDICTED.

NOT LONG AFTER MY DISCOVERY OF THE STREETS A PATTERN DEVELOPED IN MY LIFE. INCARCERATION BECAME NORMAL FOR ME AND MY EVENTUAL CONFINEMENT WAS ALWAYS EXPECTED. MONTHS OF INCARCERATION SOON TURNED TO YEARS OF CONFINEMENT. BUT NO MATTER WHAT I DID I COULDN'T SEEM TO BREAK THE CYCLE, I WOULD CONSTANTLY DO THE SAME THING OVER AND OVER AGAIN AND EXPECTED A DIFFERENT RESULT. WITH ME NOW KNOWING THAT THE SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS I FACED COULDN'T BE SOLVED AT THE SAME LEVEL OF AWARENESS I WAS AT WHEN I CREATED THEM. IT SEEMS CRAZY THAT I WOULD CONTINUE TO TURN TO THE STREETS AND IN TURN TO CONTINUE TO MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES.

AS AN INDIVIDUAL NOW SERVING A LIFE SENTENCE IN THE WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS ITS EASY TO LOOK BACK AND UNDERSTAND ALL OF MY FAILURES IN LIFE. BEING IN THIS SITUATION HAS ENLIGHTENED ME AND OPENED MY MIND ALLOWING ME TO REALLY APPRECIATE THE WORLD. WHEN I LOOK BACK I CAN SEE HOW EVERY INFLUENCE IN MY LIFE CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF MY CHARACTER. I CAN SEE HOW MY PERCEPTIONS WERE CLOUDED BY MY FALSE BELIEFS AND SECURITIES. I CAN FINALLY ANALYZE HOW MY CHILDHOOD INFLUENCED MY OUTLOOK ON LIFE AND CONTRIBUTED TO MY ACTIONS.

THIS IS A LONELY PLACE TO SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIFE. BUT AS I CONTINUE TO SEARCH FOR PERSONAL CHANGE I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT I'LL CONTINUE TO FIND REASONS TO SMILE. HOPEFULLY SOMEONE READING THIS WILL SEE SOMETHING IN MY STORY THAT COULD HELP THEM AVOID MAKING THE SAME MISTAKES OR CARRYING THE SAME MISCONCEPTIONS. REMEMBER WHAT IS CONCENTRATED, COHERENT, AND CONNECTED TO THE PAST HAS POWER. AND DON'T FORGET WHERE YOU CAME FROM SO YOU WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER WHERE YOUR GOING.

Love  
Rivers