

Dont Pass Go - Return to Death Row

One of the worst feelings in life is when that cell door slams shut on you. All time suddenly feels frozen. You're no longer Smiths, Jones, your average Joes- you're now prisoner #000000. You've entered a nightmare similar to the twilight zone. Only yours is a living nightmare within your worst dreams. The only worse type of a true nightmare is actually having one about prison- only to wake up in prison. You've reached life's lowest moment, magnified x10. The day you enter the system hope begins to fade. Once convicted, hope begins to die a slow treacherous painful death. It tares at the very fabric of your soul, your physique.

Nothing can describe the empty lost feeling, it's akin to being lost in the store as a young child- you panic, you feel abandoned, you feel tiny like a bug in a trap, you're helpless to your surroundings. There once was a time when all prisoners knew not the injustices of our penal system. From that first brush with the law, to you first jail cell- life begins to take on a new cruel tuff love feeling. You ask yourself How did I let this happen why me? The answers are self designed, only you hold them.

Contrary to the cause and effect, you're now flung into the Dismal Dark Abyss. It is a foreign world, a different society with a completely different set of rules, unwritten codes, morals, prides, respect, some of what you know or knew on the outside applies. A lot of it doesn't, the values and value system is totally different. Men get stabbed even killed for the simplest slip of the tongue. The obvious snitching, butting into another's business or stealing said business, (under bidding) or taking away a man's hustle- any of these can get one in a real pickle. Even a disrespectful look or failure to acknowledge a person's simple NOD is a greeting of alright, instantly is taken as disrespect, or even a sign of weakness if eyes are not met, if you looked away you just demonstrated a primal sign of weakness. Welcome to the jungle of prison society.

It's like a twisted version of monopoly and Hard Knox Life wrapped up into one warped game, only you're the pawn on the board. Make no mistake at all- it's no game, its reality- its survival of the fittest. You must be strong mentally to endure the journey you are on, it's a nightmare. Consider your plight and very existence on a day to day basis as you now embark into the criminal justice system.

You attempt to prepare for trial, you've no knowledge of the law, its rules, procedures, or functions. Courtroom conduct even is different. It's not like TV, you're on trial for your life, you find out who (if any) friends you still have- who will speak on your behalf. All too quickly as the prosecution portrayals spill out, you begin to realize you're in serious trouble. People you once trusted and thought you knew- are now witnesses against you. Parties to your being condemned.

Judges grant very few defense motions, actions and may seem to be a grand referee, only to shut your team down before you've even bespoken a word. A ruling- can indeed carry just that against your existence- you've just been over ruled, ruled against. Denied justice.

The legal system and all its pitfalls directly and indirectly steers your defense. You may intend to take the witness stand to defend yourself, to tell the truth, only to be told NOT TO by your attorney. You quickly learn why- legally if you do take the stand every BAD ACT you've ever even been ACCUSED of, now becomes public before your jury. YOU'RE VILIFIED, put up under a microscope and dissected.

Furthermore, you will be questioned about your charges, so you've defended yourself, but now if you take the stand and admit your defense in fear of your life- you have in effect just proffered a JUDICIAL CONFESSION and admitted guilt in the eyes of every appeals court from now on. Thus your attorneys sound legal advice- to assert your 5th amendment right to not testify. To your surprise you're found guilty. You cling to hope as the appeals process is explained to you. Your whisked away to Death Row- in a haze of disbelief a 5 day trial and you're sentenced to death. How can this be? Your mind replays the trial over and over- you're still to this day thinking that's not what happened, I didn't get to defend myself. New attorneys are appointed and the appeals begin, your transfer to Death Row, now your nightmare is re-lived, magnified by 10 all over once again. Years go by 3 to be precise. You receive a letter stating your death sentence was reversed, but your conviction stands! How can this be? In short- you've been short changed by the system yet again.

A few more years toll by you languish on death row with no death sentence- the prosecution appeals the ruling of your appeal. Finally word is received- you will be returned to the county jail to begin your re-sentencing retrial. It's been 6 years since the day your death sentence was handed down. 4 of which you've just spent on Death Row with no death sentence.

You return to the county jail, meet with your attorneys and this twisted process begins all over again. Only this go around, your guilt is affirmed on appeal. You are now legally a convicted man, guilty of capital murder.

Now you begin picking a jury. 12 everyday people who have little to no knowledge of the system. Both sides speak with your potential jurors. Its drilled into their head that you are legally guilty, found guilty of capital murder by a prior jury. (you got this awful sinking feeling), you've already been prejudged- as you've been prejudiced by the fact you're a convicted man.

Hope is clung to by thread, you're told to not re act, sit still, don't look at the witnesses- as a living nightmare unfolds before your eyes. You're numb, void of feeling afraid. They're gonna kill you. Once again you can't speak, told not to take the stand and all too quickly your re-sentenced again. Was there any doubt it would be death again? Hope was held, but died yet again. You've just been re-sentenced to death again. All those years past- you matured, changed, began to understand yet once again your lost in the abysmal system of death. The system does not work, it is designed to function, to convict you. If you're poor, you lose, adequate and bold attorneys who'd fight a great battle- will cost a person their entire life's earnings in a death penalty case. It is a fact the unlimited resources the state has at its disposal- tilts to the system in the prosecutions favor. Money makes the world go round.

The ole saying rings true- if you don't have the capital, you get Capital Death.

Imagine the empty hopeless pit eating at your mind, as you're faced with this twisted nightmare- you're returning to Death Row. Your life's reached an all time low. You are a walking dead man.

Would you sit and ponder your freedom?

Would you try to escape the chains of death?

Could you take such bold an action in order to live?

At some point Human Survival instinct overcomes your will indeed- we all possess that will to live. It is hard wired into us all.

My will to live is not gone. I'll never give in to death's call. I've tried to take you through a brief summary of it all. The half of it- I assure you all

You've never heard half of the story of the circumstances that led to this all.

I thank you for taking the time to read this and to take a brief look into the abyss, this system we call just. I encourage you to get involved, take interest and act on it.

Actions do speak louder than mere words.

In struggle,
Charles Thompson
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