

THERE'S THE RUB (Chapter one)

What does a prisoner look like? Does he have wild eyes and an evil grin? What about a tail and horns? Do they spend their days stabbing one another and raping each other? How do they act around "normal" people? As a member of Project Youth: a program that invites high schoolers into the prison and learn about life through the mistakes of others, I hear comments from them that allude to these very questions. Most, if not all, are truly amazed at just how respectful, articulate and clean-cut we all are. As a prisoner with over 20 years in prison, I cannot say that I am surprised by these comments but I am truly amazed at the stereotypes the general public has about us. The perception is that we are not normal people.

In an effort to curb this mentality, I am going to start writing stories of how the human spirit can overcome in a dehumanizing ethos such as prison. Prison uniformly robs a person of their individuality, then their hope and eventually their spirit. We may not portray the images depicted above, but prison certainly is not the kind of place one would consider "safe". However, in spite of our surroundings, there are many success stories that happen in prison. These are those stories in 20 short chapters.

Chapter One:

Since 2012, The community at Our Lady of Guadalupe here behind the razor wire of MCI Shirley state prison, have successfully organized four (4) fundraising walkathons. The first was for Project Bread: better known as "Walk for Hunger". The second was for the United States Marine Corp's "Toys for Tots". In the two years that we have participated, both of these great organizations have collected a combined total of \$4,605.25 dollars. The inmates who participated have logged in enough miles to walk from Massachusetts to California! In the last two walks alone, one prisoner pushed a wheelchair bound prisoner for 20 miles in one, and then for twenty-two miles in another. Several prisoners who are a part of the Runners Club, have unselfishly jogged a marathon distance of 26 miles. Bear in mind, this is a prison and accountability is a must, so, these feats that I speak of must be done within a five hour time limit. Nonetheless, each prisoner walked what he could and gave as much as they could.

In prison, a prisoners wage's are around \$1-2.00 dollars a day. So, it was no surprise to see men donating half their paychecks of \$2.50 or less. No small sacrifice for some, since it's all they have. Equally as important, is that this is no small accomplishment for a prisoner, and one the public rarely gets to hear about! Until now.