

ABOUT: YARD THREE
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Yard Three, is a "Chapter" within my manuscript: Deathrow Arrival: Stranded Inside San Quentin (A Memoir). This memoir details my arrival on Californias' death row, a snap-shot of how I was wrongfully sentenced to death, and my decades of existence stranded on death row. The title derives from my poem: "Deathrow Arrival" (See: About Deathrow Arrival & the accompanying Poem).

This chapter details my move to Yard Three from Yard Two.

In the following sub-chapters I reflect on the "Big Brother" (Reality TV Show) mindset of inmates, who function with a carceral state of thinking, and procured my transfer to Yard Three. My initial outlook on corresponding with "Pen-Pals," and the perspective of other condemn inmates.

I reflect on my first visit, "Mother's Day," with my Mother, and the disappointment of my daughter not making the trip, which made the visit bitter-sweet.

Last but not least, I address my "Return to A/C" (Adjustment Center/The Hole), and my couple of months in this restrictive environment.

This is my first typed draft of the manuscript, thus, forgive me for any errors of grammar mistakes. I simply wanted to give the reader a real view of Californias' death row and my personal experiences and daily ordeals.

I hope you all enjoy the read and that it piques your interest enough to inquire more and question more about the reality of the carceral state, along with its effects on the people imprisoned. Likewise, I can use your HELP in finding an "Editor" and "Publisher." If you know of someone who is genuine and Sincere about HELPING ME, please have them contact me?

YARD THREE

Free from the W/A shallow grave, I walked out onto yard three and out into the hot, bright sun... though my enclosure expanded, my range of movement continued to be limited, however, my ability to actually "walk" and not ping-pong in a minuscule space was welcomed; along with the opportunity to mingle and have access to the exercise bars.

Most importantly, for me, and not so delightful for the Old-Man (the jailhouse lawyer), whose tutelage I was under. No longer would he have the fence as a barrier, to prevent me from hounding him, now I could corner him at will. Though his teaching style was unorthodox I continued to seek guidance and wise advice.

My presence on the yard was greeted warmly, I expected nothing different. Big Bro, Lil Bro, and Two-Face preceded me and was reason enough not to deny me access to yard three.

Re-establishing my yard program, Lil Bro and I picked up where we left-off; we came to a consensus decision to implement our first project, beginning with the T-shirts.

The atmosphere on the yard was conducive to my program, it had the right mix of adults, man-children, and adolescent males. Never did I sense or feel any hostility or resentment from others, nor the threat of having my program disrupted due to another inmate's fear, dislike, or them feeling uncomfortable. There was a cordial respect amongst everyone; therefore, the races respected each others space, as it should be. But, that's not to say dark clouds never formed and brought on storms.

Entering the yard one morning I knew it wasn't the Bay Areas' morning chill that had people standing stationary, with their backs pressed against the fences and wall... I peeped the new guy before I even entered the yard, he stood out like an alien. It was Richard Ramirez (The Night Stalker). This was his first appearance on the yard in years.

Sitting alone (near yard two), no one stood within five feet of

his person as though he carried some contagious virus. He wore the same blank look I often seen on photos or T.V., but I'm positive he was fully aware of the tense atmosphere brewing around his presence. For years, he had known he had an issue coming, not because of his crimes, but for fat-mouthin' and being a cell soldier. Years earlier he regularly disrespected Blacks from behind the safety of his bars, but now he had no barriers between him and retribution, only space and air.

As I was receiving the back-story... a loud heavy thud jarred my attention toward Richard. With his hand to his face, blood gushed from between his fingers, from his face being cracked open. He sat there bleeding until a goon saw the blood gushing from his face, thereafter, the goon hit his alarm! "Everybody Down!" the gunner bellowed, training his weapon on the yard. The buzz of the alarm drew a battalion of goons out of the unit, shouting orders and bellowing yard three. With everyone on the ground the goons ordered Richard off the yard.

Afterward, everyone on yard three was ordered off the yard one at a time. Six days into our lock-down, individually, we were interviewed as to what we knew and what we witnessed? (These type of routine interviews took place anytime an altercation unfolded on the yard or a threat is rumored to be carried out. Such interviews are a tactic to camouflage those who will provide information). Ten days after the incident the yard was re-opened.

Big Brother

Returning to the cell one afternoon, feelin' good, on my way pass yard one, a brother on the fence asked, "What's up?" Assuming he was just greeting me I returned the greeting with a smile. Then he says, "Yo! I seen you down there blowin', look out for me."

"Naw man, I wasn't doin' nothin'," I shot back. I didn't fuck with this dude like that; but it was an eye opener.

'Damn!' I thought to myself as i peeled away from the fence and entered the unit. How in the hell did he see me? The yards were

densely packed (this hot summer day); it's difficult to find someone on the yard with you, let alone the yard next to you, thus, how did this dude peep me two yards away? Either way he's doing too much! Actually, I was doing too much, leaving myself open for my foes, and to have outsiders in my business. As I continued to the cell that revelation and the good weed had me a little paranoid.

From that day forth, I decided to stop blowin' weed on the yard; but would only blow in the cell. It was a matter of risk and reward; the risk of too many eyes and inquiring minds made it more difficult to cover my tracks. Eventually, I would cease smoking regardless of circumstance. It wasn't difficult to do, blowin' was a luxury for me, I didn't fiend for it like some. Plus it was difficult enough to study the law with a clear head. When I was high I had no interest in the law, writing, or drawing. My only interest was chillin' and spinning CDs while I enjoyed my high.

Big Brother was alive and active in many forms, when he wasn't watching, the yards had eyes and the cells had ears. I likened the whole environment of E/B to the T.V. show "Big Brother". Except here, the scheming, lies, deceit, and back biting didn't get you sent home or to a jury house.

From yard three I had the opportunity to analyze yard two from the outside and it was obvious I wasn't the problem, but more of an obstacle. The real issues were the insecurities of individuals who had established alliances and they were very much interested in maintaining those alliances. Information I gathered later helped me comprehend this game being played. Many in E/B wore the disguises of Janus: one of camaraderie, the other of rival. Those who arrived and didn't question things or didn't care who were thorough, but just accepted the dysfunction and tomfoolery had no problems getting along. The insecure, needed to remove anyone who made them feel inferior and may reveal their weaknesses. The removal of obstacles left room for them to posture, peacock, and puffer-fish. Essentially, the yard was their prize. Likewise, they had no other yard they could retreat to. I wasn't the only one who

knew this, thus others could see the company they were keeping, but so many had succumbed to their predicament, and simply were interested in being accepted.

I created a buffer to repel any negative forces or energy that sought to use me as a host for anything not productive. It was simply a method of protecting my ab (heart), knowing these Januses were attacking my ego. It didn't take a lot of energy to ward off the daily encounters with fickle gangstas, chameleon snitches, phonies, and hypocritical religious practitioners; but it was necessary to maintain my sanity, integrity, and Maa-t being. For the most part, my raw, harsh truth repelled most, like sun rays to a vampire. The only prize I was competing for was Life, Justice, and Freedom; this required man-power, brain-power, and the determination to empower myself, which was too much work for many, thus, they beat a hasty retreat when I begin dialoguing on subjects of empowerment and upliftment or questioning their cognitive maturity (like those who are forty-plus year¹¹ old and/or grandfathers who speak in the language of manhood or (Black) empowerment but think and act with a gang mentality, simply because they can't let go. Most having begun their gang affiliation in adolescence and have continued to hold firmly to this idea well into their adulthood, which has prevents the grown man from developing).

Pen-Pals

My attempt to make a connection with a worthwhile pen-pal was not going well. I wrote every Anti-Death Penalty organization that were offering pen-pals: Human Writes, Alive, Life Line, Lifespark, and other now defunct organizations. I also contributed to their Newsletters; the Newsletters provided an opportunity for the condemn to express ourselves and have our voice heard, through poems and essays, and showcase our art.

For whatever reason, I was changing pen-pals with the seasons; just the same, some of the superficial written conversation rarely evolved past the weather and the nature of prison. Then there were

those who wrote letters filled with rambling talk and never once addressed my questions (but they had many) or sought to get to know the man. Overtime I would come to realize pen-pals were curious passer-byes with no real interest to bridge the gap. Letters from such people brought no sense of encouragement, smiles, light, nor a brief escape from my darkness or trials and tribulations. They merely added to my frustration and disconnect.

Not to sound ungrateful, because I indeed appreciated their time, effort, and courage to reach beyond the walls and their comfort zone, to invite the unknown into their lives.

Most prisoners desire a connection with the outside, but not every prisoner is equipped to pursue such correspondence due to illiteracy, and they don't wish to expose that. Others don't possess the maturity to hold a lengthy correspondence; then you have those who believe their outside contacts are there for them to pilfer and take advantage of. They enter the relationship with the sole intentions of making demands as though their pen-friends owe them, simply for the privilege to communicate with them.

Just the same, you have those genuinely and sincerely mature enough to appreciate the compassion and empathy of strangers. They value the time and effort, because they know these individuals owe them nothing; and it's the only sufficient opportunity we get to promote our humanity.

Initially when I sought a pen-pal I had no real interest, I was just fishing; if I met someone who I connected with or was able to hold a meaningful dialogue with, then cool; if not... As soon as I thought I'd turned a corner with a pen-pal they would go off script: one lady got caught up in a love triangle, ended up getting pregnant, and henceforth, every letter was a diatribe about her lover; after the baby was born I received two pages letters about the child. I went from relationship expert to sounding board. Another woman in a loveless marriage pressed me for erotic letters, and asked me to trace my penis on a letter; that was beyond the pale for me (if the money would've been right, perhaps

I would've reconsidered; don't judge me!).

Eventually I gave up on the pen-pal search and stopped requesting them. I would put more energy into securing my families support. Though, all they were offering and preaching were patients, prayer, and faith. I had faith in my patients and the awareness to know without a support system I could rely on, to "Help Me, Help Me," patients would find me forever praying and waiting for results. (Lord knows, the court doesn't recognize Gods' Law nor divine authority!) I had no interest in prayer, my "prayer basket" was full, it was my deed basket that was collecting dust! Everyone offered their prayers, but did nothing in the way of 'deeds' (the book says, "prayer without deeds are dead."). Like those prayers I would indeed be dead.

Mothers' Day

Four years removed from my last visit, Moms arranged a Mothers' Day (2003) visit. I was enthusiastic about the visit and the first time in a decade I would be able to hug and kiss my Earth. As sweet as it would be, it would likewise be bitter; my daughter would not be making the trip.

This was very disappointing and frustrating, and I expressed as much! Yes, I was happy to be visiting with my Earth (mother), but it was equally as important to me to re-connect with my young teenage daughter. Not only had I not seen her in five years, I had not touched her in ten years. I had kept up regular communication with her by phone and letters, however, this was no substitute for my physical presence (the hugs; the ability to look in each others eyes; be able to identify our resemblances; to hold hands; and eat together), even with the time constraints of a visit. Something overcomes nothing!

Though we never spoke about her feelings or perspective on my absence, I knew there were some mental and emotional effects developing. I knew as much, because I went through the same ordeal, my father was jailed and eventually imprisoned when I was five. The only difference, my father never took the time to contact

me, never!

Of all the request of my family, the one thing they possessed the power to ensure where visits with my daughter. And they failed at that! This would put me near the edge, close to the tipping point.

I arrived at the inmate staging area, was placed in a holding cage and went through the usual dehumanizing strip-search, a second time (I went through the process before exiting the cell). Afterward, I was restrained and ushered toward the visiting room entrance door.

Abruptly, I informed the goon I needed to use the bathroom... No way was I allowing this goon to send me into the visiting room to greet my Earth without washing my hands. This sick, degenerate knew exactly what he was doing; having me fondle my genitals and spread my butt cheeks and not offering me an opportunity to wash my hands. I was agitated by his antics but masked my anger. This was dastardly, and I wasn't going to allow him and his co-worker a laugh at my expense, instead, I countered their degenerate, psychological game. I previously watched unsuspecting inmates so eager to get in the visiting room not even think to ask to wash their hands or wonder if some nefarious game was at play.

The bathroom area is a caged enclosure with a combination toilette and sink. The enclosure resemble an Ad-Seg cell, complete with dusty spiderwebs. Never have I entered that enclosure and seen the sink and toilette clean. It also doubled as a search area. Why anyone would want to strip-out and stand barefoot in an area with urine on the floor and clearly filthy, baffles my mind. But inmates comply with such a despicable order! Simply because they don't want their visit cancelled or/and their eagerness to get into the visiting room distracts from the unsanitary conditions. I find it to be a disgusting joke and a method of the goons to test their psychological control. Indeed it's an effective assessment of ones control over another; and a method to identify those who are conditioned to "simply obey," and those

who question or challenge authority.

Entering the visiting room for the first time since the incident that shut it down, I could see the changes that were made; gone was the open space that allowed for free movement and inter-mingling. Cages corraled the visiting area, preventing all access to the door where the visitors entered. Unlike before, I still had the restraints on and I was escorted to a wire mesh cage smaller than the cell. I was placed in a cage, uncuffed, and took a seat in one of two chairs within the cage to await my visitor.

The 4' X 8' cage was seven feet high and a completely wired enclosure, with plexiglass in between the cages on either side. Accompanying the two chairs was a small child's table. From within the cage I could observe the entire visiting room: there were seventeen cages within the old space running parallel to one another; eight cages lined one side and nine the other. The middle of the floor plan was left empty, this area was reserved for the prisoners transition in and out of the cages. Each cage had two gates, one side allowed for the visitors to enter and exit, the other for prisoners.

My Earth arrived, after a brief greeting and smiles she departed to buy some food and drinks, when she returned I was re-cuffed and removed from the cage. She was allowed to enter from her side, the gate was secured, then I was returned to the cage, the gate was secured and I was uncuffed.

Like magnets we clung to each other! We embraced each other for a long while before letting go; ten years and three months had elapse since our last embrace, it was as though we could make up and recoup all the years of our separation and absent affection. The past five years were kind to her, all the features and characteristics I recognized from childhood to adulthood were still present, her face still carried that smooth, vibrant, exuberant expression I knew so well. I witnessed the lost time in the tears that streaked from her happy eyes, down over her prominent cheeks.

We sat down to talk, eat, laugh, and enjoy each others

presence. The five hours didn't crawl by as they do when I'm confined in the cell, instead, it felt as soon as it begun, it was over. As we opened the visit we closed it: In a tight human embrace of love and regret. I returned to the cell reveling in my mothers love, hugs, smile, eyes, and the re-assuring feeling I knew from my childhood. I buried the moment in my heart and stored the occasion in my mental hard drive.

A/C Revisited

Sitting in the cell reading, the counselor appeared at the bars. Initially, I presumed he was there to inquire about my ninety day classification review, instead I was questioned about my relationship with Too-Hard. He was seeking to be assigned to yard three, and according to his file we were enemies. This was news to me; and denied we were enemies. The counselor inquired about our incident in the county jail? I assured him it wasn't nothing. Thus, he wanted to know if I had a problem signing a form stipulating we're not enemies and there would be no problem with us being on the yard together?

As I looked over the form I saw Too-Hard had already signed it. The way I figured it, I wasn't his enemy, Two-Face was (thus, let the gate be the bell). Apparently, upon his arrival from the county jail he conveyed to classification I was his enemy. The form stated, "I was his enemy," not that "we" we're enemies or "he was my enemy." I knew he wanted out of that Walk Alone cage and since his arrival we were both cordial, thus I figured he was over our past incident, if not oh well! I signed the form regardless.

The persona and characteristics of Too-Hard epitomize the stereo-typical Hollywood character that was depicted in the movies and comedians joked about. Simply put, it was peacocking at its finest. But this wasn't some prison mask put on to put others off, this was his demeanor through-and-through, as he was on the street.

Our incident in the county jail occurred while we were briefly