

DEAR READER.

3-3-19

I HOPE YOU'RE DOING WELL!

2ND GROUP HOME. THIS ONE LASTED ABOUT 3 MONTHS LONG. IT WAS KNOWN AS AN EMERGENCY SHELTER FOR BAD KIDS. I WAS DEFINITELY 'NOT' THE KIND OF BAD THEY WERE REFERRING TO. I ARGUED WITH MY SIBLINGS AND GOT INTO UNPREPARED FIGHTS AT SCHOOL. THE KIDS IN THIS HOME WERE CARRYING GUNS & SELLING DRUGS AND GETTING INTO GANG WARS... AND I WAS MOVING IN WITH THEM.


MY FIRST DAY, I MET THE COUNSELORS & THEY WERE NICE. IT SEEMED LIKE THEY MIGHT NOT BE THAT BAD. I WENT UPSTAIRS AND PUT UP MY STUFF. 3 BEDS... SO I HAD 2 ROOM MATES. 4 MORE BOYS ACROSS THE HALL AND 4 GIRLS DOWN STAIRS. I WAS IN THE 7TH GRADE SO I WAS ABOUT 12 OR 13. I REPEATED THE 2ND GRADE... AS I WAS PUTTING UP MY STUFF MY ROOMMATES CAME IN. ONE OF THEM PICKED UP MY BAG AND STARTED GOING THROUGH IT. I SAID TO HIM, "WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THAT'S MY STUFF?" HE SAID, "I'M SEEING WHAT I WANT." I GRABBED MY BAG AND THE OTHER KID CLOCKED ME IN THE TEMPLE. WE FOUGHT AND I LOST. I WENT ONE-TO-ONE WITH THOSE TWO FOR THE NEXT MONTH. FINALLY THEY EASED UP WHEN THEY SAW I WASN'T GOING TO SUBMIT TO THEIR "RULE." AND THEN HERE SO WAS THE FIRST TIME, OF MANY, I WAS ASKED TO BE A PART OF A GANG. IT WAS AND FELT LIKE A COMPLIMENT. THEY WERE TELLING ME I WAS TOUGH AND DESERVING OF RESPECT. SO WAS

TEMPERING BUT I DON'T WANT TO LIVE THAT LIFE OF ALWAYS FIGHTING SOMEONE. I ONLY FOUGHT WHEN I HAD NO OTHER THAN THAT I WAS A NICE KID. SO I REFUSED THEIR OFFER AND THAT DON'T GO WELL AT ALL. NOW I WAS SOON OR DIE. LUCKILY FOR ME ONE OF THEM GOT IN TROUBLE & GOT LOUSED UP. THE OTHER ONE WAS MORE OF A FOLLOWER SO WITH THE OTHER GUY GONE THE SCALES WERE LEVELED. HE KNEW, I KNEW, AND I KICKED HIS ASS! HA! HA! AFTER THAT I WAS OUT THERE. I STILL HAD MY PROBLEMS AT SCHOOL THOUGH. THIS ONE KID DON'T LIKE ME BECAUSE I HUNG OUT WITH A GROUP OF WHOSE KIDS. HE TOOK SO PERSONAL AS IF I WAS TURNING MY BACK ON MY BLACK BROTHERS & SISTERS BY HICKING SO WITH MY WHOSE BROTHERS AND SISTERS. I AM OBVIOUSLY MIXED BLACK & WHOSE. THOUGH SOME PEOPLE DO THINK I WAS PUERTO RICAN WHEN I WAS A KID. THAT KID GOT SOME OF HIS FRIENDS AND THEY HAD ME CORNERED ON SOME STAIRS. I WORKED OUT WHO I WAS GOING TO HIT FIRST AND WHERE I'D RUN TO. THERE WERE SEVERAL OF THEM... NOT A FIGHT I WANTED TODAY. BEFORE I COULD ACT THOUGH THE KID WHO HAD A PROBLEM WITH ME MOVED FORWARD CRUSHS, LEFTED HIS ARM FORWARD. I LEANED BACK TO ESCAPE THE HIT AND HIT A POLE. I WAS JAMMED. BUT HE WASN'T SWINGING TO HIT ME... IN MY FACE, PRESSED AGAINST MY FOREHEAD WAS A NICHE COLORED REVOLVER. FEAR HIT ME LIKE A TON OF BRICKS. HE WAS SAYING SOMETHING, SPENDING WORDS OUT OF HIS MOUTH, BUT I HEARD NOTHING. I JUST

FELT THE COLD STEEL PRESSED AGAINST MY FOREHEAD. HOW IF I TRIED TO LOOK DIRECTLY AT THE GUN MY EYES WOULD CROSS & MY VISION WOULD BLUR. NEAR AS I KNOW, HE AND HIS CREW STARTED BEATING THE CRAP OUT OF ME. I FOUND A HOLE AND STRUCK OUT LIKE A BOLT OF LIGHTNING. THEY GAVE CHASE BUT I WAS TOO FAST... TODAY. THAT WAS A CONFUSING MOMENT FOR ME. DEON'S UNDERSTAND ANY OF IT. BUT I WAS STUCK IN THE CENTER OF IT AND HAD NO ONE TO HELP ME OUT OF IT. I FIGURED THE ADULTS WOULD BE LIKE MY MOM AND BLAME ME FOR IT SO I DEON'S GO TO THEM FOR HELP. AFRAID I'D GET IN TROUBLE.

NOW I'D BEEN JUMPED PLENTY OF TIMES UP TO THIS POINT. BUT I WAS ABLE TO DO SOME DAMAGE TO THE OTHER KIDS TOO. I COULD STAND MY GROUND AND FIGHT WELL BUT THE CREW... IT WAS SUICIDE TO DO THAT. I SOOD MY GROUND TWICE AND WOKE UP THERE TWICE! HA! FIRST TIME, I WAS ALONE & EVERYONE GONE. I WALKED BACK TO THE GROUP HOME & WENT TO MY ROOM. DENVER CAME AND I WANTED TO K EVERYONE ELSE ATE AND SHE I GOT ME SOME FOOD. ATE REALLY FAST, BEFORE ANYONE COULD SEE ME & HOW MESSED UP I WAS, AND WENT BACK TO MY ROOM. THE 2ND TIME I SOOD MY GROUND I AWOKE IN A FIELD. AN OLDER MAN, WEARING A BLUE UNIFORM WITH A WHITE & RED TAG ON HIS LEFT BREAST POCKET, WOKE ME UP. HE TRIED TO HELP FURTHER BUT I TOLD HIM I WAS O.K. AND WALKED HOME, TO THE GROUP HOME. FROM THEN ON, WITH THAT CREW, I RAN! HA! YUP, I WASN'T TRYING TO TAKE ANY MORE AFTERNOON NAPS BY THEM! HA! I DODGED THEM AS MUCH AS

I COULD BUT THEY SOON CAUGHT UP WITH ME A COUPLE TIMES.
I GOT PRETTY SICK & STARTED FOLLOWING THEM. I FIGURED IF
I WAS FOLLOWING THEM, THEY COULDN'T FOLLOW ME. ONE DAY
THEY ALL DISAPPEARED. REALLY. JUST VANISHED. NEVER CAME
BACK TO SCHOOL. I FIGURE THEY GOT INTO SOME TROUBLE
AND GOT LOCKED UP... I WAS GLAD THEY WERE GONE! SHOO!
HA! HA!

7TH GRADE - I GOT BEAT UNCONSCIOUS TWICE AND A
GUN PUSHED AGAINST MY FOREHEAD. AND THE GUY WHO PUT THE
GUN TO MY FOREHEAD? I RAN INTO HIM 2 MORE TIMES IN MY
LIFE AND GUESS WHAT? THE 2ND TIME I WAS 17 & HE PUT A GUN
TO MY HEAD AGAIN! CAN YOU BELIEVE SO? TOO BAD FOR HIM THOUGH
I BEAT HIM UNCONSCIOUS THE 3RD TIME. 3RD TIME WAS IN
JUVENILE PRISON. NO PROBLEMS. 

THAT STAY IN THE EMERGENCY SHOWER LASTED ABOUT
3 MONTHS. I LEARNED NOTHING MORE THAN TO FEEL MORE
ALIENATED BY MY ENVIRONMENT. WHAT ARE GROUP HOMES
FOR? THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO HELP KIDS DEVELOPE SKILLS
THAT ARE NEEDED TO MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS IN LIFE.
UNFORTUNATELY A LOT OF THE GROUP HOMES IN OUR COUNTRY
AREN'T BEING RUN THE WAY SOME PEOPLE THINK. PUTTING
A CHILD INTO A NEW ENVIRONMENT IS A BIG DEAL PARENTS
SHOULD THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATE THESE PLACES BEFORE
CHOOSING TO PUT THEIR CHILD IN ONE.

UNTIL NEXT TIME.

YOURS TRULY

DOUG