

DEAR READER,

4-7-19

HEY. I HOPE YOU ARE DOING WELL!

MY LAST DAY AS WILDERNESS CAMP WASN'T A SURPRISE TO ME. ALL THE KIDS WHO GRADUATED HAD THEIR FAMILIES THERE WITH THEM... EXCEPT ME. I WAS STAYING WITH MY CASE WORKER. I WAS STILL IN MY CAMP CLOTHING AND EVERYONE ELSE WAS IN NICE STREET CLOTHES. I WAS HOPING I'D SEE MY MOM WALK IN BUT KINDA KNEW SHE WASN'T GOING TO. ANYWAY SO WAS TIME FOR HER TO SHOW UP FOR ME SHE SEEMED TO NEVER BE AROUND HER PHONE.... EVEN NOWADAYS SO STILL HAPPENS. WELL, ON MANY OCCASIONS WHEN MY ATTORNEYS HAVE CALLED....

SO I WAS DRIVEN TO MY MOMS HOME BY MY CASE WORKER. WE LIVED IN A PRETTY NICE MOBILE HOME NEIGHBORHOOD. FOR ABOUT 2 MONTHS THINGS WERE GOING O.K. BUT THEN MY SISTER STARTED ON ME. I NEED TO HAVE A JOB AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE BILL OR FIND ANOTHER PLACE TO LIVE. I WAS "15" IN THE 10TH GRADE-HIGH SCHOOL. SHE WAS THE BOSS AROUND THE HOUSE. SHE STILL HAD HER FOOT ON MY MOMS NECK. FIGURATIVELY SPEAKING. SO MY RELATIONSHIPS IN MY HOME LIFE BEGAN TO SPRAL SO I STARTED STAYING AWAY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. MY OLDEST YOUNGER BRO HAD MY BACK WHEN IT WAS RAINING. MY MOM KICKED ME OUT A FEW TIMES AND TOLD THEM NOT TO LET ME IN... I'D SLEEP UNDER MY BROTHERS BED OR IN HIS CLOSET ON THOSE NIGHTS. I DON'T KNOW ANYBODY

WELL ENOUGH TO CRASH AT THEIR PLACE. BUT ONE DAY, THE PARENTS OF A FRIEND OF MINE, WE'LL CALL HER GINGER<sup>3</sup>, FOUND OUT ABOUT MY HOME LIFE. THEY TOOK ME IN. I DON'T "LOVE" THEM, BUT ANYTIME I NEEDED THEM, THEY WERE THERE FOR ME. THEY CAME TO BE MY FAMILY. I WAS LEARNING WHAT IT WAS TO BE IN A REAL, FUNCTIONAL FAMILY ENVIRONMENT. I'D GO TO WORK SOMEONES W/ THE FATHER AND LEARNED THINGS LIKE PUTTING IN CEILING TILE, INSULATION, MECHANICAL WORKS... AND AT THEIR HOME THE MOTHER TAUGHT CARPENTRY WORKS, STAIRS, DECKS, FLOOR TILE/LINOLEUM.... THEY WERE MY FAMILY. THEY CARE A DAMN ABOUT ME... AND I FEEL SO. THEY LOVED ME & I LOVED THEM. STILL DO.

ANYWAYS, THE ~~MIDDLE~~ HOMES NEIGHBORHOOD MANAGER DON'T LIKE ME. I STARTED GETTING ALL THE KIDS TO COME TO GAMES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD...  
 .... "2" IF YOU LET HER TELL SO. THE TOWN IS SHE WAS A KNOWN RACIST. SHE HAD A PROBLEM WITH ALL THE BLACK KIDS. HER OWN FAMILY PUT HER OUT AS A RACIST SO... THAT'S WHY SHE TARGETED ME. BLACK, WITH A TROUBLED HOME LIFE. EASY TARGET. I JOKEFULLY TOLD HER ONE DAY THAT I WASN'T FULL BLACK. THAT I WAS BLACK & WHITE... SO SHE SHOULD'VE HATE ME "THAT" MUCH. MY FRIENDS LAUGHED AND SHE BRANDED HER AUTOMATIC PISTOL... WE RAN WHILE WE LAUGHED...  
 KIDS... "2"

A COUPLE WEEKS MORE AND MY MOM TOLD ME I

HAD TO GO. THAT THE MANAGER HAD GIVEN HER AN  
 ULTIMATUM. SHE AND MY WHOLE FAMILY GOES OR JUST  
 I GO. SHE TOLD MY MOM THAT "16" PEOPLE  
 COMPLAINED TO HER THAT THEY'D CAUGHT "ME":  
 BREAKING INTO THEIR CARS. MY MOM DOESN'T ASK FOR  
 ANY EVIDENCE OF THIS. IF SHE HAD SHE WOULD HAVE  
 FIGURED OUT THAT SHE WAS LYING. BUT OUT ON THE  
 STREETS I WENT FOR GOOD. 16 YEARS OLD. 16 YEARS  
 OLD WOULDN'T BE A BAD, REAL BAD, AGE TO GET OUT  
 ON MY OWN EXCEPT THAT I HAD BEEN IN AND OUT  
 OF GROUP HOMES SINCE I WAS 12 AND HAD NO  
 FOUNDATION ANYWHERE. NO TEACHING ON HOW TO  
 SURVIVE ON MY OWN. SO I FIGURED IT OUT ON MY  
 OWN... AND MADE A "WHOLE" LOT OF MISTAKES!  
 BY THE WAY, THE ACCUSATIONS THAT I'D BEEN ACCUSED  
 OF BREAKING INTO CARS WAS INVESTIGATED  
 SEVERAL YEARS AGO, NOT 1 COMPLAINT WAS FOUND  
 OF ME DOING THAT. I NEVER DID. BUT MY MOTHER  
 DOESN'T BELIEVE IN FIGHTING FOR ME. FOR THE  
 NEXT YEAR AND A HALF I WAS ARRESTED SEVERAL  
 TIMES FOR OVERPASSING INTO THAT NEIGHBORHOOD. ONE  
 TIME THE MANAGER TOLD THE COPS I HAD A GUN...  
 THEY ALMOST SHOT ME BECAUSE OF THAT. BUT THAT  
 WAS A GOOD SHERIFFS DEPARTMENT. AND WHEN THEY  
 CAUGHT ME AFTER PUSHING THEM ON A SEVERAL HOUR  
 FOOT CHASE, IT WAS JUST THAT. NO ROUGHING ME  
 UP. THEY NEVER TREATED ME LIKE THAT. SO I'VE

NO COMPLAINTS ABOUT THEM. I WAS KNOWN BY THEM AS RABBIT. THEY'D CHASED ME MAYBE 15 TIMES AND ONLY CAUGHT ME THAT ONCE. EVERY OTHER TIME I WAS IN A CAR OR BED. HA!

WELL, THAT'S WHEN I WAS FORCED TO GROW UP. AND ALL I KNEW WAS WHAT I'D SEEN ON T.V., SELLING DRUGS & ROBBING. SO THAT'S WHAT I LEARNED TO DO. I'LL GET INTO THAT IN MY NEXT BLOG.

DURING THAT TIME I LOVED BOUNCING FROM MY FRIENDS FAMILIES HOME (WHICH BECAME MY FAMILY) AND A FRIENDS HOME KNOWN AS "THE DONEYARD!" "THAT" WAS THE PLACE TO BE! HA! AND HE'S ALWAYS BEEN MY HOME SO DON'T EXPECT FOR ME TO REVEAL TOO MUCH INTO WHAT WENT ON THERE BACK IN THE DAY! HA! HA! BUT THERE'S PLENTY IN MY LIFE TO TELL. STARTING WITH MY ROBBERY CHARGE WHEN I WAS 17.

UNTIL NEXT TIME...

YOURS TRULY,

DOUG