

Easter 4/01/2018

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OASIS

April-2018

Freedom
Within



LIFE ON THE OUTSIDE

By Gary Thomas

After serving 30 years, I was paroled on 6-30-14, to HealthRight 360 in L.A. I spent 6 months there. I went into a sober living house for 3 months before getting my own apartment. I worked full-time for Sister Mary Sean for 2 years and also worked part time helping apartment owners keep the places rentable. I stayed busy most every day. Then I went to work full time, painting. Still helping at PREP and helping others as often as I could.



After getting my own apartment, I got involved with a very beautiful woman, Lisa, and fell in love. I was chastised by more than a few people, telling me it was too soon. I knew better. I knew my heart. My son kept after me to move to Illinois to be near him and my family, grandchildren I had never met and a few cousins that were

still alive after all the years I was incarcerated. After losing my full-time job, I decided to request my parole be transferred. Lisa had a full-time job but we decided we should go back East. My transfer via interstate compact was granted and in January of 2017, we packed up and moved to Illinois. We arrived there on 1/3/17. I was informed by my parole agent that being a lifer, I was to register at the local police station on Monday, January 5th. My son and I went there and as soon as I told them who I was, I was arrested on a 33-year-old traffic ticket for driving under a revoked license. Cost me \$325.00 to bond out. Even my PO told me it was nonsense. But, I was prepared to deal with it.

That evening, my son told me he had been offered a job in S.C., with a substantial raise and rank in the company he worked for. He had already accepted the job before I was transferred. Told me we could move to S.C. with him and his family. Interstate compact doesn't work that way. So, we stayed there in his house while he and his family moved south. He put his house up for sale and we remodeled it for him. Then, he lost his job and moved back to Illinois. We had already arranged to move to Alton. So, we moved there, but I couldn't find a job without being able to drive.

To get my license in Illinois I would have to pay \$1500.00 to go to school, attend AA for a year, pay an additional \$850.00 to petition the State to get my driving permit to drive to and from work only. I didn't have a job. Mandatory risk insurance for 5 years. I was highly upset, legal to drive in 49 states, but not in Illinois and couldn't leave.

Lisa, my beloved, agreed to marry me. Happiest day of my life. We were married on July 8, 2017. My son and family couldn't attend because they were still in S.C.

After much debate, Lisa and I decided we were much better off in California. So, I asked my parole officer if we could return to California. He told me he'd put the paperwork in and see. The very next day, Sacramento called and asked if I was moving that day. Already been approved. We couldn't move till February and only then, thanks to friends and family were we able to afford the move. We are now back in LA. Thanks to Sister Mary and PREP, I have a part time job. Thanks to our friend Marion Daniels, we aren't sleeping on the streets. It has only been a little over 6 weeks that we have been back in LA, but already, I am finding prospects of work and feeling much better about returning here. When I left California, I said good riddance. Just happy to be out of Calif. Now, I'm just happy to be back.

Life goes on whether we are on the outside or on the inside. It isn't always roses or peaches and cream. But, it is always life. We still have ups and downs. But before I met Sister Mary and changed my way of living inside, I would never have been able to deal with these situations like we have and would probably wound up in trouble again. As it is, I can still walk with my head held high and know that I learned my lessons well. Thank you, Sister Mary. Also, I must thank my lovely wife, Lisa, for believing in me and keeping me strong.



LIFE ON THE INSIDE

By Carlos Cano – ISP

I'm currently serving a sentence of Life Without Possibility of Parole. I was 19 years old

when I was convicted for a murder I didn't commit. Due to the fact that I was living a life full of destructive behaviors I had *no* clue of the significance this meant to my family, the victim's family, and my life.

Prior to coming into prison, I had no idea of what to expect, I was scared because I was placed in an environment where I felt vulnerable. I had so many negative perceptions about the prison world. The only way I found how to protect myself was by affiliation to the same type of people who showed me a sense of acceptance, belonging, and love. It felt just like the neighborhood I was removed from.

Today I realize that my whole life revolved around a warped - belief system, which led to poor choices. I am now able to see how detrimental I was to my community and everyone who tried to help me, like my teachers, principals, and parents. I now have an understanding of why I could have easily been capable of killing the victim in my case. I empathize with the families I victimized and hold myself accountable to make amends to everyone I have caused harm.

I have now found a new way of living because everything I was doing before only led in hurting my family. Change didn't come easily; I was resistant at first. Then I met a good friend who introduced me to a class called Alternative to Violence Program (AVP). This class helped me to see that I was not alone in the types of pain I had suppressed my whole youth growing up. It also helped with communication skills as well as finding my true value and purpose.

I now take full responsibility in my recovery. By taking advantage of every group that is offered, I have gained insight into the deep-rooted emotions which led to the progression of my bad choices - groups like Inmate Peer Education Program, Turning Point, Alcoholics Anonymous, Criminal Gang-members Anonymous, Jesuit Restorative Justice Initiative, Anti Recidivism Coalition, Getting Out by Going In, Victim Awareness Programs, Addiction Counseling Program, and Place for Grace. All of these classes have impacted a new development within me of beliefs and manners which project an identity I'm proud of stepping into, by utilizing the practice of my spiritual principles.

In conclusion, I'm proud of the person I've become today. I'm in college and I'll be receiving Alcohol and Drug Studies certifications 1&2, this semester and I'm two semesters away from receiving my AA Degree in Social Behavior Science. Even though I know I can't prove my innocence I believe and hope that one day I may have an opportunity to prove I deserve a second

chance. I now trust myself and the process of group therapy. My only suggestion to every reader is to give yourself an opportunity, educate yourself, have an open mind, listen to those who have trudged the path of recovery out of insanity and you will see that it all makes sense.

PREP

Anger Management



By Robert Callejas KVSP

Final Report on Prep Anger Management Course

By J.P. Remsen KVSP

In the two years that I have been working the Prep Anger Management Course, I have identified multiple areas where I required and still require improvement.

The reason I have worked these areas is to bring myself in line with positive behavior in society for which I hope to be found suitable.

The first area of improvement has been learning to accept other people's critical thoughts and opinions of me. I have always had problems in this area and would lash out in anger if I did not accept or agree with the contrary opinion. This course has helped me realize that for me to make better life decisions and choices, the nurturing critical thoughts and opinions is a necessity.

Secondly, this course has taught me the difference between good and bad anger. I, up until this course never allowed good anger to motivate me for positive solutions. Prison taught me violence and the threat of violence solved all things. Positive dialogue and problem solving are the answer.

Thirdly, this course helped me map out my anger profile:

- 1) Suppression-----my childhood
- 2) Open aggression-----prison

My solution to these

Assertiveness and / or letting go, are the two leaders for successful anger management.

PROPER COMMUNICATION AND BALANCE ARE THE LINKS FOR POSITIVE OUTCOMES.

This course taught me that "suppression" is a dangerous cancer that I cannot allow to fester inside my head. To counter this, I plan on using positive effective communication in explaining my dislike or anger with regards to a person's words, actions etc.,

The fourth aspect of the course taught me the negative effects of mythical thinking and false notions. The way I see myself is not the way somebody else may see me. So, to eliminate false notions, I will place myself in the shoes of my boss or a prison guard.

Another way to counter the thought process is simply asking my boss or prison guard a question and "listen" to their insight and thoughts on any area of contention.

This course discusses the -Negative Momentum-, this is a trap that I have fallen into. To counter this dangerous trap, I sit down and do a thorough self-assessment, when and if I see myself cleaning in the wrong direction, with a thorough self -assessment I will avoid self-inflicted words that go hand in hand with negative momentum. Also, by involving myself with good people, positive activities and attending self-help groups, I have found a formula for "SUCCESS".

Lastly, it has become clear that I will always have some ongoing imperfections in my life. So, I choose to accept my circumstances for what they are and I choose to drop my anger. The only way this works is a lifelong commitment to self-improvement. I also realize a problem free life is as absurd as a utopia. As long as I use the tools in this course, and a level head, I will have success.

From the desk of Sister Mary Sean

Easter Sunday

It is good news to know that Truth is immortal. We can suppress Truth, accuse it of being a lie, condemn it, torture it, kill it, bury it in the grave but on the third day Truth will rise again.

Remember this and do not give up on Truth even when everybody seems to give up on it. Do not give up on Truth; do not give up on Justice. **Do not give up on doing what is right.** True will always be true. Just will always be just. Right will always be right even when the world around us would have it otherwise. We must learn to believe in the sun even when it is not shining, knowing that by and by it will shine again. It is the end of the story that counts. That is why the church asks us today to rejoice and be glad. Even when we are going through very difficult times: through betrayal, unjust discrimination, lies, misrepresentations; even when the enemy seems to be winning the battle in our lives. Today Christ has won. And we know that in Christ we shall overcome. Easter blessings from PREP. **Halleluiah, Praise the Lord!**



A thought to ponder
"I asked myself: is my sentence the end of my story"
 Insight Workshop CMC West

Found Suitable for Parole

Arturo George - CAL



Dear Mr. Thomas, my name is Thomas Mason at Solano and I am writing this brief letter to let you know that on December 28, 2017, I was found suitable for Parole.

Mr. Mason, we at PREP are proud of you for all of the efforts you have made to become whom you were always meant to be and looking forward to meeting you in person. Our prayers are with you.
 The PREP staff.

We are excited to announce our website is almost complete, thanks to the generosity, hard work and talent of Luke Sheldon an Attorney who is volunteering his many skills with PREP.

WWW.PREPLA.ORG

Art Show Update



April 14/15 St. Lawrence Martyr

1940 S. Prospect Avenue, Redondo Beach, 90277

April 28/29 St. Joseph

6180 E. Willow, Long Beach 90815

May 5/6 St. Denis

2151 S. Diamond Bar Avenue, Diamond Bar, 91765

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