

Presidents Day 1/15/2018

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♥♥♥ Valentine's Day 2/14 ♥♥♥

LIFE ON THE OUTSIDE

Finding Human Value

by Joseph Ajdukovich

It is amazingly difficult to tell the absolute truth about yourself. Someone is always going to take offense to something you've done. You, yourself, may likely take offense to some of the things you've done. There is another thing, though, even more difficult and to do, and that is assigning values to individual lives. We think actuaries somehow crude for presuming to do so via statistics; yet, we presume to make similar judgments based on, at times, just one solitary bit of information about someone.

Take for example a remote village where there lives a single doctor among the people. Also living in that village is a man who has on occasion stolen from and even harmed another villager quite seriously. Whose life is of more value? Seems obvious, right? What, then, when it is revealed that these two people are one in the same? That it was the doctor who, 15 years before entering his profession, happened to steal and behave recklessly. How many people in that village would today be suffering if there were no doctor for hundreds of miles? Who's to say? No one is capable of divining the future, nor foreseeing the changes another person will undergo. Therefore, it is impossible for anyone to presume knowledge of the particular and relative value of another's life. All too commonly, however, we do presume such knowledge. This is what causes the amazing difficulty in expressing with honest objectivity one's life as it has been lived.

In order to commit to this sort of transparency you must have firm conviction in your own worth as a human being, and in the fact that no instance or collection of instances defines you-unless you decide to let them. Take heart to this vital fact, my friends! It can work to your advantage as easily as to your detriment. Make a catalog of the many good things you have done in your life-and I assure you there are many, no matter who you are-if only you search them out. Try judging yourself from this list instead of those compiled against you. Indeed, you must learn this skill in order to succeed. You must be honest with yourself in all ways, however, for that success to be lasting. This means you cannot simply overlook all the wrongs you alone know you have done. You must list these out too, to be rid of the burden they bear on your heart. You must seek to understand what caused you to do them by thinking and writing about them. Write as fast as you think, without editing or re-reading. A good exercise is to do this first thing each morning. Try to write 3 pages of stream-of-consciousness thought. After a week of doing this, then go back and read them. Know what negative things you've done and why. Then turn away from them with deep conviction. No matter how long the list of negatives is, realize that once you stop adding new ones you are absolutely capable of eclipsing them by continuing to add positives.

Do the same morning exercise again. Only this time list all you've done that makes you feel good about yourself. List the things that other people do that make you feel good and inspire you to do good. Keep your pen moving until you fill 3 pages. When and if you run out of things to write, begin writing affirmations: "I will eclipse my negatives with positives. I will not judge people, lest I be judged myself. I am a good person, and deep down I know this to be true...."

"And you who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now he has reconciled." Colossians 1:21
"For the Son of Man did not come to destroy lives, but to save them...." - Luke 9:56

My name is Joseph Ajdukovich and I served a 12-year sentence for attempted murder and robbery. I was incarcerated from the age 18-31 in general population at Centinela, Calipatria and SATF. I paroled last in August 2012 from New Folsom. The words I choose to live by today, and that I urge all to whom they apply to seek to live by, come from Galatians 5:13 - "For you, dear friends, have been called to live in freedom-not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love."

OASIS



Freedom Within

February - 2018

LIFE ON THE INSIDE

Paying the Price and Gaining Change

by Jay Vasquez ASP

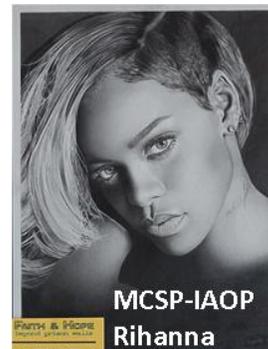
Good morning. I was not born a criminal. My destructive life-style was the result of not learning effective life skills such as assertive communication, empathy, conflict resolution, anger management, and goal-setting. I came to prison a know-it-all 16-year old still searching for identity and trying to find my place in what I thought was a hopeless world. But after 22 years of incarceration and having completed over 80 self-help programs, 3 vocational trades, and earned 2 college degrees with honors, I've learned quite a few life lessons that will help me be a contributing member of society. For example, to succeed in the free community, I must first develop a habit of succeeding in prison. This requires changing the way I look at things because if I change the way I look at things, the things I look at change.

The other day I heard someone say that they didn't mind being in prison. In fact, this person glorified prison. He said, "I've got free meals, free rent, and free gym membership because I get to workout all day." Well, I disagree. Everything has a price. I believe the rent we pay in prison is the most expensive price compared to any real estate on earth. So why do I say that prison is the most expensive place to live; because we pay with our freedom. I've learned that to maintain freedom out there I must first free myself in here. If I change the way I think, then I change the way I act. It is a simple concept, yet difficult to do because people are creatures of habit. My personal experience has shown me that change is possible for anyone who is willing to work at it. But I cannot enjoy the view unless I climb the mountain.

I realized the way I was living was still victimizing my victims and I was the creator of my own misery. It dawned on me that if I create my own misery, then it stands to reason that I can create my own happiness. But to do so requires a behavioral change starting from the inside out. A desire developed inside me which I believe was my innate spirit striving to affirm itself. The more I gave it attention, the more my creative potential shined through. This desire in me grows stronger each day because I'm finally aligned with my authentic self.

The fire within motivated me to seek knowledge on how to change bad habits into good habits. This is where education, vocational training, and self-help programs came into play. The more I learned, the more I practiced a healthier way of living; and this in turn created the happiness, balance, and stability that my spirit desired. I began to feel better about myself, my relationships improved, and gone were the days of solitary confinement in the hole. I've learned that life is what I make of it, and my past doesn't define who I am today. I focus energy on my limitless potential instead of my limiting past. I believe a mistake is only a mistake if I don't learn from it. If I learn from my mistakes then that turns it into a valuable life lesson which ultimately makes me stronger and wiser. I am still not where I want to be in life, but every day I grow one step closer. And isn't that what life is really about... the journey.

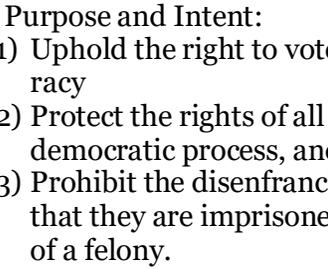
Change is not a destination; it is a way of life. I also believe that happiness is a state of mind. So I encourage every one of you to practice what you've learned, create your own happiness, and turn this experience into a powerful life lesson. As you complete one chapter of your journey, glance back and appreciate your accomplishments and recognize the strength you possess for the path that lies ahead. It is a huge achievement to earn a GED or complete a vocational trade. Keep learning, keep growing, and use what you've learned to improve your quality of life, which in turn will have a positive impact on those you love and care about.



Continued from Life on The Inside

Thank you Ms. Blanton, Mr. Cravens, and Mrs. Kellenberger for helping me become the person I am today and for providing opportunities to enhance my quality of life. I take a piece of each of you with me on my journey. I've learned that prison makes good people better and bad people worse. This implies there is no such thing as good people or bad people, there are only people. But there are good decisions and bad decisions, and ultimately that is what defines a person's character. So, ask yourself, is the rent in prison really free. The caps and gowns we're wearing today are proof that we want a better life. We are worth it. So, let us continue to practice what we've learned because our experience in prison can be a waste or it can be our greatest asset. The choice is ours. Twenty-two years. Everything has a price. The rent in prison is way too high for me. For better or worse, this is my journey. And on this journey, I found true freedom in prison. Thank you. PREP Workshop Forum graduation 12/15/17

Coming up on the November Ballot (Prop 17-0023) ELIMINATES RESTRICTIONS ON VOTING BY FELONS OR PAROLEES. Get the word out to family and friends. Title: The Voting Restoration and Democracy Act of 2018.



- Purpose and Intent:
- 1) Uphold the right to vote as fundamental to any democracy
 - 2) Protect the rights of all US citizens to participate in the democratic process, and
 - 3) Prohibit the disenfranchisement of voters on the basis that they are imprisoned or on parole for the conviction of a felony.

We are the Art Show Family



Lucy Copp, Sam Martinez, Olivia De Cardenas, and Carolina Krakovic. Sam always starts by practicing on me. He believes anything that covers my face is an improvement.

Holy Family Art Show: we were honored to share in the celebration of John August Swanson's 80th birthday. You the contributors to our show made an everlasting footprint in the hearts all who attended, You have the heart of PREP.

Art Show Update



PREP's next Art Show is at St Lawrence Martyr, Redondo Beach, April 14-15
 The significance of our shows is speaking to the parishioners about God's redemptive love in those inside and out who choose to change and transform their lives. We thank you for the art you continue to send us and we ask for your further ♥♥♥ generosity of art to support PREP. ♥♥♥♥

From the desk of Sister Mary Sean

At this time of division in our country and with unrest prevalent among other nations, let us hold true to our calling to be peace-makers We are called by our God to love one another as we are loved.



We pray with, and support, the thousands of immigrants who have lived in the US for most of their lives and are living in fear of deportation. **WE ARE ONE PEOPLE!**
 We stand firmly with Pope Francis as he says to young immigrants: "The first thing I want to tell you is that I'm praying for you...The second thing is to continue to dream. And find people who love you and want to defend you in this difficult moment." **WE ARE ONE PEOPLE!!!**
 We welcome Tony Kim on board with us to work with Fred Price in Turning Point and also to review Insight. Always in change of personnel we are slow... and catching up. Be patient with us- as we are with you!!
 We remain grateful to DALE LOZIER for continuing to publish OASIS even though he retired in December when he had shoulder surgery. Thanks Dale.
 PREP is giving only Recognition of Completions- no more chronos. Tony Kim says it best: "Self development and introspective work is for your own personal growth."
 My trip in January to HAITI with nine members of Holy Family South Pasadena Church is most memorable. I will give a reflection in the next OASIS.
 As always, we are grateful to you for your ongoing donations of stamps, money and ART.
 May you continue to be blessed as we are blessed, know always **WE ARE ONE PEOPLE** in our God!

With love, YOUR PREP STAFF

Correction! This amazing piece of art was created and donated to PREP by Martin Rene Rodriguez. I erroneously published it in the December 2017 OASIS as the work of Uriel Rodriguez. Uriel being a man of great integrity wrote saying, "While I appreciate the compliment of being associated with such a great piece of art, it is not mine." To Martin I truly apologize. AT PREP your art and your contributions are exceedingly appreciated.



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