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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

I was born in the City of Detroit, Michigan, I was raised primarily by my mother. Although, my father was present. His role in the beginning of my life was minimal. His role became more of a friend than a father. Outside of my family, when I was growing up the environment was normal. Or at least what I believe was normal to me.

We use to have rock fights, and shingle fights with the neighborhood children. If you don't know about shingle fights. Well what we would do is the siding on houses that was flat and tar like. We would tear that off the side of the houses and throw them at each other. Once I was hit in the head with a brick during a rock fight and I cut a child over his eye with a shingle.

I grew up on the Eastside of Detroit. The place I was talking about was on Van Dyke and a street called Leander. Then we moved to a street called Hoyt. That was so that we would be close to a school that provided a great education at the time. It was a Magnet School. Where, your parents had to stand in a line in order to try and enroll you in the school. Not everybody was allowed. Your grades had to be up to par. There is were I stayed until my incarceration. I believe that we were the first black family to move on that block. Not much of what they consider (white flight took place). Only houses that white people stayed in that moved was next door to us. Other than that the block remained mainly with whites and a Vietnamese family. The schooling level finally fall below average. It started to take on a whole different meaning, school that is. The place I grew up was nice overall.

I can say that my life as a child was not the greatest. However, I knew children that were worse off than myself. So I always looked at my life as a blessing.

My ideas and perceptions about the criminal legal system as a young person, was colored by my family's history with it. As well as my own personal experiences. My father went to prison when I was around 2 or 3 years of age. My uncle came to prison when I was around 8 or 9 years of age. So, I had the notion that the legal system was for those who did wrong. But it was a particular type of wrong. Being at the wrong place at the wrong time is what I was told. That was as far as reasons went. So I assumed that if you were somewhere that you weren't suppose to be then you could go to prison. Couple that with the some prejudiced that I was taught about growing up.

Our house was broken into and the police never showed up for that. Along with that they had a group, I don't know if they were real officers. They were called the Blue Pigs. They dressed up in officers uniforms and played music at schools. They would tell us the say no to drugs routine along with doing our homework and listening to our parents and teachers. So that helped to paint a particular picture of the justice system as well.

I was arrested for the first time at I believe it was 12. I was in a car with a friend who had stolen it. So I was taken into custody and let go for joy riding. That scenario happen only a couple of other occasions as well. It was more like a catch and release system. Slap on the writs violations. Within that sentiment, I had no time to really appreciate the true consequences of my actions and were they were leading me. So at age 15 I found myself in custody yet again. A so called friend of mine was robbing a store and I was outside. When he came running out of the store the police were already there. I ran when I saw him running and I ran into a guy on a scooter. Luckily the guy who rob the store was white and I was black or else I would have been in prison for that. I did however, get charged with larceny from a person in regards to the scooter rider.

My lawyer at time told me that we could have won the case, yet they told me that if I plead guilty I could go home at that time. So I took the sure thing and plead guilty to a crime I didn't commit just to ensure that I would go home that day. That was my first contact with the criminal legal system.

I do believe that I sent a list of all of the facilities that I have been at. I have been down for 26 years now and I have been to about 8 facilities. I first spent most of my time in level 4. That was when I first came to prison. I was being trained/taught by people (other prisoners) who didn't have my best interest at heart. So I lived and began to mold into the reality of prison life. Adopting the prison culture seeking to advance and enhance a name for myself. That was so it (my name) would reach prisons before I did. Only to establish that I am what people in here would consider a monster. This provided a form of protection and relief. It also created wanted and unwanted attention as well as enemies.

Being in prison for me was a blessing and a curse. It took an understanding for me to see that it was a blessing. I was on a destructive path. Had I remained on that path that I was on at the time. I believe that I wouldn't have focused on what really matters. It (prison) gave me a true opportunity to focus on myself.

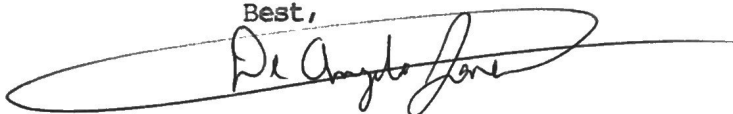
It is a horrible feeling to live in prison. Only because of the self-examination, self-analysis, and self-corrections that I have made. I remember times when I actually had to build up the courage to walk into a cell. One day a Correction Officer asked me: "why do you always take so long to go in your cell." And my response was, "I have to build up the courage to lock me in a cell."

At Riverside the conditions of living in prison were more relaxed. I believe because at the time that it was open. A lot of us there were younger so we were given more freedom. The cell was so small, when two of us stood up it was crowded. We also didn't have a bathroom in the cell. So we were given a urinal (the hospital jug). When we had to defecate we had (3) three choices. One we could wait at the door or bang on it until an officer came and hope they were nice enough to let us out. Two we could hold it and risk damaging our self medically. Three we could just use the bathroom of the floor. For some that was a choice that was made.

Muskegon was more of the same, except we had a toilet in the cell. Where I am now, I share 8 toilets, 6 urinals (the stand up kind), 6 phones and 6 showers in the unit with over 130 other prisoners. I sleep in a bunk-bed about 3ft away from another person on the top bunk. There are 8 of us in a cubicle setting. The area is open space and about the size of a bedroom. We also have 8 wall lockers, the tall ones in the cube with a 8 chairs and a table as well. All that is not including the personal property that each of us may have. Legal footlockers and personal footlockers. But all of that is in a area the size of a bedroom.

I pray that this information is helpful in your endeavors to this Project. Thank you for allowing me an opportunity to assist the Project if I have.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DeAngelo Jones", written over a horizontal line.

DeAngelo Jones