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Testimony

- I was born July 28th, 1982 at St. Joseph Hospital in Ypsilanti, Mi. I was primarily raised by my mother but my father and I would spend time together as well.
- Being Bi-racial, my experiences were feeling of no acceptance, even from my own family. So I always felt like no one cared about me and that I was alone in the world.
- I grew up in Wayne, mi for 15 years then we moved to my mother's childhood home in Canton, mi and I lived there for 8 years. I bounced back and forth to my father's home in Brightmore, Det. Living with my mother I was always around Caucasian people who I would experience the racism and feelings of not being wanted or accepted. From the ages of 6-18, I was in and out of different boys homes and institutions, seven in total, and I was home for 5 years before coming to prison at the age of 23.
- As a young person my perception of the criminal system was that of not being wanted. Most of the times I was placed in a home or institution, it was my mother's doing, so these places forced me to become numb at a very young age.

- The facilities I've been to are: St. Louis (SLF) from 2006-2008 level 4, Oaks (ECF) 2012-2014 level 2-4, and Coldwater (LCF) 2014-present level 2.

- I hate being incarcerated, I've grown and matured over the last 15 years and all I see are people who are emotionally deprived. Everyday there's an argument over the littlest thing that almost always ends with threats. You have people in here that are good people people that you can lean on, but, for the most part everyone is just tryin to survive... emotionally, mentally, and physically.

- The food is at best... horrible. There is no nutritional value to it and there is no pride in presenting it to the population. Every meal either has over/under cook beans or un-peeled mashed potatoes... Working and employment are a joke. We get paid on average a dollar a day and work over 40 hours a week, just to get paid once a month \$10.00 - \$25.00 depending on your job and your skill level. You can work in the kitchen and get paid \$50.00 a month but you would have to work 160 hours and that's if your skill if not your out of luck. Because the store prices do not make it any easier. One (1) Ramen noodle cost .35, tuna 4oz - \$1.50, toothpaste \$3.34, deodorant \$2.50 - \$3.70. So if you do the math, you have to either be clean or not have anything to eat which in turn causes a lot of stealing.

Healthcare is unacceptable... If we have a problem with teeth - they just want to pull them. Bones - if it doesn't need surgery, they just cast it leaving people deformed because the bone wasn't set or taken care of. It takes months to see the provider who thinks that they are doctors (but they're only PA's) and that's after you've already had to see the nurse's twice and they try to diagnose you which they're not qualified to do either. Not to mention everytime you want to see dental, eye, or healthcare... you have to pay \$5.00 out of that money that I mentioned earlier. So most of the time people don't want to even go to "healthcare" because you end up paying \$5.00 for them to do nothing or just give you the run around. . . . Education and training are left up to you. Meaning if I want to make myself better, I have to do the work. I mean yeah sure they have classes and programs for you to take and some places even have college now, but besides those college classes who do you think teaches those other classes and programs? . . . inmates who've taken them! They want to better themselves so they go through the training (done by inmates) learn and start teaching. I can personally speak on that because I am a facilitator for the Chance For Life program and that is how we do it a most programs are ran the same way. The inmates are the one's teaching other inmates how to better themselves not the administration or state workers.

- My incarceration means to me... A chance to right my wrongs, to be a new man. I've been given an opportunity to reflect and through introspection, take a look at my past, my emotions, my attitude, and my behaviors to understand why I came to prison and how I can change from being the person I was to the person I need to be. Incarceration for me gave me the ability to gain emotional intelligence.

- My perspective about the system is point blank... it's a business not interested in your well being or the communities. It's all about the almighty \$

- What I want people to know is that there are good people in here. We did something wrong or bad but that was a moment in time that was/is not the person we are. I am not the worst thing I've done and neither are you. True empathy is taking your emotions, your judgments out of it and seeing how the other person was or is experiencing that situation, realizing that no matter where we come from or who we are, we all want the same thing and that is happiness. It may look different for different walks of life and sometimes we go about getting it the wrong way but that doesn't change the fact that we all want the same thing. Sometimes it just takes others a little longer to get there...

Thank you

