



Founder's Full Story & Vision

Thank you for your interest in the founder's dedication to fulfilling the mission set before him by God Almighty...

He believes that you should know the truth before joining him in this endeavor. He, himself, was lied to and trapped *into* one of the deadliest gangs in the '80s era: The Aryan Brotherhood of Texas — *because* of false and incomplete information concerning what he was joining, he quit and had a contract placed on his life... It was the *second* time he had to face a death sentence...

No one likes negative surprises, deceit or pressures applied to make us submit. Especially when lives hang in the balance; our own, *or* someone else's.

The details of the founder's gang activity and the hit placed upon his life will be provided later in this writing. The documentation is *long* because the founder's errors in judgment were *huge*, and his redemption *long* and *violent* and *achieved* only by the Grace and Mercy and Forgiveness and Love of Jesus Christ...

Herein, he has fully explained his predicament, his stupidity, his ignorance, his mistakes, and the renewing of the mind (*Romans 12:2*) that God so graciously bestowed upon him, as well as the vision He set before the founder.

Grab a coffee and a doughnut (or your favorite drink and snack) and be introduced to the founder.

Hear, straight from him, the vision and how it was delivered to him while serving a Life Sentence in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice: Institutional Division.

First: before you dismiss this as having come from some religious fanatic, or some delusional idiot, please read it, *in its entirety*, and allow your heart to guide you.

It addresses and offers solutions to the national dilemma of inner-city poverty and violence, as well as the lack of opportunities and job skills in the economic workforce.

It involves Law Enforcement, the Citizenry, and the Local, State, and Federal, Government.

The program will dissolve police profiling as citizens and police interact in scheduled events and get to know each other; and *understand* each other's fears, hopes, and dreams...

In the endeavor laid out herein, there is a very definite upside for the President, the Nation, our States, Cities, and, *more importantly*, the individuals who are lost to poverty, abandonment, lack of quality education and legitimate opportunities, and to the resultant gang violence — from within and from without.

My name is John Bradley Dainwood and in accordance with the instructions of God, I have formed the nonprofit organization, *God's Neutral Zone: The GNZ*.

Arrested on January 12, 1979, and not released from prison until November 19, 2014 (a continuous term of 35 years, 10 months, and 7 days; from the age of 18 to the age of 54), I was confined in a prison cage.

Sometimes I was held in a cage, within a cage, within a cage. *All* were cages I certainly and seriously deserved...

God's Grace and Mercy, however, are sufficient for *anyone* and *everyone* who will embrace the Way, the Truth, & the Life: Jesus Christ.

I was indicted for Capital Murder in January of 1979 (causing the death of an individual during the course of a robbery), and the State of Texas filed notice of its intent to seek the death penalty.

I was guilty as charged.

After six months of preparing for a Capital Murder jury trial, I entered a plea agreement to avoid the death sentence. I pled guilty to the lesser-included offense of murder, at a bench trial before a Judge.

I did this to avoid *execution by lethal injection*. Instead of the death sentence, I was given a life sentence — with parole release *possibilities* after serving a mandatory 20 calendar years of incarceration to reach *initial* parole eligibility.

Having turned 19 in the county jail, I entered prison without much in the way of education. Although I quit school as a junior in high school, I was a terrible student, with an extremely erratic and short attention span.

Additionally, in the year before committing the crime, I had a major car wreck, in which my skull was broken into four large pieces and shoved downward upon the brain, causing paralysis of the right side, seizures, and severe personality disorders...

Consequently, I entered prison dumb as a rock, brain-damaged, and filled with rage... We fear things (*and people*) we cannot understand and fear is the very *root* of anger and rage...

On the way to prison shackled and chained for maximum-security transport, I was 19, 6' tall, weighing 145 lbs, with blond hair and blue eyes, and still suffering brain injury and trauma that would take years to heal.

During my six-month stay in the county jail, preparatory to a capital murder jury trial, I had heard all of the stories of how the hardened criminals of the maximum-security penal institutions abused teenagers (the maximum-security prisons that the seriousness of my crime and eventual length of sentence would mandate I be housed in).

I was scared to death and striving desperately not to let it show; hardened prisoners *smell* fear with an animalistic instinct that is as precise as it is strong.

A *whiff* of fear and they begin to circle and hone in for attack and total domination...

After the first hour of the prisoner transport ride from Beaumont Texas to Huntsville – an hour of bone-shaking fear and the inability to think beyond the rapidly circulating, panicky, thought of, *O God! What am I going to do?! What am I going to do? WHAT AM I GOING TO DO????!!* – a shackled man in the row in front of me, turned and scornfully, contemptuously, asked:

How you going to do that time, youngster?

You gonna get you a man to take care of you?

How you gonna DO that time, BOY?

The questions were rapid and spoken with the gleeful undertone of a twisted man who could already visualize this young, scared, boy *under* him...

In *that* instant, *my heart turned to stone* inside of my chest. All of my fear congealed into a hard, solid, all-encompassing rage. My shaking and quaking instantly ceased; replaced with a calm, seething, but highly explosive anger.

I answered the questions in the *manner* and *stance* I would operate from until God renewed my mind, enabling me to begin to see another way — *The way, The Truth, The Life, The Peace, The Love*, that is found only in Jesus Christ.

My answer was, *I tell you how I am going to do my time, mister... I am going to do it killing anyone who F***S with me. Are you F*****G with me???*

It was said calmly but with the even temperament of the maniacal for whom rage was physically suppressed only because he was chained and shackled.

The facial expressions and body language of *both* myself and my antagonist changed — *and abruptly so*.

Mine, the *instant* the all-encompassing and barely controlled fear *congealed* into a proportionate degree of suppressed rage; the antagonist's, from a hungry wolf circling its prey, to the wariness of a wolf pack leader who finds himself, unexpectedly, in the presence of a lone wolf who is better left alone...

The man's answer was to turn around in his seat to face away from me while muttering the first *positive* words I had heard in a long, long, time: *You'll be all right down here* (meaning in maximum-security prisons).

Several months after entering the prison system, and while at work in the fields, several convicts jumped me.

They knocked out one of my front teeth, cracked my jaw, and bruised my rib cage lining in multiple spots...

They jumped me on a day when the men on the cell block would go to spend money – if they had any – at the Unit Commissary.

When the cell doors rolled open to allow the convicts to come out for commissary, several of the men who had attacked me in the fields earlier that day, confronted me with a list of items for \$20 of the \$30 allowed to be spent in the commissary every two weeks, during that period of 1979.

They informed me that I would get more of the same (beatings) if I did not provide this money on a continuing basis (every two weeks).

They added that I would have to *catch the cell* for some *big six* (dominoes) later that evening. This was prison-speak for entering someone else's cell, to be locked in with them until the doors were again rolled open.

The *playing dominoes* reason was subterfuge, nuanced to allow me the fallacy to hope against hope that it was *merely* to play dominoes instead of a *ploy* to rape me...

During the short months before the beating, I had prepared a prison shank — a weapon fashioned out of a bean ladle handle.

Instead of commissary, I gave the leader a shank in the chest and the other two ran off.

I was subsequently told by the medical personnel who checked on prisoners confined to punitive solitary confinement, and the restrictive dietary rations then in effect, that I had just nicked the muscle of the man's heart, but had missed puncturing a valve or severing an artery, so the man had lived.

Ultimately, however, it had the same effect on other prisoners as if the man had been slain. They viewed me in an entirely different light.

They viewed me with the wariness and *fear* that is the *equivalent* of respect in the prisons of the world. They saw the *demonstrative* evidence that to mess with this teenager was to risk losing their lives. They determined I was better left alone.

My existence took a *radical* turn.

From quaking fear to evidenced rage – from being preyed upon, to being left alone – these changes were instantaneous and directly connected to the violence displayed...

When this environmental *shift* was coupled with my brain injuries and disabilities, it was a recipe that provided a sense of security and well-being for the first time in my relatively short confinement... a span of time that had then seemed *forever* in passing.

Additionally, it filled me with the *bedrock certainty* that such actions would *guarantee* that I would be left alone for the duration of my life sentence...

It was the *illusion* of an oasis to a man dying of thirst in the hottest part of *the* desert of all deserts — it was the proverbial *recipe for disaster*, but it was the *only* one available to my limited mental capacity and environmental circumstances: Kill or be Killed... or worse.

It was the *only* path I could *see* where I might come *close* to being left alone for the two decades necessary for *initial* parole release *possibilities*... It was still 1979 and I could not be eligible for parole consideration until January of 1999.

Ignorance, a damaged and improperly functioning brain, the only rewards experienced coming from rage exhibited through violence, and fear congealed into a hard knot of anger and temperament; this is not a combination conducive to decision-making on a *rational* level... It is merely surviving on instinct.

This is especially true when the only alternative is to return to a continual state of living in *dread, fear, and palpable* anxiety — returning to the state of a rabbit for whom ravening wolves *await at every hole of the warren, for it to poke its head up*.

Due to these facts and actions, stemming from my inability for rational decision-making, I was placed into administrative segregation in one of the most dangerous prison in the State of Texas during this era. The Eastham Unit was labeled *Home of the Criminally Insane* – though it was a prison and not a mental institution. From standard administrative segregation, I was then placed into total isolation: security detention... for attempting to burn a man alive in the cell next to mine.

I, effectively, went to prison within prison, and then to prison within prison within prison, as the State determined that I was too dangerous for the general population of the prison which held the worst of the worst in

Texas...

From my cage within a cage within a cage, I *cried out to God* for *deliverance from myself*, and to be lifted out of the hole I had dug so deeply that only a *miracle* of God could bring me forth...

As I progress in this writing, I will explain the circumstances of the first half of my prison years, I will also explain how God transformed me through the renewing of the mind (*Romans 12:2*) during the second half.

First, however, I will discuss the circumstances of how the vision of the *God's Neutral Zone: The GNZ* came to be.

For the last 15 to 20 years of confinement, I began to study God's Word (*The Holy Bible*) in depth. I also earned three AAS degrees from Lee College and was certified in numerous vocational trades (two of which were instrumental in building and maintaining this website).

I learned to walk with God in prison and I was *truly* set free, long before the State granted me *physical* release from imprisonment to serve out the remainder of my life sentence in the free world... *he whom the Son sets free is free indeed* (*John 8:36*).

I began by delving into God's Word, with the perspective of believing that it is the *only* infallible truth. I asked God for Wisdom and Spiritual Discernment, and where I read things that were difficult to understand, I sought other scriptures to prove what was written (*as opposed to trying to – by any means – disprove it*).

I earnestly studied the entire Holy Bible, and I found that when the scriptures are taken *in context*, there are no contradictions, no errors, nor unfulfilled promises (*except those lined up for prophecy fulfillment in the future*).

I began to get involved with the various Bible Studies and Church Activities provided by the Unit Chaplaincy. As I learned, I shared the information with those around me.

Truly, the treasures contained in God's Word are such that in the middle of the worst storms one can imagine, there can be peace, strength, and joy, stemming from not having to endure them alone, powerless, and directionless...

As I came to understand God's Word and as it began to come alive in my life, I had peace and true joy amid the chaos inherent to living in a cage with extremely violent individuals.

I wanted others to have this peace and joy that comes *only* from God, so I began sharing God's Word with them and offering to pray for anyone who wanted or needed it (you'd be surprised at how many hardened men want prayer for their families and sometimes even for themselves).

Eventually, I began teaching Bible Studies on the cell blocks I lived in, and sometimes preaching on the recreation yards. I became a member of the choir and then a spiritual leader over the choir of the TDCJ-ID Unit I was housed in.

I even preached, occasionally, to the congregations of the Unit Chapel... I sometimes provided the sermons when a Chaplain or the scheduled Prison Ministers failed to keep their appointment to preach and minister.

I routinely accompanied the Unit Chaplain (Chaplain Thedford), to bring the Word of God to those housed in the Regional Medical Facility, awaiting death at the end of their fatal illnesses... or who were being treated for very serious disease or injury.

I continually witnessed to the men around me concerning God's promise to renew the mind, to deliver, to save, to bless those that choose the Way, the Truth, the Life, through believing and trusting God, His plan of salvation, and the sacrifice He made so that everyone choosing to do so, could enter into His Kingdom... I explained that Jesus did not come into the world to condemn it, but to save it (*John 3:17*) and that we might have life and life more abundantly (*John 10:10*).

I shared with these men the certainty that they were loved, valued, and cherished by the Creator to the point that He *intentionally* had a Son to sacrifice that they may have *all* that He has promised believers (*John 3:16*). I then taught them *all* the promises of God — promises to bless *and* promises to curse (*All of which will be kept*; the *only* impossibility for God is that He should lie — *Numbers 23:19*; *1 Samuel 15:29*; *Hebrews 6:18*).

It had a good effect on the men for many years, but then they began to say to others (and finally to me directly):

There's no use in me doing the Christian thing. Nobody walks for God like you in here, but God is not delivering you — I can't walk like that in here, so He ain't about to deliver me...

They, of course, believed that *deliverance* meant *release from prison*.

By this time, I had served the 20 years necessary to reach initial parole release eligibility and had received and served an additional 15 years' worth of set-offs (*release denials*).

It broke my heart and wounded my spirit to know that my very relationship with God was the *reason* these men would not come to Him; the *reason* they could not become new creations, new creatures, in Christ... the *reason* they were blocked from all things becoming new... the *reason* they were lost to a meaningful, purpose-filled life...

While they all respected the fact that I had not lost my mind, as well as the strength it takes to survive decades in prison, and years of administrative segregation, without becoming warped by the pressures and the environment, they viewed the fact that God had not gotten *me* out of prison as *evidence* that He would *never* do that for *them*...

On Friday-night, July 11th, 2014, several months before I would again be eligible for parole release, I was on my knees crying out to God in anguish. My very closeness *with* Him, and the peace and joy that comes *automatically* when we line up our will with His, was actually driving a *wedge* between Himself and the men who needed Him the most... and I was that wedge.

So I prayed:

Oh Lord, my God! My very relationship with you is driving men away from you. In fact, my very witness is a stumbling-block to everyone here.

These men equate deliverance with getting out of prison — I know that you have delivered me from myself, and from the power and the penalty of sin... I know that you have set me free while in prison, but they do not want to hear that...

I have never asked you to get me out of here, because I am guilty and deserving of nothing more than spending the rest of my life in prison and then going straight to Hell. And Hell was my destiny and destination, but for Your Grace and Mercy and Love and Forgiveness...

I have told you again, and again, that I will serve you no matter where I am, even if that means that I must stay in this dreadful place for the rest of my life, and that has not changed...

My answer shall ever be Isaiah's when you ask, "Whom shall we send, Who will go forth for us?" It shall ever be, "Here am I, Lord, send me."

But Lord, my witness is no longer good here... What would be a good witness – a great witness – is if you got me out of here in such a way that no one could doubt that it was anything but you that did it.

That would be a great witness and proof to these men that you will deliver those that put their trust completely in you.

So Lord, I am going to ask you, will you deliver me at this parole process?

Before I could get the word *process* completely spoken, my anxiety *instantly* disappeared, my mind became *completely* still, and God said, *I WILL!*

While I did *not* hear an *audible* voice, the strength and the clarity of the thought was such that I *knew* — that if this *was* God, then it was the small, still, yet powerful, voice that others speak of God using, but that I had never, myself, experienced.

I was stunned. The abrupt stillness of my mind, coupled with this statement from God, sent my heartbeat off the charts. I had never in my life experienced anything like it and *doubt* leaped to the forefront of my mind.

I had been in prison, continually for 3½ decades. Everyone, accept my Mother, believed that the State of Texas – because of my violent crime, my violence while in prison, and my smuggling marijuana and contraband into the prisons – would *never* allow me to leave...

Even so, like the Apostle Paul, I had learned to be content in all places and things (*Philippians 4:11-13*), and I was truly *grateful* to God for having set me free spiritually, *while in prison*.

There are a lot of *seconds* and *minutes* and *hours* and *days* and *months* and *years* in 3½ decades (I was incarcerated for approximately 1 *Billion*; 131 *Million*, 354 *Thousands* seconds) and I *hated* every second of cage dwelling...

And, by the way, the seconds aren't your *average tick-of-the-clock* when you are forced to live in a cage; *they're stretched long and hard...* Time moves at a different, crueller, pace when you're housed in a cage — It just *does*.

So, I am sure you can understand that when God spoke to me, my excitement and physical reaction were immediate... My heart racing, my emotions swirling upward, my mind stunned, yet wary and doubting, I continued my prayer:

Oh Lord — is that You? I want with every ounce of my being to believe that it is You, but I don't know if it's You, or if it's me, just wanting it so badly that I am attributing my own desire to coming from you...

You know how much I have hated every single second of these 3½ decades of cage dwelling... You know how much I want out, so, I don't know if this is You or if it's me simply wanting it so terribly bad that I think it is You. So; I am going to ask again...

Then, as if God might be hard of hearing or somehow might have misunderstood my question, I – slowly and with great diction – asked, *Will... You... Deliver... Me... At... This... Parole... Process..."*

Again, before I could completely get the word *process* out of my mouth; *I WILL!*

I started to shake... Could this really *be* God?!

I was excited and almost in tears, but I *still* did not *really* believe that this was *not* me wanting it so badly that I was answering my own question and attributing it to God. So, I continued my prayer:

Oh God! I want so much to believe this is You and I do believe; I do know that You can deliver me, but – like the father of the child the disciples could not cast the demons out of – You are going to have to "help thou me with my unbelief..." (Mark 9:24).

Forgive me, Father, but I am going to need confirmation that this is really from You... Like doubting Thomas, I am going to have to reach into your side and put my fingers into the nail holes (John 20:27)... I want this so badly that I do not know if it is You or Me... Forgive me for my unbelief, but I am going to have to have confirmation...

And Lord? You know that I'm kind of dense. You know that I'm a little stupid where you are concerned... You know that I tend to completely miss the things you'd have me do, often until I have already messed things up... or missed the opportunity.

Oh God, if this really is you, you are going to have to provide me with confirmation and, when you do, please do it in such a way that I will know for sure that it comes from you and that I understand your answer...

I have learned to sincerely thank and praise you in all circumstances – both good and bad (1 Thessalonians 5:18) – knowing that you work all things to the good to them that love you and are the called according to your purpose (Romans 8:28).

If it is you, I praise your Holy Name... If I had ten thousand tongues, I could not praise you enough and I will witness this miracle you have done to anyone and everyone who will listen — both here and in the free world.

If, on the other hand, this is me simply thinking it is you, confirm it and, still, I will praise you for as long as I am here...

I will praise you for as long as I live, either way it goes — But I need confirmation and I need you to make it clear.

I remained silent for a time, awash in this extraordinary experience with God. I took some deep breaths and then felt almost *compelled* to ask God:

What about my Brother, John Jones, Lord? Are you going to deliver my Brother? Are you going to deliver John from his two life sentences???

His answer was as immediate and certain as He had answered for my situation... *I WILL!*

This set me upon my feet... I leaped up from my knees and began to pace the cell... Excited, but strangely at peace. A calm came over me that is inexplicable, as the hope that this was *really* God, speaking the promise of

my freedom from the physical limitation of cage dwelling, began to solidify, from indefinite hope, to looked-for certainty...

Only men serving life sentences (or death sentences) can understand the gut-wrenching forces that are brought to bear moment by moment, from without and from within, for years and decades. There is no time, no moment of wakefulness when men serving these sentences do not have the full weight of *time* and the almost hopeless struggles of *survival* upon them...

There is no break in the *battles* of depression, and hopelessness, and *uselessness*, in the *war* comprised of men serving life, or death, sentences...

There is no *freedom* from the soul-crushing weight of condemnation, of isolation, of total and complete societal rejection... except through the supernatural love and acceptance and power of God Almighty, through Jesus Christ...

This is the love that compelled me, in the face of the greatest single event in my life (beyond my salvation) to inquire of God, His intentions for my Brother... I will explain the spiritual bond shared between John and myself, a little later on.

It was that bond that moved me to speak of him to God, in the spectacular moment of God promising my deliverance from the cage I so richly deserved...

For now just know that John Jones was the *only* person, other than my Mother, and one other person, for whom my answer and the vision subsequently provided by God was *real*; who believed – and *continues* to believe – that it would and *will* happen *exactly* the way God relayed it to me...

Again, this was July 11th, 2014. I had been on my knees for a long time that Friday night. It was late when I finally went to sleep. Oddly enough, however, I had no trouble going to sleep. I got on my bunk, laid my head on my makeshift pillow, and closed my eyes. Seemingly, the next moment, my alarm was going off for me to get up and get ready to leave when they rolled the doors for Saturday Morning Church Service.

I was feeling great, as I always did when going to church. It was another day; another opportunity to praise God, to hear His Word, and to thank Him for renewing my mind; for transforming me from the Demoniak, Gadarene, Man (*Luke 8:26-39*) into the man He called me to be...

For turning me from a man of trouble, extreme rage and violence, into a peacemaker... *And Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God (Matthew 5: 9).*

I knew that God *would* give me the confirmation I asked for, and I felt in my spirit that, this time, I would recognize it and not read it wrongly... Usually, however, it takes *time* for Him to provide confirmation. It could be weeks; the next parole consideration process was not due to begin for a couple of months.

Although I knew confirmation would come somewhere in the period prior to the next parole consideration process, I did not expect it to be early in the morning immediately following my late-night prayer.

That, however, is *exactly* what happened.

During worship services in the prison chapel, it is customary for choir members to circle up, hold hands, and pray for individual choir members, their families, and the congregation, and to usher The Holy Spirit into the chapel. It is also the custom to have someone read a scripture.

To get the men into the word, beyond the weekly bible studies I taught, we had implemented the procedure of having a random choir member read whatever verse(s) God would provide. That Saturday morning, when the choir director asked, *Who is going to bring the scripture?* The Holy Ghost immediately told me, *YOU READ IT!*

Before I even realized it, I had my Bible out of my shirt pocket and into my hands... (I have an Authorized King James Version of the Holy Bible – Old and New Testament – that fits into my shirt pocket. I carried it everywhere I went; answering questions and witnessing to men all over the prison: Dayrooms, Recreation Yards, Chow Halls, Hallways, etc., etc.) ...

With the Bible in hand, I silently asked God, *What scripture? I don't have a scripture ready!* While questioning Him, I had *randomly* cracked open the Bible, and the Holy Spirit said, *Just Read!*

I had opened the Bible, without giving it any thought, and when I lowered my eyes to the page, I simply began to read where my eyes focused.

The Bible had opened at the Book of Acts, the twentieth chapter, and so I replied that I would bring the

scripture and began to read the passage my eyes had landed upon.

At that point, I believed I was reading a scripture that one, some, or *all* of the men needed to hear for encouragement, conviction, deliverance...whatever... a scripture specific to *them*.

I had been a choir member and spiritual leader for right at 3 years. I had taught these men hard lessons (lessons they did not really want to hear). There was a contingent of choir members who resented that I took the first part of their once-weekly choir practice hour in a mandatory Bible study. (Often members join the choir for the chance to sing and play the instruments — serving God is not the *main* reason they join.)

So, I began to read where my eyes had landed, thinking God wanted these men to hear this particular scripture and I was excited to see what it was He was going to convey to *them*.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

And now, behold; I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (Acts 20: 24-28)

I was supposed to continue reading verses 29-36, *but I just could not*, though later I *did* share those verses with the men. I *knew* that I *knew* that I *knew*; these verses *were* the confirmation that I had asked for.

I *knew* when I read the words *and now, behold; I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more*. Verse 31 was just added confirmation (although I did not read it until later):

Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

I had been a Spiritual Leader over the choir for right at 3 years and had often taught them lessons they did not *really* want to hear... But I had also cried with these men, prayed with these men, and shared the burdens of these men, as their family members died (and my own) and we were denied the ability to go to the funeral, or be there for the rest of the family through their loss...

I read through verse 28, but could not read further. I could not *at that time* share the verses that warned the men that after my departure grievous wolves would enter in, although that is exactly what happened to the choir, when I made parole and was released, approximately four months later.

By then, the other members of the choir knew that something was up — I was fighting tears and could not continue beyond *verse 28*. I gave up and quickly went to the kneeling alter and got on my knees...

I am not sure what all the words I spoke were, but I was praising God, thanking God, crying, shaking and *knowing beyond any doubt* that I was going to be released when I came up for the next parole consideration process (the lengthy process would begin, about six weeks later).

A man I had mentored came and kneeled beside me and asked, *What's wrong, Dainwood? Are you okay? What's going on?*

I hugged him, crying all the more, because he had been in prison for twenty-plus years, himself, and I knew that he would understand the magnitude of being told I was going home after 3½ decades of continuous incarceration...

I told him, *Smitty, I'm going home!!! God has confirmed it!*

I had not yet told anyone about the revelation God had given me the night before. When I did so, however, (and I told everyone) the body language and the carefully chosen words of reply, clearly indicated what everyone was thinking:

Oh Lord, Dainwood has been so strong for so long, and now when they tell him he is set off again (meaning denied parole release once more) he is going to lose his mind — he will either kill himself, or have to be placed on psyche meds...His mind ruined forever.

There were others concerned about what was going on with me and when I told them what God had just

confirmed from my prayers the night before, they *all* viewed the situation with skepticism and concern for my mental and emotional health...

All of them, that is, with only the two exceptions of my Spiritual Brother, John Jones and my Hispanic cell partner.

When I told *John*, he received it with the certainty with which God had delivered it to me and with the complete lack of doubt I then possessed (after receiving clear and conclusive confirmation from God, just moments before).

After returning to my cell following church, my cell partner said, *You going home 'cause You just trust God...* His answer to every prayer request brought to him, and every problem's solution, was *Just Trust God*.

Every now and then, in this life, people run across each other and instantly, powerfully, feel a deep and certain connection. Non-believers in God attribute this to finding *a soulmate*...

Even those that do *not* believe in life after the death of the physical body, use this *spiritual* term to describe this very special connection — if, that is, they are fortunate enough to *ever* experience one...

Soulmate is most often used to describe two persons who were *meant to be together* on a *spousal*, or profoundly special *friendship*, level.

In spite of the non-believer's inability to acknowledge the God of this Universe, and despite their rejection of the principle that what really makes them who they are is the unique, vibrant, and eternal *spirit* within, *animating* the body in which it dwells, they adopt the phrase *soulmate*... In so doing, they are closer to *reality* than they would ever *dream of admitting*...

These connections *are* special; they *are* spiritual. They are not *the norm* and so they are not *natural*. And *only* God, through Jesus Christ, calls us to be *supernatural*, and to harness His power to operate *outside of the natural* while serving Him, and His Kingdom Purpose for our lives, in the *supernatural*... (*John 15:19; 17:14-20; Romans 12:2*)

For believers, these connections are *not* happenstance. They are not stumbled-upon or accidental meetings. They are the *product* of God *working* to harness the individual talents and strengths and wisdom of Two Persons for One Kingdom Purpose — bringing the Love and Mercy and Forgiveness of God Almighty to a lost and hurting people...

When John and I first met, we each instantly understood — deep within — that God had brought us together for His Service and Purposes. We had that immediate, *spiritual*, connection that has absolutely *nothing* to do with the physical...

It was the meeting of one man, determined to put God first in his life, with another of the same mind and spirit.

We knew before the introduction was complete that God had a purpose for us. We both understood, instantly, that God had brought us together to serve Him in prison and that it would go beyond the cement walls. Beyond the razor wire fences, the concrete and steel, the darkness, the hatred, the rage, and the hopelessness of those dwelling in prison cages, to those trapped in cages of circumstances... *All* of whom are *without* the power of transformation that only God can perfect.

We met as *free* men, in the penitentiary, serving life sentences — the world having cast us aside and valued us a worthless.

Truly, John Jones is a man of God, doing God's Work. He is as close to me as if he came from my Mother's womb, or I from his Mother's... And as it would turn out, he was one of *only* two men inside of those prison walls that truly believed in God's revelation and promise to *send me out of prison* to bring His Love and Peace and Mercy and *Transformative* Power to a hurting, hateful, and hopeless world.

After the service, I told everyone, including the Unit Chaplain (Chaplain Thedford). When I entered his office, I told him that I was going home. His response was, *Oh, you got your answer? I didn't even know you came up for parole again*.

I told him that I had not yet been brought back up; that I wasn't even due for the next consideration process

to begin for a couple of months, but that *God* had told me that I would be granted parole at the upcoming consideration process.

Immediately, I could see the worry and concern enter his features and hear it in his tone, as he asked, *You know you are stepping out on faith here, right?*

You see, long-term prisoners often latch on to something and attribute it to God, placing the last of their hope on something *not from God at all*. When what they believe will happen does not play out, they either go crazy and have to be placed on psyche meds (their minds broken), or they kill themselves. This is more common than you might think to long-term cage dwellers.

The knowledge and training against such a situation was very evident in the Chaplain's manner and speech. I immediately responded by informing him:

Faith has absolutely nothing to do with this, Chaplain Thedford. ... God SPOKE these things to me. He said it. He confirmed it. I believe it, and His Word will not return to Him void — It will accomplish what He set out for it to do (Isaiah 55:11) ... Let me tell you about the prayer I prayed last night and the confirmation I received this very morning!

After I had explained everything to Him, his response was to hold out his hands and say, *Well come on then; let's thank Him for your parole!* We, of course, did just that!

Please remember that I had been locked up for three and a half decades and during the first half of my incarceration, I had stabbed a man in the chest – nicking his heart muscle – and had set a man's cell on fire with him inside... I had been a member of one of the most deadly gangs of the era...

There is no way *any one person* should have ever voted for me to be released, *much less* the two out of three that is required for the granting of parole...

If I were a voting Parole Commissioner or Parole Board Member and my file hit the desk for the vote, there is no way (except that God clearly indicated to me that I was supposed to) that I would vote for that man's release

Thank Jesus, these professionals know what they are doing and many of them know how to listen to and then follow God's instructions...

They have a thankless, terribly serious, and very difficult job. When it goes well, they are not even thought of, much less thanked. Given the fact that they often lose their careers with a single wrong decision, it's a wonder they *ever* vote for a previously violent offender to be returned to society...

So, as I proclaimed God's promise of release to everyone (including giving all of my possessions away because I would no longer need them), I awaited the six or seven weeks for the parole process to begin (which would take an additional several months for the determination, answer, and eventual release).

Everyone was concerned because everyone just *knew* I would *never* be released. Some even said to me, *Dainwood, you have been so strong, for so long, I worry that when they don't grant you this parole... I worry that it will devastate you...* (a polite way of saying they thought I was going to lose my mind).

Though few actually voiced it, this thought was evident in everyone's demeanor. Everyone except for *John Andy Jones, Jr.* – the man who took my place as Spiritual Leader, when I caught the chain bus to the Walls Unit to be released the following day – my Hispanic cell partner, and my Mother...

The church knew. The general population knew. The educators, the staff, the officers – the entire Unit knew – that John Dainwood had *set himself up* for *soul-crushing, mind-breaking*, disappointment.

They saw me as becoming another statistic, proving that *hopelessness* breaks down even the strongest of men...

I could see the pity, fear, and disappointment in their demeanor and hear it in the tone everyone spoke... I just laughed and said, *You're trippin', man! I am going to wave at you guys when I get on the chain bus to be released from the Walls.*

During the parole decision-making process and eventual release, which spanned several months, other miraculous things transpired that directly impacted my release... That is a part of my testimony of the Greatness of God and His Grace and Mercy and Love... and His *inability* to lie, where *all* of His promises are concerned...

For the purpose of this writing, however, suffice it to say that God shocked *everyone* when He delivered on my prayer that it would be a *good witness* – a *great witness* – if He got me out of there *in such a way* that no one could doubt that it was *anything but Him that did it...*

I have provided the information of the miraculous intervention of God, concerning my release, because it was the foundation for God informing me of *why* He was releasing me from prison... *and the work He has committed me to.*

The precept of the Bible is that when we are faithful to the little He has given, He will increase our boundaries and borders. As my Kingdom Work was effectively destroyed *because* of my continued incarceration and *because* I had been faithful with the flock over which He had made me an overseer, God expanded my pastures, my Kingdom Service, and added to the people He would have me witness to and work to end their suffering...

God sent me out of prison to form this nonprofit organization and to be the instrument He uses to address the division, the hatred, the callous indifference, and the *ungodliness* of the *views* and *circumstances* of our inner cities...

It is my routine to be still and *listen* for God, after giving thanks and making my petitions known through prayer...

I do this because it often happens that the Holy Spirit will bring certain scriptures to mind that I will need that day for the work of God in the lives of others, or in my own life...

On the day I found out I had made parole, this was my position: on my knees, in silence, and *listening* for direction from God. This is what He said:

I want you to go to inner city Houston and then Chicago. I want you to start a recreation and vocational center called The Neutral Zone and I want you to have the best graffiti artists from rival gangs paint the signs that read The Neutral Zone: Leave Your Weapons, Your Colors, and Your Hatred, At The Door.

Just be patient and wait upon Me. I will give you everything you need: the building, the land, the professional athletes, the vocational teachers... Everything: Just be obedient and wait upon me.

I sort of half laughed and said,

Well, Lord, you know my answer will always be Isaiah's when You ask, Whom shall we send, who will go forth for us; it shall ever be, Here Am I, Lord, send me, but there is one small problem here: You have to get me out of prison first.

Immediately, He responded with, *That's done!*

I did not even finish my prayers or say Amen. I jumped up and began pacing the floor, and when they rolled the doors for 8 am out-for-work-and-dayroom, I called Mama and told her to call the parole secretaries because God had just told me that *it was done.*

I told her I would call when I came in from the Chapel at 5 pm or so...

When I called, she was filled with excitement as she yelled into the receiver: *Are you ready for some FANTASTIC NEWS?!!!*

My response was to ask, *What sort of parole did I get, Mama?*

She replied *YOU GOT A FI!!!*

There are many types of parole release programs in the State of Texas, in which inmates must complete counseling programs of varied lengths and intensities before release but an individual receiving a FI-1 is released as soon as the paperwork and release processes can be completed... It is the very best type of parole release; reserved for those with demonstrable rehabilitation and the greatest chance of successful reintegration with the free world society.

I found out I'd been *granted parole release* the same day God gave me the vision for this nonprofit organization... The day He gave me the *reason* He was releasing me from prison...

This vision and mission that God delivered, concerning The Neutral Zone, also confirmed that God would deliver John Jones. He said He would deliver me from prison; He said He would deliver my Brother... John Jones was a member of the Blood gang and he sings gospel like a winner of *The Voice*...

He will be instrumental in this nonprofit organization and the healing God will bring our inner cities and this nation; both while in prison and upon God delivering him...

I wondered why God had said go to Houston first and *then* Chicago. God has since shown me that if I first went to Chicago (the city with the greatest need, to be sure), I would be an outsider, without street credibility or connections – other than the 3½ decades of continuous incarceration for the offense of murder during the course of a robbery – or connections.

With Houston, however, I have served time with many of the ex-convicts caught in the snare of hopelessness and abandonment that automatically attaches to our inner cities. I will know some of the men, as well as possess a network of Prison Ministers who will know people as well (volunteer citizens who regularly go into the prisons to bring the message of God — the Love and Peace and Mercy of God to those who need it most). Achieving success in Houston will lay the groundwork for those in Chicago to see an actual demonstration of what *can* and *will* be done in their lives — if they only embrace the opportunity presented. Once established in Houston, Chicago will have evidence that I am not just another white man who comes to exploit the Hood...

God said He would provide the vocational instructors, the professional athletes, the building, the land – *everything needed* – and that I was to be patient and wait upon Him for the timing...

He said this because He knows that the hardest thing for my faith is to *wait upon the Lord*.

For the years since, I have done just that — although those closest to me have known me to be somewhat impatient with God's timing; a shortcoming I daily strive to overcome.

God's timing, however, *is* perfect. The nation is divided, with all sides intractably positioned.

The effect is that not enough is being done to address the root problems which, inevitably, give rise to gang violence, police profiling, inner-city poverty, the lack of a way up, a way out, fear between police and citizenry, racism, lack of educational opportunities and quality, lack of willing investors... and the list goes on and on and on...

All sides of the entrenched and perpetual problems, that plague our inner cities, have *some* truth to their arguments for blaming others...

All sides have some fictitious/false claims/charges for blaming others...

Yet ALL sides *agree* that something needs to be done, and ALL sides point to others for what is *not* being done...

Despite the truths existent on all sides of the issue, simply raising awareness has accomplished little, beyond bickering back and forth, as our inner city citizens suffer and die and destroy each other...

All sides have *some* truth...

All sides have major frustration...

And ALL sides are unbending.

Everyone says, "Something Needs to be Done!!!"

Our Founding Fathers, however, had the *only* truth that matters:

Together we stand, Divided we fall.

It is time to stop talking about it, to stop bickering and pointing fingers. It is time to come together to rid our inner cities – and in fact, *our nation* – of this division; this emotionally explosive and divisive situation...

It is time to actually *do something* (other than raise awareness), to stop the killing, the suffering, the hopelessness, and the abject fear on all sides of these issues...

Here at the GNZ, we believe professional athletes can and will play a major role in transforming our inner cities...

We believe they will not want to miss this opportunity to do more than merely have a platform for publicity...

We believe they will want to join us here at the GNZ to make a difference...

We believe they will *wholeheartedly* join in the endeavor to be a large part of solving the problems of inner-city violence, police profiling, and the lack of quality educational opportunities available in our inner cities.

Who among us does not appreciate the dedication, commitment, drive, determination, and the *greatness* of

Elite Professional Athletes?

Name a *community, city, or an environment*, that is not positively and greatly *impacted* by their presence, if only fleetingly at championship competitions and individual promotional events...

What if they became regularly *involved* with the men and women of our inner cities?

What if the *storyline* of every news outlet depicted real footage of Professional Athletes, World Champion Athletes, and Police interacting with the inner city inhabitants in *staged events*; in *seminars*, in *recreational exercises* and in *educational disciplines*...

Continual and Frequent Interaction breeds Familiarity... Familiarity breeds Understanding... Understanding breeds Love... and Love Conquers All...

Here at the GNZ, we believe that *everyone* will embrace the chance to rectify the general hopelessness of those enduring our inner city circumstances and the unwillingness of people to do anything about it. To actually *do* something truly meaningful to provide a way out of this seemingly perpetual social dilemma; *to remember our nation's truly forgotten and abandoned men and women*.

Everyone includes the U.S. President, All Politicians, and the Governors and Mayors of the individual States and Cities, as well as Police, Detectives, Concerned Citizens, and Local, State, and Federal Governments...

We believe they will be unable to sit idly by and resist the opportunity to rid our innocent citizens of ravaging hopelessness, frustration, despair, and *inequality of opportunities*.

We believe they will be *unable* to resist having a hand in providing the training that will not only bring hope and love to those who have only dismal options but will also help to solve the insufficiency in workforce skills that plague the nation...

We believe they *cannot* fail to *want* to take part in *healing the breach between citizenry and police*.

We do not think *anyone* can – *in good conscience* – sit out the opportunity to be a part of stemming the tide of violence, and intractability, suffered by victims, perpetrators, and innocent bystanders alike...

We do not think they can *continue* to allow *personal differences* to *block* their *mutual concern* and *stated desire* to be a part of the solution that brings the umbrella of humane standards to fully cover those that, for too long, have been awash in the raging storms inherent to those trapped by circumstance, callous indifference, and the lack of options.

But *someone* has to *start* the turning of the tides...

We, at the GNZ, are the *someone* and YOU are the tide!!!

Our *differences* should not *prohibit* our becoming the *tide* that cleanses the animosity, the hate, the contempt, the frustration, the callous indifference, the apathy, the social disconnect, that is prevalent in our time...

Yet it takes a message *from someone from our own brand of existence*, of our own brand of suffering; of our own brand of responsibilities, to get our attention to engender our concern — to spark our desires to join together to rectify the injustice done to others in the name of: *They are different from us; they will never understand us — so what does it matter???*

Professional Athletes, Politicians, Policemen, Firemen, First Responders, Presidents, Inner City Inhabitants, Minorities, and Majorities; all know that those *outside* of the realms of their own experience and circumstances cannot fully *understand* or *speak to the concerns* and the *everyday existence* of what they go through...

It takes *one of their own* to *command their full and undivided attention*.

Humans are dismissive of those differently situated, because we know instinctively that outsiders cannot completely relate to us — *even though it may be their highest desire to do so*.

Me? I understand violence. I understand gangs. I understand a life of imprisonment; of being *trapped* in a violent, hopeless, environment. I understand the fear and rage that attaches to those cast aside and treated as animals (*however justifiable the reasons for their ostracism*)...

I understand the hardness of heart and callous indifference for those not *inside* their particular brand of suffering.

I understand the antisocial thinking and behaviors that automatically attach to those who do not possess the mental, emotional, psychological, and educational means – or even an *evidenced* social concern – to help them learn to cope with (much less change) the hopeless certainties played out all around them, for all of their lives; for generations.

I can speak to these men and women because I am *of* them...

I can speak to YOU because I am also one of you...

I have utilized the help of those *not* callously indifferent, of those who cared enough to show me that there *IS* a better way and taught me the way I should go by beginning to accept the concern and help of those who *desired* to give me a way up, a way out, a way forward.

I now wish to do the same and let others know that it all starts with a concern and a willingness to reach those you may have deemed unreachable; those whom you may have given up on...

The difference God made in my own life was the evidenced concern and education and skills extended and brought to the *violent and hate-filled environment* I found myself in; by those who cared enough to enter the hell of my existence to extend to me a way up, a way forward, a way out...

These Educators and Spiritual Iconoclast entered prison to bring *hope* and *light* into a dark and violent and desolate landscape... and into the hardened, debris-littered, and scarred *hearts* of the not only forgotten, but to the feared, abandoned, and often *hated*, men and women of society.

But you don't have to be an Educator or Spiritual Iconoclast... You don't have to *be* anything at all... All you have to be is willing to lend a hand to someone who needs to get out of the pit they find themselves in by way of circumstance, through location, through birth, or even because of past poor choices that were often made because alternatives were few and far between, or even nonexistent...

Getting behind this endeavor is a win/win situation for everyone concerned... Uniting for this will provide all parties concerned with the ability to *join together* in a much-needed *bipartisan, bi-cultural, biracial, commitment* to providing a leg up, a way out, and a surefooted platform, for social reform, where it is needed the most.

Joined together, we can be the tide that washes away the poverty, fear, injustice, and lack of opportunities in our inner cities.

If we join together, we can be the light that destroys the darkness of misunderstanding, bitterness, depression, frustration, anger, rage, and fear.

For three and a half decades, many of those emotions, coupled with seemingly insurmountable obstacles, were prevalent in my own life.

Compounding my problems, I made poor choices along the way. The only way I overcame them was through the help and unwarranted compassion of others... Those who had little or no reason to lend a helping hand out of my own pit, *caring* and *doing* what they could, when *nobody else* would or could...

In the next section, I will explain the errant reasoning behind my gang involvement and how God will use it to bring to fruition the reclamation of our inner city youth and citizenry, through the vision He provided me... The circumstances are a little lengthy, but you cannot have a complete understanding of the vision without knowing its foundation...

So, please read this in its entirety.

In the early to mid-1980s, when gangs began to proliferate in the Texas Penal System (after the inmate guard system of *Building Tenders* and *TurnKeys* were ordered disbanded by the Honorable William Wayne Justice of the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals – in the Ruiz vs. the State of Texas decision), murder and mayhem erupted.

A tsunami of bloodshed struck the then Texas Department of Corrections, as waves of violence burst forth because of the court-ordered removal of the extremely brutal *inmate guard system* previously entrenched in the Texas Department of Corrections (TDC) policies and practices.

Gangs were formed to fill the vacuum of the long-standing and extreme power exercised by the inmate *Building Tenders* and *TurnKeys*. During this explosion of violence, each gang rushed to recruit members in order to dominate rival gangs, rule the prison, and protect their own.

Tremendous pressure, via violence, or threats of violence, bore down upon individual prisoners to join whichever gang was representing whatever race, or city, or area of Texas he was from.

Gangs sprang up to fill the power vacuum, very quickly — often forming under a loosely formulated and sometimes incoherent mandate, charter, or *constitution*.

By-laws and rules were basic; blood in, blood out (enter by killing or attempting to kill someone, and leave

the gang only by death).

Snitches, homosexuals, and non alpha-status inmates were not allowed to enter gangs. If you joined a gang hiding such facts and it was later discovered, a *hit* or *death contract/order* was placed upon your life and carried out, as well as *the life of the gang member who recruited you*.

Probationary recruits were utilized to exercise the hits and thereby *earn their bones* by murder or the serious attempt thereof. Absent *firearms*, homemade knives or *shanks*, or bludgeoning devices of all sorts were utilized, and the men often did not possess the expertise to quickly and efficiently strike a fatal blow... It was a brutal environment which the State of Texas *answered* by forming its own violent gang: *The Special Operations Response Team* or *SORT*.

These specially chosen guards were extremely fit (and often on steroids that stoked their suppressed hatred and rage). They were shipped to the various prisons to squash (yes *squash*, instead of quash) violent gangs and, thereby, regain control of the Texas Prisons.

They dressed in all black and many of them carried *black* bandannas to represent that *they* were the *baddest* gang in existence and *smashers* of all who opposed their rule.

They had full body armor and equipment; forearm and shin guards, re-enforced Kevlar and padding, helmet, face shields, ramming shields, clubs, pepper spray, etc... *Aggravated Ninja Turtles*, while inmates utilized magazines for body armor...

They ran *miles* every day, did steroids, lifted weights, and worked out constantly... Unfettered, Unleashed, Unrestricted Power, Peek Physical Condition, State-of-the-Art Equipment; tempered by emotionally destabilizing Performance Enhancement Drugs — a *very* potent recipe for regaining control, to say it in the politest of terms...

The program was extremely effective (like machine gunners against a single knife-toter) and soon expanded to allow SORT teams to be assigned to the various violent prison units. In this way, the response to localized inmate violence was immediate, brutal, and extremely effective.

The SORT program was disbanded, in fairly short order, because of its own brand of brutality. Additionally, the State of Texas implemented the Divide and Conquer Blueprints for building prisons that became the standard for all modern prison facilities... Separate buildings of inmates classified to similar length of court-ordered prison terms, disciplinary records, physiological, mental, age, and aggression traits...

For the year or so before the State regained control of its prisons, inmate violence in the form of near-fatal assaults and homicides were rampant. During this time, I was housed in the maximum security, Eastham, Unit of the then Texas Department of Corrections — the Unit that held the worst of the worst, having been shipped there for stabbing a man in the chest.

I was told by the medical personnel who came to see if you were okay while you served punitive solitary confinement terms, that I had nicked the muscle of his heart, but had not punctured a valve, so the man lived (I thank God now, that he *did* live — at the time, I was trying to kill him.)

I had blond hair, I was 19 years old, 6 feet tall, weighing only 145 pounds, and I thought killing those that had beat me up in the fields, was the best way to keep from being raped on the cellblock... And it *WAS*, during this brutal period of the then *Texas Department of Corrections (The TDC)*.

Administrative Segregation, or Ad. Seg. did not exist at that time. 15 days of solitary confinement was the only prison punishment for killing or attempting to, or assaulting, other inmates. Going to a disciplinary hearing meant 15 days of solitary confinement for serious rule infractions...and the *probability, bordering on certainty*, of being transferred to another, more secure, prison unit.

You were guilty if you were unable to get a prison administrator to dismiss the charges *before* attending the disciplinary hearing. You were *beaten*, if you *pled not guilty*. In those days, no one was found *not guilty* at disciplinary hearings. No One, except inmates who worked for the Warden, that some foolish, and probably brand new-on-the-job officer had written a disciplinary report on.

Consequently, when inmates did violence on their particular units of assignment, they were given 15 days of solitary confinement and, upon completion of the term, they were shipped to one of three Maximum Security Units in the State of Texas: Ellis I, Darrington, or Eastham.

If you were *violently* assaultive or disruptive on either of the first two, you were shipped to

the *Eastham* Unit: A Unit then designated as, *Home of the Criminally Insane — 2 miles from water* (the Trinity River) *and 2 Feet from Hell*).

Eastham received many of the inmates who had done violence on the other Units in the system. Gangs cropped up, their members killing each other, and were shipped to one of the three most violent prisons in the state.

The *Aryan Brotherhood* and the *Mandingo Warriors* were at war and killing each other across the system... A captain of the Aryan Brotherhood was transferred to the Eastham Unit. He was severely outnumbered by the Mandingo Warriors on the Unit and he needed to recruit enough people, very quickly, to protect himself from certain death. There *is* safety in numbers when the alternative is to stand *alone* against an army intent on killing you...

He lied to everyone. I told him, specifically, that I would not be a part of anything that required me to put it before my Family, God, and the Country.

He assured me that it was strictly a penitentiary thing and that nothing would be done without a majority vote from all other members on the Unit.

With those assurances, I joined — again there *was* safety in numbers with the onslaught of gang and racial violence becoming rampant in the penal system.

This captain sought out the men who had already proven their willingness and ability to cause serious bodily injury or death to others. He focused on me because of my crime and my violent prison record.

Once he convinced me, others followed. Approximately a month afterward, a lieutenant of the brotherhood was transferred to our prison unit from another. He began to meet with each new recruit individually and explain the particulars of what we had joined. He showed us a document that was the *constitution* of the aryan brotherhood of Texas.

Nothing comes before the brotherhood; not family, not God, not Country, and at that time, the *only* way out was *death*... There were a lot of other particulars that I paid no attention to, having read all I needed to know to quit.

When I explained that I *would not*, and *never would*, make such a commitment and that I had been recruited under false pretenses, the lieutenant informed me that there was no way out, except by death. He said I needed to rethink quitting because it would mean that an *automatic* hit or contract must be placed upon my life and then executed.

I told him that if I stayed because of a threat against my life — in direct opposition to my core beliefs — he would have a coward for a brother (cowardice is an offense requiring death by their constitution).

I told him that it did not matter, anyway, that I was out, *come what may*.

Please remember that at this point (the mid-1980s) and for several years following the disbanding of the inmate guard regime, inmate-to-inmate violence was at an all-time high in the state of Texas. Death and the appearance of chalk outlines of those slain could be seen wherever they fell (hallways, dayrooms, shower areas, chow halls, etc.) — throughout the Texas Prison system.

Brutality was rampant.

Rapes, Robberies — even the members of the hand-picked guards (who would later become SORT members) that were sent to the various Units to quell the gang violence, were robbed of their jewelry... robbed by inmates with paper bags from the commissary over their heads, with eye holes cut into them.

Assaults with weapons (both inmate-to-inmate and inmate-to-guard), and groups of men against single individuals, and murder, were prevalent.

The State's response was to create Administrative Segregation; a policy by which they locked away anyone with violent prison rules or security infractions (smuggling contraband into the prisons) and any sort of gang affiliation.

Entire cell-blocks were retrofitted to house extremely violent individuals. Individuals that were locked in 5'x 9' cells 24 hours a day.

Shortly after the opening of the first newly fashioned isolation cell-blocks, I was confined to a cell and told:

*Might as well make yourself comfortable, you are going to be here for the rest of your life — Don't f**k*

*with us (meaning give the guards trouble while back there: throwing heavy can goods at them – cans of roast beef, beef stew, tuna, etc., – feces, urine, fire-bombs made of toilet paper, from the tiers above), and we won't f**k with you... If you cause us problems, we are going to put a serious hurt on you...*

And they were true to their word.

As men in administrative segregation lockup continued to stab those being escorted by their cells for showers, visitation, warden and classification interviews, medical appointments, etc., they were forced to cover the cell bars with Plexiglas.

They then took that down and replaced it with diamond grating, welded to the bars of the cell (they were forced to do this because the summer heat caused men to have heat strokes. The solid Plexiglas on the front of the cell prevented airflow to the vent in the back, blocking the necessary ventilation).

Finally, they hung a shield of solid sheet metal, which ran on a track between the cell fronts and the officers and the inmates they were escorting down the cell block walkway or *run*; as it is called in prison. It sounded like a freight train, but it put a steel barrier between the guards and the escorted inmates and those who were intent upon killing them.

It was in this environment that I attempted to burn a man alive.

After being housed in administrative segregation for several years, they moved a man next to me who would scream from the top of his lungs for probably 22 hours per day. He would *never* become hoarse, not even by a little bit. Additionally, he threw feces and urine at officers and the inmates they escorted, which forced me to breathe the constant stench of a sewer (as a deterrent for inmates to not engage in such activities the administration would not allow it to be cleaned up — *"Let them smell it and they will police their own and make this stop."*

He would scream racially slanderous remarks. He would scream an endless stream of profanity. He would scream gibberish... Scream and Scream and Scream and Scream... and throw some more urine and feces... and Scream some more.

Then he would fall out and sleep, *for a couple of hours only*. He would then wake up screaming and scream until he passed out again, with no regular pattern of scream-time sequence... no schedule; just scream until he passed out.

He was, of course, on psyche medication (or not taking what he should be taking), so the little he slept; he slept very hard.

There are no sound barriers, there is no sound proofing, there is no sound absorbing acoustical material; there is only *reverberation* from the bricks and glass, which is amplified by all the solid concrete, and steel.

Sleep deprivation, coupled with a solid, continuous, bombardment of excessive noise...

It is a known method of torture and a potent recipe for inducing insanity... place on top of that the constant stench of living in a sewer... and well, it is a *little* difficult to endure...

For a man already suffering the long-term effects of brain injury and trauma and barely controlled rage... Well, I just could not take it.

I banged on the wall separating us to achieve a brief silence and then told the man that if he didn't shut up, I was going to kill him. I told him, *I say what I mean and I mean what I say*, and that if he didn't shut the F**K Up, I was going to kill him.

He continued to scream and scream and scream and scream...

So, I sent kites (prison slang for small pieces of paper with communications written, sometimes coded, upon them) to all the guys I had been doing time with for the last several years. I asked for, and received, a bunch of rolls of toilet paper...

I then unrolled them in my cell, opened a double sheet of newspaper and used it to pack down the fluffy mountains of toilet paper and forced them under my bars and then under the bars and into the screamer's cell next door... when the toilet paper was pushed through, it immediately fluffed back into its mountainous form...

I pushed roll after roll after roll into this man's cell, until it was higher than the bottom bunk-frame (approximately 3 feet high, 9 feet deep, and 5 feet wide — the length and with of the cell).

I had carefully placed single match sticks, sulfur-head – evenly spaced – below sulfur-head, spiraling downward for a foot, maybe a foot and half, glued to a *tightly* rolled sheet of typing paper (actually, I used the

grievance forms provided by the state) that was rolled diagonally, corner to corner...

This formed a fuse because one match head would burst into flames and ignite the one below, all the way down the tube they were attached to.

I formed a long pole by inserting the narrow end of one rolled tube of typing paper into the other, until the pole was long enough to reach the deepest corners of the man's cell next door.

I used the fused pole to alight the toilet paper from back to front, and all across this man's cell.

The wall of flame reached the very top of the man's cell (he was on the top bunk sleeping under a wool blanket) and roared out of the entire width (5 feet) of the cell, and continued upward to burn the paint off the second tier handrail.

Yes. I *was* an idiot. Yes, I am glad *now* that this man lived (you see the toilet and news paper burned very quickly, so while it was very intense and fairly massive, it burned out quickly). At the time, however, I was very disappointed that it did not kill this man... It was the mindset of an extremely violent environment brought to bear upon a man with a damaged brain...

Before you rush to judgment; put a mattress in your closet and have a loud man stand outside it. Stay in there for 8-10 days while he is screaming profanity and hatred – much of it specific to you – and gibberish at the top of his lungs. Have the man fall silent for only a couple of hours in a 24-hour period (never in any manner of schedule), and see what sort of mental state you are in after a week to ten days...

They moved me into a double-door, solid wall, total isolation cell, on a super-segregation cell block, but could not get anyone that had provided me with toilet paper to roll over and witness against me (and the investigating officers did not particularly try because this man constantly threw feces and urine at and on them).

Everyone – and I *do mean* EVERYONE (the inmates, the guards, medical staff, disciplinary staff, psyche staff, writ-room personnel: EVERYONE) wanted this guy to shut up and stop throwing feces and urine...

Although no one would ever admit it, if killing him was the only effective method to obtain that goal – then so be it. I have often wondered if security personnel did not have that man moved next to me for that very purpose...

It was a brutal, chaotic, environment.

Place on top of these circumstances, my lack of education, my brain still malfunctioning from having my skull broken into four large pieces and shoved downward upon the brain, and you have the necessary ingredients for insanity, cloaked in fear, anger, hopelessness, stubbornness, rage, and lethal rebellion...

It was a very dark time in the penal system and a very dark time in my personal demeanor and character.

This was the world we lived in as the Old TDC (Texas Department of Corrections) was ruled to be cruel and inhumane, by William Wayne Justice of the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals.

During the transition from TDC to TDCJ (Texas Department of Criminal Justice), the Old Guard (Directors, Wardens, and Major rank holders) saw the imposition of federal orders as the *very reason* they lost control of the prisons.

Their response was to brutally and effectively turn inmate against inmate and then to *isolate* and *separate* all of the strongest challengers to their administrative dominance, through *forced* segregation — if they could not *persuade* or *manipulate* them into entering *voluntary* protective custody segregation...

The Wardens spread rumors that gangs had placed hits on individual gang members — their own and others. These men heard they had had hits issued and would go to the Wardens asking to be placed on protective custody, or the Wardens would call them to the office to impart the untrue news that a hit had been placed on them and *ask* if they *wanted* to be protected..

So many hits were taking place and with such frequency that the majority of those told they were next, took advantage of what they *thought* would spare their lives... when in all actuality, *doing so* meant having a death contract issued for real (you catch protective custody as a gang member and a death sentence from the gang you ran from automatically attached).

Because they believed the rumors and *ran* to protective custody lockup, they were immediately dubbed as cowards, who would not stand unto death with and for a brother. If they could not or would not stand for themselves, gang mentality was, *How you gonna die for someone else when the s**t hits the fan, if you're a*

coward that will not die for yourself or what you profess to believe in...

These rumors were spread by the Wardens, Prison Officials, Guards, and the snitches that worked for them. This was done to create inward division, chaos, and violence against their own, within all the violent gangs — It was Divide and Conquer, practiced to the nth degree.

One did not have to be a racist to seek refuge in gangs... Although race was the clear division of most gangs at the time. In many cases, survival was the ultimate goal.

Often, men join because there is safety in numbers and very little chance of standing alone against seemingly insurmountable odds considering the number of those standing against you.

Under normal circumstances, no one, with multiple people intent on killing them, wants to stand alone... though sometimes it is the only choice a man can make: When it is either live with himself after his proven cowardness or die with whatever honor and dignity still left to him, some men prefer death.

It was in this environment that I joined one of the most violent gangs in the State.

However, when I found out the truth of what it stood for, I quit. I would have rather been killed than forced to live without the last vestiges of honor I believed I possessed: Loyalty to my Family and to God and to my Country.

In point of fact, I had previously written to President Jimmy Carter asking to be transferred from prison to the Marine Corps (for a 20 year term — the span of time necessary to my reaching initial parole release eligibility) to be trained and then sent to recover the American hostages in Iran...

The request made its way from the President, to the Armed Services, to the US Attorney General, to Texas Governor's Office and finally to the Attorney General of the State of Texas.

They informed me that the military was not then accepting people with final felony convictions into the armed services. They specified that absent a pardon, the request was impossible, but that I would, however, be placed on a list for wartime consideration, should it come to our shores.

Because I quit, a contract was placed upon me and I lived in close quarters with the men that would be charged with carrying out the inmate-ordered death sentence.

Because I had been lied to, the lieutenant appealed the hit. This took several months, in which the death contract was issued but hung suspended, until word could be carried to, and received back from, the Prison Units that the steering committee (the highest leaders of the gang) was being held at the time.

The Warden called me out and informed me what I had already been told; that I had a hit issued against my life and asked if I wanted to catch protective custody.

Well, I had this stubborn mental state that was as deeply entrenched in my psyche as the severity of the circumstances I found myself in...

Yes; all of the circumstances were creations of my own ignorance, and mental and emotional instability (including the reasons I ended up in prison). It was nobody's fault but mine...

Reasons for how one got into situations of potentially fatal consequence matter not at all, however, when moment-by-moment survival is against all odds.

When the lack of an ability to reason is the reason you find yourself in dire straits, the odds of you making correct decisions are astronomically small.

I did, however, make one right decision, even if it was made in the rebellious stance of, *You can't make me do a damn thing! You cannot break me!*, I quit and faced the certainty that I would be killed, if word came back from the appeal that the only way out was death.

Because I would not catch protective custody, I lived several months of having close interaction with the gang members that would be ordered to kill me, if it came to that.

It was harrowing, it was nerve-racking, and the pressure was constant, but for once in my life, I did the right thing.

Word came back that I would be allowed to tattoo over the aryan brotherhood patch (tattoo), and leave the gang with good standing. If, however, I wanted to rejoin, I could not do so after leaving... If I stayed, however, there would never again be another opportunity in which I could leave, absent death...

I, of course, quit. The men that followed me into the gang had the same option. Some elected to remain and others quit.

I realize that today there are ways of exiting gangs that were not available back then... I understand that now multiple gang members seriously beat an individual who wishes to leave the gang, and if they endure it without giving in and remaining affiliated, they allow them to leave...

As far as I know, I was the very first person to leave the aryan brotherhood without violence, although the steering committee did require the existing members to hit the captain that recruited us on false pretenses.

They stabbed this man multiple times (17 times I believe it was) in a meeting they called in the Unit's Law Library, for just that purpose...

I believe he lived, but I know they stabbed him multiple times, intent upon killing him and I am not sure if he later succumbed to the injuries sustained.

I include all of this *because* there is a direct correlation between the gangs and violence and hopelessness in our inner cities, and the prisons that most of their inhabitants end up in — if, that is, they do not end up in the grave...

There is simply no way of understanding the plights of rejected and abandoned persons, without having experienced it...

That is why God has given me this mandate... It is the calling upon my life by the Creator and I embrace it *wholeheartedly*.

That God *can* and will change the worst of the worst, is why I provide this information. I am living proof of that fact. All that is needed is submission to Him to *enjoy* the peace and joy and love that is *automatic* when the Way, the Truth, & the Life, is sincerely sought by way of biblical knowledge, and obedience to the Savior who gave His life for a wretch like me: *Jesus Christ, the Messiah*.

I provide this information to prove that this is not something I am merely claiming; *that God gave me this vision*... I provide all of this so you will *know*, and can certainly *verify*, that I told the Chaplain, and everyone on the Prison Unit, from the very beginning, and as it all transpired... What God had *said* and what God *would do*...

First, that God had told me I would make parole, and against all odds be released, and *then* that God had given me the mandate and the particulars for The Neutral Zone, on the very morning of the day I found out that I had been granted parole release.

I do not expect you to believe things I say *after the fact*. I proclaimed these things *before and as they happened*, despite looking foolish and stupid and weak to the close and dangerous environment of the penitentiary world (where the foolish and weak are preyed upon and routinely robbed and raped).

Since I have been released, and as I waited upon the Lord to begin implementation of the vision for the Neutral Zone, I have been licensed as a Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, by an international organization (*Lost Sheep Ministries*), as well as by my church (*1st Baptist: Dickinson, TX*).

I have been granted the Certificate of Ordination as a Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I have preached and witnessed to and counseled the men in the Bay Area Recovery Center (*BARC*), in Dickinson TX.

I baptized over a hundred men for the 1st Baptist Church of Dickinson Texas, as well as taught Adult Bible Studies and preached sermons, as part of my path to ordination.

Since my release from prison on November 19, 2014, I was able to co-host at *KKHT 100.7 The Word*, the radio program, *Oasis Live*, with Pastor Lonnie Provost, every Sunday-night for quite some time.

I have also co-hosted with Mr. Zeke Young several times on the *Z-Team Radio* program at that same station.

I have applied for and *received* my passport and traveled in February of 2018, internationally, to spread the *Good News Of Jesus* to *Nicaragua*, with *Pastor Bob Gibson*, founder of *Lost Sheep Ministries*... We witnessed to the men and women of the *Hodera*, a drug rehab center, where all but three received Jesus and the transformative power of God Almighty.

I am a man committed to following God through obedience to The Word God Become Flesh, Jesus Christ, via His written instructions (The Holy Bible), and the Unction of The Holy Spirit...

My answer, when God asks, *Whom shall we send? Who will go forth for us?* is, and shall ever be, *Here am I, Lord, Send Me!*

Please join me as I go.

This is who I am in Christ. This is the vision God gave to me. This is the need of a nation and the way for it to come together.

This is the *opportunity* to not just have a platform for raising awareness and speaking of the need (which has been done for decades), *but to actually do something to render aid.*

This is the way to remember our forgotten men and women of the inner cities... Not just the perpetrators of violent crimes, but the innocent citizens that are impacted by the hopelessness and abandonment inherent to people and places *without* a tangible way forward, *without* a way up, and *without* a way out.

So, I ask you: *What separates you from those you despise? Who are worse: those without options and means to affect *change*, or those with the means and options, but *choosing* to do nothing???*

That is a question that you must look inward to answer and to *even* recognize the truth, perhaps you'll need the wisdom of God. Please pray for that wisdom and guidance.

I have provided my contact information below. Won't you please join in the endeavor to bring this vision into reality?

Won't you *please* be a part of the solution to a problem that divides our nation and its people?

I am just a simple man with a renewed mind. A man who has received Grace and Mercy and Hope and Direction from God, the State of Texas, and the United States of America.

I have a heart for God.

I have a heart for all of His people.

I need your help to begin repairing this rent in our social fabric; to bring healing to this wound in America's Heart; a wound that we have *all* done *little to nothing* to heal.

We talk and argue, while it deepens and festers.

Together we stand; divided we fall.

Won't you do something other than argue while our citizens despair and suffer and die???

May God Bless & Keep You & Yours, Always,

John Bradley Dainwood

Founder

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