

A Passage Through The Valley Of Death



A Passage Through The Valley Of Death

The Anthony 'Fines' Ashwood story
By
Dawn Vaz-Green



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To all the young men on the corner:
“Straighten yuh corner an hold yuh freedom.”

Fines

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments
Foreward
Introduction

PART ONE

- Chapter 1. The Valley Of Death 1
Chapter 2. The Basic School
Chapter 3. Dutty Tough
Chapter 4. The Young Celebrity
Chapter 5. A Strange Turn Of Events
Chapter 6. Young Man, Yuh Too Girlie, Girlie
Chapter 7. The Stealing Of The Youth
Chapter 8. Fight In De Dance
Chapter 9. The Changing Of The Guards
Chapter 10. What A Crime!
Chapter 11. My Day In Court
Chapter 12. General Penetentiary
Chapter 13. The Trial
Chapter 14. Death Row And The Condemned
Chapter 15. The Hostage Crisis
Chapter 16. Insane Behaviour
Chapter 17. The End Of A Nightmare

PART TWO

- Chapter 18. Reverence For Life
Chapter 19. Good Advice And God Speed

CONTENTS

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October 2000
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by Desmond Green
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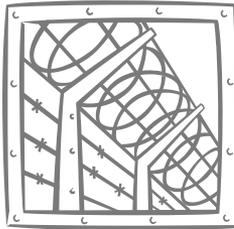
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The book provides one of many voices to tell parts of the Jamaican story and will be another beacon of light for the Reverence For Life message. Members of the Cricket Hall of Fame have been exposed to the Self-management workshops and have requested an extension of the program to schools and other institutions throughout the Hartford area.

Thanks to Professor Charles Nesson for his confidence in Jamaica's potential and his continued involvement with the rehabilitation program in Jamaica. Special thanks also to Mrs. Fern Nesson, who graciously assisted with the editing of the book.

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FOREWORD

During a visit to Kingston, Jamaica, in 2003, through the help of psychologist/teacher Professor Desmond Green, a team of Cricket Hall of Fame members met with two former inmates recently released from prison. While in prison, the two were involved with Professor Green's Reverence for Life rehabilitation program, which they said helped to sustain them. Prior to meeting Professor Green the men admitted that they had dangerous thoughts of revenge on their minds, which they planned to carry out on their release.

The men, aspiring DJ Robert James, and Anthony "Fines" Ashwood, both claimed that they were convicted for crimes that they did not commit. They told similar stories of the horrible conditions that they had endured while in incarceration. They described prison life as a horrifying experience.

Ashwood who spent 10 years on death row, had a very intriguing story to tell. In a very emotional and passionate way, he related his experiences from his early upbringing as a child growing up in East Kingston to the events that led him into a life of crime. Listening to Ashwood tell his story, left us to believe that what he was describing could be the makings of a very powerful book. The Cricket Hall of Fame members were so moved by the emotional story, which he told in graphic terms, that after returning to Hartford, we came to the conclusion that this story should be made available in book form. It is our hope that other youngsters facing similar situations can use this

book as a guide to chart their lives in a more positive direction.

The book became a reality recently. It can be considered historical as it gives an inside look into how the underworld operated in Jamaica during the 1970s and its link with politicians.

Now back out in society, after spending most of his youth in prison, Ashwood reflecting on that fateful day when he received his freedom, said: “When I reached the gate I was overcome with mixed feelings. I didn’t know what to expect or how I would feel on the outside. Things had changed so much during my incarceration. The institution had been my home for almost twenty-two years and while the experiences were not all good, it was what I had become accustomed to. Change meant opening up myself to a new world and that was a little scary but I was ready.”



Dolton James, Ph.D.
Stanford Walker
Michael Chambers

Michael Chambers

INTRODUCTION

I got the name Fines when I was ten. I was living at Ocean View at the time and used to play football (soccer) with some brethren on the beach. One day one of the guys said to me: “How every time wi caan si yuh, an more time yuh lock up in yuh house?” My mother was very strict; I couldn’t go out; I had to wait until she was gone about her business and then I would sneak out to play with the boys. When they asked me what I was doing in my house all day long I would say: “Mi deh in mi house a fry something man.”

“Yuh a fry everyday, so how yuh look so mawga (meager)?”

“Yuh know wi a go give yuh a nick-name.”

“Wha kind o’ nick-name unno a gi me?”

“Wi a go call him Fines man. Si how him mawga an fine.”

“Fines! Fines him name man. Him haffi have a nick-name.” And from that day until now everybody started to call me Fines. Over the years that name stuck to me.

This is my story of twenty plus years wasted in prison with ten of those precious years spent on death row. It is also the story of many young Jamaican boys, boys who have fallen through the cracks unseen and unheard; boys who have been used as pawns in a corrupt political system. It could be your child next unless someone does something to stem the flow of corruption. We can no longer say ‘them and us’, ‘downtown versus uptown’ because crime knows no borders and everyone of us bleed red.



Anthony *Fines'* Ashwood

PART ONE

1



THE VALLEY OF DEATH

“Boy yuh fi dead yuh know,” the warder’s voice bellowed from across the room. It brought me temporarily back to reality. Slowly the nightmare dawned on me – I was sentenced to die. I could not believe after so many years out in the free world that I would end up on death row. It was like I was going out of my head. How was it possible for fate to lead me to such a sordid end after giving me a glance of the glitter and glamour of the good life? I was only nineteen. My whole life should have been before me. The pain was not in my head. It was in my heart, spreading like blood through my veins, through my entire body. It consumed me. I felt dead already. They were going to hang a dead man.

My first evening on death row was like a dream. It was like I didn’t know myself. I felt like a dead man waking up in a coffin. The guards came to me and said “Boy, yuh know sey a death row yuh deh pon? Tek off yuh clothes.” It was scary. I had never felt so alone and afraid in my entire life. I took my clothes off and they took them away. They gave me some condemned clothes. The shirt was made out of flour bags. The flour hadn’t been fully washed out of the clothes. When I put it on, I could feel the stickiness inside and immediately some flies started to stalk me. I feared that a previous death row inmate, a man now gone from this earth, had already worn the pants. What had been his crime, I wondered? How did he face his fate? I didn’t want to put them on but I had no choice; I had to put them on. They took away my underpants, my

shoes and my socks. They even took away my rag. I felt... I felt... I felt naked. I felt like I was not a human being.

“Boy, yuh nuh know sey yuh fi trim? Go bathe” he said, prodding me with his baton. The second warder looked at me as if I was some soiled discarded rag. They pushed me into a filthy bathroom where I was forced to wash while they waited. Stepping out of the shower, I looked down at the grey wash water sliding down the slimy gutter... it reminded me of my life.

One guard took up a pair of scissors and started to trim me. Before coming on death row my hair had grown long because I hadn't trimmed since my incarceration. He jammed the scissors through my hair with a vengeance, purposely leaving some patches high, while digging the scissors into the scalp, leaving other areas bare and low like a cornfield after a hurricane season. Even without seeing it, when I felt my head, it felt like a worn down shoe brush. That didn't help my dismal mood. I was scared; I didn't know what to expect. After they trimmed me, they photographed me front ways, sideways to the left and sideways to the right. They gave me a number and then they took my fingerprints. That whole time they kept questioning me. Questioning me about my mother and my family. During the questioning, it's like I didn't know myself. I couldn't understand... I couldn't fathom where I was and how I had reached where I was. But somewhere deep inside me I reached for something to hold onto – some kind of faith that could hold me. I remembered a faith from a long time ago, a life long ago, a faith from my grandmother, Miss T. A faith that held, *“while there is breath, there is hope irrespective of how grim the outlook.”* I couldn't let that faith die. That faith was in God. I think that, if I didn't remember God at that time, I would have gone off of my head and probably become an insane person. But I stuck to the God I remembered from my grandmother during that time, as I held on to whatever time was left of my

life. *"Everyone knows God,"* I thought, *"when their life is on the line... pity... maybe too late."* I still hoped. I didn't want to die.

They took me from the reception area to the cellblock. On my way to the cellblock I heard other inmates shouting, "Some new man come, some new man come! Some man get death sentence an come." Some were saying, "yuh know dem?" Others were saying, "Yeah man. Me an dem did deh a G.P. (General Penitentiary) together, at G.P. and remand together."

They carried me to the worse part of the prison, the maximum-security section of the Spanish Town District prison, which is called Gibraltar. I was taken to Gibraltar three and placed in a cell by myself. I was placed behind a cell with a heavy board door. When the guards pulled the cell door, put me inside and locked down the cell, it was like I wanted to run. I wanted to run and never stop but there was nowhere to run. There was no window, no light, only high dark walls that I could touch but not see. The walls felt cold and rough; they threatened to suffocate me. After my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness I made out a small air vent high above. I felt like a rat in a very small cage.

In the cell I paced around like a wild animal. In clear moments, I wondered whether I could come out of a place like this. I wondered how I had gotten into this mess, what dark path had led to my downfall. I was truly between a rock and a very hard place. This dismal cage that was to be my home until my death was not even as comfortable as a hog's stall. I didn't know where to look for help. I wondered if God himself had forgotten about me. I was confused, I was desperate, I felt like I was floating in an abyss of black fog... just me....alone in the darkness.

Then I heard an inmate shout, "Fines, Fines! Fines, yuh OK?"

Yuh awright?” At first when I heard the voice calling to me I didn’t respond because it seemed to be coming from a distance. I wondered if this was part of the nightmare too. It took me a time to get back to myself, and then I answered, “Yo! Yo brethren!” Then he said, “Yuh awright?” and I replied, “Yeah, mi awright.”

“Come up on de cell front man. Come up on de cell front.”

“Mi caan climb it...”

“Yeah man, put yuh foot cross ways man, an climb up on de front ventie.”

I obeyed the voice. I jumped up and held on to a bar at the top of the cell front. When I climbed up onto the cell front I saw that other inmates had climbed up to their front vent and were looking out. They were saying “Wha’ a gwaan brethren, yuh awright?”

“Yuh caan move so yuh know. Dem place ya a place weh yuh haffi liven up yuhself yuh know.”

“Mi a sen on a piece o’ sheet come gi yuh fi mek a hammock that yuh can tie up on de front ventie an’ siddown an mek wi gwaan talk.”

“Brethren, if yuh stay down inna de cell bottom yuh a go mad.”

“Brethren, mi nuh feel fi talk to nobody,” I said. “Mi jus feel weak.”

“Yo brethren, yuh caan mek yuh feelins overpower yuh. Yuh haffi put down dem de almshouse feelins”

“Come pon de cell front.”

“Shake up yuhself man.”

Right a way they produced a line made out of rice bags with a sinker made from a stone tied up in it, and sailed it across to me. I caught it. They tied the piece of sheet on the string and told me to draw it over. I drew it over. They told me to tie one end to each side of the bar. I did as they instructed, made

up my hammock and swung myself into it. I felt dizzy, I felt weak; I really didn't want to talk.

“Yuh waan ganja? Mi have a nice likkle spliff?”

“Yuh waan cigarette? Yuh mus need a smoke brethren?”

“No mi no waan nothing,” I responded feebly.

“Brethren, talk to mi nuh. Wa a gwaan?”

“Brethren, mi caan tek no talk now, cau de position weh mi fine miself inna... mi caan talk to unnu now,” I said.

“Nuff man mad pon death row because dem bruk unda.”

“Some man tek dem ownna life in ya.”

“Talk to us brethren.”

“Yuh haffi sort out yuh head or yuh will lose yuh mind.”

“Yuh sure yuh nuh waan a spliff?”

“Mi nuh waan nothin man,” I told them again.

“Mi in hear fi three year now an a hol' de faith.”

“Mi have four year, three months and ten days.”

“How de procedure go in regards to me appealing 'gainst my conviction?” I asked. While they were explaining the appeal process to me, I was hearing the words but what sense were they to me, a condemned man? Confusion and all sorts of different feelings washed over me, taking over my mind. I couldn't settle. We spoke for what looked like the entire night and still sleep wouldn't come to me. The men spoke of their own experiences and their lives, so as it was on death row. I think we must have talked right through the night that first night that I came into Gibraltar three.

“Yuh have anyting to sleep on?”

“Yuh need anyting?”

“No, a don't have anyting to sleep on.”

“Awright! A gwaan sen on two piece of cardboard.”

“Mi have some newspaper yuh can put pon it.”

They crossed the cardboard and paper over on the same string. I caught it and threw it down into my cell. I looked down at

the gloom below me. I feared leaving the company of the men at the vent to go back down into the cell but I was weary beyond words. From where I sat on my make shift seat tied to the vent, looking down was like looking into a dark hole without a bottom. It felt like hell down there. Finally I began to feel weak and I told the others that I had to lie down. I jumped off the vent and went down into the cell. Standing up in the cell I looked at the three walls and the door and said to myself, *“Wbat a doin’ here, though eh? How I goin’ come out? Wbat a can do to come out?”* If at that time there was any chance for me to run, believe me, I would have run, run, run, run and not stopped running.

I spread out the cardboard and the Gleaner (local newspaper) on the floor. I lay on my back and stared up into the ceiling wondering, remembering, considering, meditating, dreaming, visioning and hoping that this was all a dream. But the stark reality kept coming back to me that this was not a dream, this was the real deal and that I had to find a way to take a hold of myself. Feeling only the walls around me, the black ceiling forming a funnel into another world, a world apart from me, I told myself, *“Only God alone can help mi.”* I came up off my back, knelt down on my two knees and prayed with all my heart for God to have mercy on me, to help me out of the position in which I had found myself, to give me the strength to endure, to give me the will power to fight and the hope that one day I would be free.



THE BASIC SCHOOL

My earliest recollections were those of going to a basic school in East Kingston at Vauxhall Avenue, Franklyn Town while living with my grandmother, Miss T, (Annie Thomas, my father's mother). I remember my grandmother sending me off on the first day of school. She had ironed my clothes with loving care; my short pants were starched stiff and pressed to show sharp seams in the front and back.

My first day of school was a happy memory. I set out to prove to the teacher that I was a little boy who knew a lot of things. I used what I thought were big words in an effort to impress her and let her know that I was serious about learning. I sat at the back with the other boys eager to learn, excited about joining the ranks of 'big boy' school goers.

At lunchtime I saw that Miss T had packed bread with fried plantains and some lemonade in a little red thermos. I felt special. It didn't take us children long to get to know each other and before the end of the first day we were playing boys games like we had known each other forever. The girls played ring games and hop scotch. We boys played more rough and tumble games like cow boys and Indians and leap frog. School was laced with fun and good times but it was also filled with a lot of trauma for me.

For the first nine months things went very well for me but one morning, without warning, everything changed. I didn't want to go to school and begged to stay home. I just didn't feel well, my stomach felt queasy. By the time I left home my belly was

rumbling and I felt more unsettled with every passing minute. Miss T had a regular breakfast routine, which consisted of porridge first. You didn't get your tea (hot chocolate) with bread or fried dumplings or salt fish fritters until you had finished all your porridge.

That morning I didn't feel like drinking any porridge and left for school half-heartedly. During my first class the rumbling in my belly got worse and cold sweat began to wash over me. My stomach continued to rumble and gripe until I realized that I had to go to the bathroom urgently. I went up to the front of the class and asked my teacher, "Miss, please allow me to go to the bathroom."

"Young man, go back to your seat," she replied barely looking at me.

"Miss, a well want to use the bathroom yuh know?" I cried holding back the tears.

"Go back to your seat. No one is allowed outside during class. Go back to your seat." But standing my ground I said, "but Miss a must use de bathroom now."

"Yuh hear what a sey? Yuh not going outside, go back to yuh seat."

I stood up and looked at her not understanding.

"But Miss, I want to use the bathroom."

"Go back to yuh seat," she insisted.

I still stood my ground and looked at her. Then I felt my bowels get loose and give way. I started to mess up myself. I could feel it making its way slowly down my well-starched short khaki pants unto my legs. It was only then that the teacher realized the seriousness of my situation.

"Yuh have to go home now yuh know," she said in a matter of fact tone. "You cannot stay in school like that," she continued, seeing that I was messing up myself. I didn't say anything to her because I felt so ashamed. I felt different in myself and remember thinking, *"I cannot come back to this school 'cause the*

children goin' to tease mi.” So I walked out of the school, leaving my slate, my pencil and my lunch pan behind.

I remember walking down the street, wishing that the earth would take me in because the mess was down on my feet and on my shoes. I had to walk pass a lot of people to reach my home, but I had to reach. I thought of every short cut, any way that I could reach my house without anyone seeing me but I couldn't think of any other way home. So I took a deep breath and just walked. I walked as if I were in a trance not noticing the people around me. I walked purposefully towards my home. On arrival I walked into the house and went directly to my grandmother.

“How yuh mess up yuh self like that?” she asked, alarmed at my condition.

“Is not my fault Grandma. I asked Miss to let mi use the bathroom an' she sey no.”

“But de teacher suppose to mek yuh use the bathroom.”

“I ask her grandma but she sey: *“Go back to yuh seat.”*”

“Well awright, come mek a carry yuh roun the back an help clean yuh up.” After she cleaned me up and put fresh clothes on me, I felt better but I had this shame and fear that if I ever saw those children again, they were going to tease me and say mean things about that awful day at school. As a result of a caring grandmother I never went back to the basic school.

Miss T wasted no time in speaking with the principal of St. Michael's All Age School on Tower Street, near to the general penitentiary and my little sister and I were placed there within a week or two. My sister started out at the infant section and I started out in grade one. My first day at St. Michael's wasn't bad even though my nightmare experience of the basic school was still fresh in my mind and I had expected the worst.

That term in grade one went pretty well however and I tried my best. Over all I wasn't a bad student academically. I paid attention in the class and during lunchtime I would mix with the other boys. One of our favorite games was '*stuckie*'. '*Stuckie*' is a game where one team tries to catch persons from the other team. Anyone caught would have to stay on one spot or be stuck until freed. A person could only be freed if someone on his team, who was a free man, touched him; then he was free to run with his teammates again and the game continued. In that game I was considered to be a good player and a fast runner. I would be in and out and try to dally away from the opposition to reach any of my teammates who were stuck. We would also play karate and pretend cowboy and Indian when we were dog-tired of playing '*stuckie*'.

Even from grade one I liked running and football (soccer) and was a good footballer from that age. My class teacher grew to love me and encouraged me to concentrate on my schoolwork but in the evenings after school I was always lured into a good game of football and would play for maybe a half-hour before going home.

After graduating from grade one I went into one of the classes for bright students in grade two because of my performance in grade one the previous year. I also became a favorite of the grade-two teacher and I liked her, so things went well. I was a quiet student. I didn't like to brag and boast but being a part of the in crowd always made me feel special. I excelled in Math, English and the Science subjects and grade two also passed happily.

But my world was never to be stable for any length of time or so it seemed. The constancy that I longed for seemed elusive to people in my world and to me. Towards the end of my second year at St. Michael's All Age School, my grandmother

slid on a banana peel and injured her right foot. She made many visits to the hospital for treatment but the foot remained swollen. This made it difficult for her to move about and it became more and more difficult for her to take care of me, so I was moved from her home and placed in the care of my mother's mother, Miss Florence Campbell.



DUTTY TOUGH

Miss T never fully recovered from her injury. She became very ill and eventually succumbed to her illness. I was devastated. No one could comfort me. I cried for weeks and felt that my grounding had been snatched from under me. My mother, though I knew that she loved me, was busy trying to make a living to support my sister and me. My father, who also loved me, was an alcoholic who spent more time drinking after hours with his friends than with me. Though he was never physically abusive to either my sister or me, he was never around when I needed him. Miss T had really been my only lifeline and our primary care giver. With her gone I felt alone and afraid.

I remember going to the funeral parlor and choosing a burial dress for her. She was buried at the May Pen Cemetery in Kingston, a grim place seen through the eyes of a nine year old. I cried as I saw them lowering the casket with her body into the hollow grave. It was a frightening sight for me. I didn't understand why the people we love most had to be taken away from us. "*What kind of God rewards us in this way?*" I thought. Even more frightening was the thought of her final resting place in the cold, dark earth.

About a week after Miss T died, I dreamt that I was sitting on the ground beside her bed. I saw some people walking around me in full suits of white. When I looked up, I saw her lying on the bed in a white frock. She was lying on her back and I looked at her, wondering to myself, "*How dem sey Grandma dead an si Grandma here.*" Just then she opened her eyes wide and looked at me. I was horror-struck. I struggled out of the

dream screaming into consciousness, awakening Grandma Florence who sat upright in the bed looking at me in shock.

“What happen, what happen?” she asked, perplexed. Her hands clutched her nightgown close to her heart as if on the verge of a heart attack.

“A jus vision Miss T,” I said.

“So why yuh scream?”

“A was frighten when she open her eyes.”

“Yuh shouldn’t scream. Yuh wi scare her away. She come to be yuh guardian angel and will protect yuh. So if yuh vision her again, nuh scream an frighten her off. If yuh scream she not goin to feel comfortable to come roun yuh.”

“Yes Grandma,” I answered not quite understanding the import of the message. I never dreamt of Grandma T again but I felt as if she had come to herald in the new chapter in my life, living with my maternal grandmother, (Grandma Florence) and my aunt.

My mother and my aunt never ever saw eye to eye and there was always a tension between them. One day they quarreled; tempers ran high and angry words were hurled through the room like knives carving out little pieces of my insides and cutting into the quiet of the morning. In hindsight it was a forerunner to a dreadful day.

My sister and I were sent to my grandmother to get our lunch money for school; Grandma Florence sold produce in the Coronation Market, on Spanish Town Road. After collecting the money we took the number-20 bus from Railway Station, which had a route through Tower Street bypassing our school. We took the bus and I elbowed my way through to the front. I lost contact with my sister who was somewhere in the crowd towards the middle of the bus. I came off at the school stop and stood in front of the bus waiting for her. She came off the bus but wondering where I was and unable to see me in the

crowd, attempted to cross the road herself instead of waiting for me. She ran straight in front of the bus past me and proceeded to run across the street without looking. As she ran across the street a motorcyclist came charging around the bus and hit her. I saw her lifted into the air and thrown down on the road some ten feet away. The man on the motorcycle stopped. All the passengers came out of the bus to see what had happened. My sister was lying in a little helpless heap on the ground. Her clean starched uniform torn and splattered with blood. Someone shouted, "Call de ambulance! Quick, she hurt!" I stared at my sister lying unconscious on the ground; a lifeless looking bundle with cuts, bruises, blood and dirt from the street and I screamed again and again. The large pair of work worn hands of a street seller held me and I nestled my head in the folds of her stained apron, which had the familiar smell of thyme, onions and ground provision. Finally I stopped screaming.

A police jeep stopped, lifted up my sister, put her inside the jeep and sped off with her. The policemen who were left on the scene asked if anyone knew the little girl. I told them that I was her brother and gave them my mother's name and our address. They asked where we were coming from and I told them that we had just left our grandmother at her stall in the Coronation Market and had boarded the bus there for school. They asked me if I was going to be okay and if I needed something to drink. Seeing that I was physically okay, they crossed me and sent me on through the school gate.

That day I sat in class emotionless, dimly oblivious of my surroundings, the thought of my sister lying unconscious in the street loomed before me. I didn't know if she was dead or alive. All I could think of was her little body lying there with eyes closed in the middle of the busy street. *"I should have held*

her hand firmly,” I thought. But in that crowded bus that was an impossible thing.

My aunt and my mother weren't on speaking terms and when I went home that day my aunt didn't want to speak to me because of her fight with my mother. Then I told her the news of the accident and she reluctantly agreed to go to the hospital. To my relief she brought my sister back with her. Aside from some minor cuts and bruises and the fact that she had fainted from the shock of the accident, my sister was all right. She spent the next two days at home recuperating but was back at school for the new week.

My parents never developed a relationship like a wife and husband might have. My mother had lived with her mother before going on her own. My father lived with his mother, Miss T. My father was a fairly intelligent man judging from what I heard about him and from what I knew. His big sister had schooled him. He grew up mainly in Manchester and Clarendon and had come to Kingston as a young man. He worked at the Passport office, the Jamaica Tourist Board, taught at Alpha Boy's School for many years and then had worked with the Ministry of Education.

My father's sister in the United States tried to help by offering to sponsor him to the United States. I remember hearing Miss T talking to him about migrating and encouraging him to take up his sister's offer but he got vexed, took a ratchet knife and cut up the passport, spat out some angry words and stormed out of the house. Miss T told his sister this, vowed never to help him again and that was the end of any idea of migration.

My father loved to drink white rum. He would spend countless hours in rum bars, from one bar to the next, as if attempting to drink them all dry. I often wondered how he was

able to drink all that rum and still stand. On Friday's when he got paid he would head straight for the bar. By the time I went to look for him at his workplace, trying to get money for school or clothes, he would be gone. It was hard following his tracks and I usually didn't find him until his money was finished.

At nights he would come home late. Grandma would give him his dinner, then he would go out onto the verandah, eat his dinner and read a book until he dropped off into a mindless stupor, his head thrown back on the chair, his lips sometimes curling into a boyish smile, maybe remembering better times, times before his personal demons compelled him to drink instead of spending time with the son that he so often bragged about. Sometimes in the wee hours of the night, I would hear Grandma waking him out of his sleep, calling him to come inside. According to her this was the time that duppies (ghosts) walked around, plus she said men were passing the house while he was on the verandah with the door still open. She swore that he was going to bring bad on the whole household if he continued that route. I recalled those times and was saddened.

My father wasn't a rough type of man. He was a loving person, despite his addictions to white rum and Craven 'A' cigarettes. He would smoke two packs of twenty cigarettes in no time and he made sure he was never without a spare pack. He spent most of his free time lost in his world of white rum fumes and cigarette smoke. Whenever I did catch up with him in a bar, he would boast to his friends, "Si mi big son here. Is my boy yuh know?" But he never cared to spend any time seeing to my needs or taking care of me. He never knew how my school clothes were bought, how I managed for lunch money, or how I was doing in school. He never knew if I had a problem, we never seemed to talk much. And I wanted so much to talk

with him, to have him talk with me, to tell me what he was feeling, to tell me about his world and even his demons. I was sure that I was mature enough to handle anything, if only he had the time to spend with me. I needed him so badly and I didn't even realize how much I did at that time.

Over the years I continued to live with Grandma Florence, with frequent visits to my mother. I saw my father on the rare occasion whenever my tracking skills were sharpest. I would hear that he was at a particular bar and start the mapping from that point. Sometimes I ended up going from one bar to the next bar, to the next, until I had scoured maybe four or five before catching up with him. When I did catch up with him he never failed to play the role of the proud parent, boasting to his cronies that I was his handsome big son. He would buy me a soda and I would watch them play dominoes or try my hand at skittles. Then as the night crept up and he realized that he had to send me home, he would look on me and say, "Come an check mi back tomorrow an mek a give yuh a money."

"But daddy, what happen to tonight?" I would ask.

"Tomorrow. Check mi back tomorrow. A don't have any money on mi tonight." I would leave saddened and sick in my heart once again. His tomorrows never came. At home grandma would ask, "yuh si yuh father?"

"Yes," I would answer. I felt a shame that wasn't supposed to be mine, a shame for the man who forgot to be a father.

"Then him don't give yuh anything?"

"No." It was always the same answer to the same question. No! No! No!

The next day I would go to the place where he told me to meet him but as always, he was never there. I would wait hour after hour hoping with each passing hour that this time it would be different; this time he would stick to his promise; this time he would give me the money that was so desperately needed for

us to make ends meet. But my wait was always in vain. He never showed up, ever. Sometimes his cronies would tell me where he had last been seen and I would start the round of tracking again. But always I would have to go home to grandma empty handed. Eventually I developed a different strategy. I found out where he worked and what day he got paid at the end of each month. I would skip school that day and present myself at his workplace early, well before closing time. He would see me on his way out and greet me with, “Wha a goin?” He was full of nice talk then. He would carry me out to lunch, show me off to his friends and then the inevitable, “Gwaan home now. A will come come check yuh later and bring some money for yuh.” I’m still waiting!

That was my father. Whenever he got paid, he would drink until everything he had was cleaned out. He worked steadily at it for years. When his pay was finished I would get a bag of promises. He was a person that always had a novel and a pack of cigarettes in his hand. He lived in his private world of white rum and fiction and was as elusive as the smoke from his Craven ‘A’ cigarettes, but a more amicable individual, you could never find. It was hard even then not to love him.

Instead of my father, I had to depend on my mother. She played the role of both mother and father. She supplied our uniforms, shoes, books and all our needs. Although we lived apart, she was there for me and on weekends I can remember visiting her where she lived at Blake Road or later at Tex Lane in Central Kingston. My mother had only an elementary education, but she tried her best doing whatever menial work she could get to keep bread on our table. She became interested in buying and selling and eventually started what is now called ‘informal commercial trading.’ She cooked well and whenever I visited, she always had a tasty meal for me. I enjoyed having dinner with her.

During her time at Tex Lane, she developed a friendship with another man who lived with her for a while. Very soon in the relationship however, her interest in him waned as she realized that he didn't want to settle down and make a life with her. I had seen this in him from the beginning, even at my tender age, but I loved my mother and wanted only her happiness, so I said nothing. I always went to look for her and we would reason, share jokes and laugh a lot. I felt from that time that my mother had a special love for me. Up to now people in the family still say that my mother loves me more than my sister. Whether that is true or not, I can only say that I felt a special bond with her. She always looked out for me and I could always depend on her to come through for me.

Once when I was visiting her, after she had broken off with this man, he came to the house and wanted to rough up my mother. I don't know what they were arguing about but she got into a fight with him. She pushed him, he hauled her about and they both ended up falling on a glass cabinet. She got cut up badly. He beat her up until her eyes were black and blue and her mouth swollen. I was just a small boy but I fought like a tiger trying desperately to defend my mother. I held on to him, kicked him and threw punches on his legs and back. I remember thinking, "*anytime mi grow up big, a goin' kill him.*" When he left she was covered in blood. I helped her to put on clean clothes, and then I walked with her to the Kingston Public Hospital. I waited for hours with my mother in agony, until sometime after nine o'clock she got in to see a doctor. They stitched up her hand, dressed her black eye and swollen mouth. I followed her back to the house and tried to help her clean up the mess as best I could. She wasn't in any state to clean up, she had lost a lot of blood and the ordeal had taken its toll.

She made me swear that I wouldn't tell anyone about the incident but said that I should tell her mother to come and look for her. Her mother came to see her the next morning and I remember Grandma Florence telling her that she should report it to the police and press charges against the man. My mother decided not to however, maybe for fear of her life or mine. For some time after their fight, the man kept coming back hoping to patch things up with her but she stood her ground, even when he threatened violence and eventually he lost interest.

Eventually my mother met a foreigner. He was a Jamaican who had gotten American citizenship over the years. They used to call him 'Sweetie.' Sweetie was a very likable individual who developed a fondness for my mother and decided to help her migrate to the United States, so he married her and filed for her soon after. In the mean time she began traveling to purchase wholesale goods in the US for resale in Jamaica. She developed a credit business with her customers. Some of these customers made special orders, which she filled from her overseas source and brought back along with other stock items. She was a good businesswoman and all her business was methodically noted with her receivables carefully recorded. When customers paid, whether in full or in part, she would make the necessary entry and bring down the balances.

Most times she did her collection on Sundays when folks were more likely to be at home. Sometimes she would carry me to help her, especially when she was also doing large deliveries. She wanted me to know her clients and to understand how she ran her business, maybe assuming that one day it would become a big business that would require my input. I was about eleven to twelve years old at the time.

My mother moved from Central Kingston to Ocean View Avenue in East Kingston when I was around twelve year old. I would visit her on weekends. First I would go to my grandmother in the market downtown, collect foodstuff and other supplies for my mother and carry it up to her house. On Saturdays my mother liked to cook soup for us and we would eat and talk until dusk when it was time for us to go back to Grandma's house. Then on Sundays I would spend the day with her again, helping her to deliver her goods or just chatting.

I was sent to live with my mother at Ocean View Avenue for a short time before she left for the United States because of my aunt's resentment, which came to a head one day. On the day in question, I cooked ackees, butter beans and dumplings. As we boys used to say, "wi run a boat." I used some of my grandmother's rice, seasonings and other ground provisions to beef up the general fare. When it was ready, I offered some to my aunt's two girls. They presumed that I had already taken the best share for my sister and myself and left the "bun bun" that was in the bottom of the pot for them and told their mother this on her arrival.

Without so much as a word to me, my aunt got into a temper. She began to fling things all over the place and hit me in her rage. I retaliated by grabbing a garden shovel and swung it at her. The edge of the shovel caught her on the side of her head and she ran away realizing that I was angry enough to defend myself at all costs. I left the house and went in search of my father. As fate would have it, he was at home. When I told him about the incident, he was outraged and would have taken a fight to her that same day, had it not been for the sensible intervention of his woman friend. Instead, my mother went over to my aunt to have it out with her. My aunt threatened to report me to the police and have them lock me up and have her police friend kill me. On hearing that I ran out of the

house, scaled some fences in the yard and swore to them that I was going to head for the sea and drown myself. Grandma Florence later found me on Windward Road, and took me to my mother's house. They both decided that I should live with my mother from then on.

My mother left Jamaica to take up permanent residence in the United States in 1979 and my sister and I went to live with Grandma Florence. She said that she didn't know how things would be for her in New York so she preferred to go up, set a foundation and then send for us as soon as she could. During those years my father's sister, Edna Collins, who had also migrated to the United States, took a liking to my sister and me. Having no children of her own, she began helping us with clothes, money, schoolbooks and other things. I remember her sending us to her friend at Sangster's Book Shop for 'back to school' purchases. She would instruct us to go to that lady with our book lists and then she would pay the bill. Whatever I was not able to get from my father, his sister provided for us.

After a while, Miss Collins decided that St. Michael's All Age wasn't a good enough school for us and we were transferred to Harbor View Technical Activities School. It was a first-rate school for sports and I immediately got involved in their sports program and excelled. I beat the school's best class-two athlete. The school was very impressed with my performance and included me in events at the national level. I was placed on the track and field team and got to practice and compete in special events held at the national stadium. I began playing football and did well in that area also.

Around this time I sat for the Common Entrance Examination. My name did not appear in the newspaper as having passed the exam. Being one of their best athletes, my school checked with the Ministry of Education and was told

that I had in fact gotten a low pass and that my father should take me to the ministry to see if I could be assigned to a secondary school. This never happened, as my father in his usual half drunk state, never followed up. I blame myself for this disappointment however, because I had put all of my energies into sports and had not settled down sufficiently to tackle my academic work. Never the less, I was placed at the Donald Quarrie Secondary School that had just opened in Harbor View. Our batch was the first group of students to attend the school, which wasn't yet completed with the exception of grades seven, eight and nine.



THE YOUNG CELEBRITY

At Donald Quarrie I became the youngest player on the football team, performing better than most of the senior members of the team. I trained hard as a winger and was very speedy. The school had great training facilities that made training fun. We would also run up the Wareka Hills or on the sandy strip along the Palisados Road to build up stamina and speed and we participated in many track meets to get even more speed.

While at Donald Quarrie School I took part in the Secondary Championships at the national stadium. I won the 100-meter class three, the 200-meter class three and the 400-meter class three and set more than one record during the course of Champs. Coaches from many of the reputable high schools such as Calabar, Kingston College, Camperdown, Vere Tech. and Excelsior began to take notice of the new comer from Donald Quarrie School. The coach from Camperdown impressed me the most. He seemed interested in me as a person, not only as an athlete. He visited me at my home, got to know my mother and spoke to her regarding the possibility of a scholarship and transfer to Camperdown High School, if I was in agreement. Many of the Camperdown athletes also befriended me and encouraged me to take up the offer of the scholarship.

During my last year at Donald Quarrie I set a record in the 100-meter. Once I was sick for a special inter-schools event. My coach wanted to pull me out but my teammate Franklyn Burrows and I were the only ones left to represent our school in the remaining heats. Being the only medal prospects for our

school, I knew we had to perform so I braced myself and ran the 100-meter, losing by a head to a Papine Secondary student. This irritated me having previously set the record in this class. I was so disappointed that I insisted, against the advice of the coach, on running in the 200-meter race. My determination prevailed and I won the 200-meter race. Encouraged by my performance in the 200-meter, I entered for the 400-meter event as well and also won the gold. After these meets I was declared the champion boy for class three, winning two gold medals and one silver medal. I became an instant celebrity at Donald Quarrie and was a hit with the boys but especially so with the girls.

I left Donald Quarrie in 1978 to take up the track scholarship offered to me by Camperdown and entered Camperdown at third form level. At Camperdown I was reintroduced to football by some of the athletes on the track team. I developed an immediate love for the sport, which was to change my focus from then on. I proved to be just as effective on the football field as I had been on the track and eventually was invited to play left back on the Cole's Football Team, a highly respected team at the time. When I began playing for Cole's, Camperdown was in third position nationally. Cole's Football Team helped to push Camperdown to the head of the Zone. At Camperdown I met Peter Cargill, (former Jamaican national coach for under twenty's boys), Raymond Stewart and Leroy Reid, (both recognized Jamaican athletes). As a matter of fact I helped train Raymond and Leroy to run.

As part of the Cole's team we performed creditably, beating schools such as Champion College, Kingston College and St. George's. We were riding high. At the finals of the Manning Cup match at the national stadium we found ourselves down 3 – 0 against Charlie Smith High School. Just before half time I got a corner. I took the corner and whether by accident or

not, the ball touched the corner post, bounced on the goalkeeper and went into the goal making it 3 – 1. In the second half we made 3 – 2. We fought to equalize the score but in the end got beaten 3 – 2.

Our senior side had won the Manning Cup that year and was playing Walker Cup also and this is how my football career started. The coach from the Manning Cup side invited me to come and train. I played Minor League Football for Franklyn/Vineyard; at that time it was called Cavalier's Junior. I played football at many important venues. I remember playing on the D & G football field, scoring and getting my picture in the Daily News Newspaper. I felt very proud to know that my picture was in the Daily News and that all Jamaicans, including my family and friends, were seeing it.

During that time I was juggling between football and track and field. The track and field coach did not like me playing football, as he was afraid that I might get injured. But I was addicted to the limelight and continued playing anyway. I went to Boys' Champs and ran in the Gibson Relay for my school. We didn't win but we performed creditably and went on to the finals of the sprint relay – 4 x 200 meters and 4 x 400 meters. In the end Calabar High School and Kingston College clipped our team to the finish in those relays.

One day while training for the Manning Cup at the Bellvue playfield I was juggling a ball under a tree, it hit a branch above me and the broken branch came crashing down on my head. A twig from the branch scraped the pupil of my left eye and I ended up at the eye clinic where they treated me and put a patch over it. For several weeks I was sidelined because of the injury; I couldn't play any football, I couldn't train, I was completely out of it. I had to attend the eye clinic regularly for new dressings and further treatment. Fortunately for me my

eye healed sufficiently to begin training just before the Minor League Finals and I got selected to play.

On the field I did everything that was asked of me but it seemed that I was jinxed for the season or maybe it was just my bad eye. I got a ball, beat a few players, darted into the box, tried a shot and the ball skimmed off the side of my boots and went into the side of the net. The entire stadium erupted with a cry of "GOAL," before realizing that the ball had only bounced off the side of the net and hadn't scored. We were playing Jones Town and they had us down one love. I really felt bad about blowing the perfect chance. Eventually my eyes got tired and the coach took me off. We lost to Jones Town 1 – 0 but we still got a trophy for second runner up and I was featured in the newspapers again and got a very good write-up. The morning after the story broke in the press, I got a champion's welcome at school. The match had been carried live on radio as well and many students had heard my name called several times and had followed the progress of the game. I was very proud to have participated in a final at the national stadium, which was considered a great honor for any young man.

As my name spread throughout the football world, I also became popular with the girls. Everybody wanted to be associated with me, as if some of the glitter would rub off on him or her. I got carried away in my football fame. The pull took me away from my previous track and field goals. I had become a star, basking in the eyes of my fans. I began to skip track and field training and got more and more lost in the heady perfume of my female admirers. I went to the Gibson Relays and Boys' Champs and performed but not up to my earlier standards.

PAPINE NEW TRACK CHAMPS

Gleaner Sports Reporter

CORPORATE AREA New Secondary Schools athletic champions Papine captured the first lien on the Wilbert C. Hanchard Trophy with 70 points on the final day of the two-day first All-Island New Secondary Schools' Athletic Championships at the National Stadium yesterday.

Papine who finished on top of the other 56 schools which competed did so in fine style especially in the relay events — the Class 1, 2 and 5, 4 x 100 metres relays.

Following Papine in the points standings were: Haile-Selassie 44, Seaforth 43½, McGrath 28, Pembroke Hall 28, Yallahs 25½, Kingston 25, Spanish Town 25, Tarrant 23, Penwood 19½, Bog Walk 17, Don Quarrie 15, Maldon 14, Denbigh 12, Sav-la-Mar 12, Bustamante 12, Old Harbour 12, May Pen 9 and Vauxhall 8.

Throughout the early finals of the day both Papine and Seaforth had quite a battle for the lead as several times the lead switched from both teams until

the relay events where Papine finally showed their class as tops.

The Class 1 800 metres was a closely run event from the final 100 metres turn between Ernest Robinson of Yallahs and L. Blake of McGrath, with both passing the finish line in the same time of 2 mins. 0.9 secs. However the judges awarded the race to Robinson. In the Class 2 800 metres final Lester Graham of Seaforth won in 2 mins. 02.3 seconds from Michael Brown of Papine and H. Forbes of Maldon.

Albert Lawrence of Seaforth took the Class 1 100 metres in a close duel between himself and Peter Matthews of Kingston with Desmond Murray third. Lawrence's time was 11.2 while Mat-

thews registered 11.3 and Murray 11.4 secs.

Pembroke Hall's Norman Edwards took the Class 2 100 metres from Rudolph McLean of Haile Selassie and Devon Morrison of Spanish Town in 11.5 secs., with McLean and Morrison recording the same times of 11.7 secs. S. Simpson of Papine won the Class 3 100 metres in 11.7 seconds.

The Class 1 400 metres was won by Kenroy Brown of Haile Selassie in a time of 59.5 seconds from Michael Marriott of Christian and Lennox Brown of Seaforth, the only double winner, won his second race taking the Class 2 400 metres final in 51.6 secs. from Edwin Lammont of Haile Selassie and Ladrick Tenny of Holy Trinity.

Anthony Ashwood of Don Quarrie took the only 200 metres beating Michael Lewis of Yallahs and Ian Acheson of Penwood in 24.5 seconds.

The 4 x 100 metres relays was completely dominated by Papine. First they took the Class 1 boys in 44.5 secs. from Bog Walk 44.7 and Kingston 44.9. They later came back to take the Class 2 boys in 45.2 secs. from Haile Selassie 45.3 and Spanish Town 45.4. In the Class 3 relay they had to work hard against Penwood in the final leg winning very close in 45.5 secs. to Penwood's 47.6 secs. and in third place was Yallahs.

Haile Selassie took the Mal-



The Daily Gleaner

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JAMAICA'S GOLD MEDAL GRAPEFRUIT DRINK

THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 1978

Write up in The Daily Gleaner
Thursday, March 23, 1978

profit on the
will share sev-

of the Ministry of Education
and donor presents the Hanchard Trophy to Papine's cap-

at the National Stadium yesterday. At left is Papine Secondary School principal Mr.

17 ft. 10½ inches from L. Pin-
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A STRANGE TURN OF EVENTS

Now I see that I wasted those golden years and ended up not fulfilling my track and field potentials. It was then that I also got caught up in a sleazy mess, which eventually led to my downfall and drop out from high school. At Camperdown High School I became friends with Randy Gordon, a fellow student, who was already on the wrong track. He was in a circle of ganja-smoking youths that seemed to always be on the cutting edge of excitement. Maybe because I was a prominent football star, they wasted no time in luring me into their circle.

One day he told me that he had a gun and that I could come with him to see it for myself. A few of us cut classes and followed him to his home where he had hidden the gun. We didn't stop to reason how he had come to be in possession of the gun and he never did tell us. We looked on it in awe. I had never seen a gun, other than in the movies, so I touched the barrel with fear and reverence. He stored it back into its hiding place in his mattress and we left to return to school. Later that day, I was in the library doing some research work when he called me and asked me to lend him some money. He left and I continued to do my work.

After school I went to my home. At that time I was boarding with a family in Hope Pastures. My mother was by then living in New York and my grandmother and aunt thought that I would be safer out of the violence erupting in downtown Kingston during the period preceding the 1980's election. On my arrival home, I was told that a man had telephoned and had asked several questions about me and wanted to know my

whereabouts. At the time I didn't think much about it and had my dinner and went to bed.

My first subject at school the next morning was English Literature. I was in class reading a book and waiting on the teacher when somebody from outside called my name. When I looked up I saw some men signaling me to come to them. Since the teacher wasn't in yet, I went to speak with them. Outside I saw Randy Gordon and said to him, "what is this?"

"You know him?" one of the men asked.

"Yes a know him."

"Him show yuh a gun?" he asked.

"Yeah, him show us a gun?"

"Whey it deh?"

"I don't know, a leave him with it," I said, feeling the taste of bile coming up in my mouth. "Me and others went to his house an wi see him with it but him never explain anything to us and wi jus look on it an leave." They requested that I come with them.

Beginning to sense trouble, I told them that I wasn't going anywhere with them. Their response to my stand was that, if I didn't come with them, they would get physical with me. Thoughts of being found battered to death on a lonely country road came into my mind. Fortunately for me a teacher overheard the conversation and told them that if they wanted me to come with them they would have to get the permission of the principal. The teacher escorted the men and me to the principal's office. Summing things up quickly in my head, I knew that something was wrong. Randy Gordon slinked behind us, his face screwed up in a sour grimace, while the men pushed me to the front.

They told the principal that they had been to the movies with Randy and that he had gone outside sometime during the show

and had taken a gun from their car. When they eventually caught up with him, he swore to them that I had stolen the gun from him after he had shown it to me and that he had no idea what I had done with it. I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

“Yuh lie man!” I shouted back at him. “Me never steal no gun.”

“You was de last one fi have de gun,”

“Mi only touch yuh gun. Every man did touch it. Mi never tek de gun, an yuh know it.”

I told the men and the principal that I was not the only one present when Randy had shown the gun and that he had further asked me for a bag to hide it in as he planned to carry it to Ocho Rios. The men demanded that I take them to the house where I had first seen the gun but the principal said that he would not allow them to take me anywhere without more clarity on the situation. The other teachers told the men that they had no reason to doubt me and that I was not likely to be mixed up in that sort of thing but that Randy was a known trouble maker. Eventually convincing the principal that they were only interested in finding out where the gun had last been seen and that I would be returned safely, he took a softer line.

In the end, they came to some sort of agreement with the teachers that a private detective would also be hired to locate the gun and I was sent with them. I was scared out of my mind but I put up a brave front and went into the car. Once in their car, the men threatened me with bodily harm if I didn't produce the gun or tell them where I had hidden it. They roughed me up a bit, slapping the side of my head and trying to scare the hell out of me.

We went to the Randy's house and I showed them where the gun had been hidden and we returned to the car. Although I was terrified, I tried not to show this to them. It was hard to

cooperate and still hang tough. These men could kill me with their bare hands if they wanted to; they knew it and they wanted me to know it too.

Back at the school, a teacher contacted a private investigator and we went to see him immediately. I recounted everything that had taken place and he advised us to report the incident to the Central Police Station. One of the teachers took me to the Central Police Station and I retold my story to an inspector and a Sergeant took my statement. Saying, I should fear for my life, the policemen advised me not to return to my home in Hope Pastures.

I told them that I could stay at my grandmother's home and they agreed to that. This plan seemed to meet the approval of all concerned and they escorted me back to school. They showed the principal my statement and told him that it would not be safe for me to return to school until things were cleared up. The policemen escorted me to Grandma Florence's home and told me that they would stay in close contact with me.

I was in somewhat of a daze, trying to make sense of what had taken place earlier. I knew that Randy was a bad-boy but it never occurred to me that he would try to involve any of us. What was worse, mine was the only name that kept coming up. Why wasn't he saying anything about the other guys who had been there? There must have been some jealousy or bad mind (not thinking well of another) on his part because it just didn't fit.

That night I took a bus and returned to Hope Pastures. Hastily I packed some clothing and a few personal belongings and told the lady of the house that I wouldn't be staying there for a while. She readily agreed for me to leave, as she wanted to stay clear of any problems with the law, which might emerge.

In time I learned that one of the men that had come to the school for me was a policeman by the name of Bachelor, who was a bodyguard for Captain Webley, a former Member of Parliament. The gun belonged to Bachelor and that was why they were putting on so much pressure to retrieve it.

I never saw those men again, though I lived in fear of my life for several months and stayed close to home. To my knowledge none of the other fellows who had gone to Randy's house that day were ever questioned. Through the grapevine I heard several stories about the possible whereabouts of the gun and how it went missing and realized that all my fears were well grounded. Randy Gordon disappeared and I never heard from him again. I was told that he went to visit a cousin in New York but he never returned to Jamaica.

At first it felt like I had been given compulsory vacation from school and it felt good. I didn't stray far from home as the police had instructed me and therefore didn't see much of the boys from school. It would have been much more fun to be on the football field with the guys but I didn't mind cutting some classes. My schoolwork took a beating. I never felt settled enough to concentrate and I didn't have much interest in the lessons after that. I didn't realize then the tremendous impact this would eventually have on my future and there was no father figure around to steer me on the right path. I fell hopelessly behind with my schoolwork and eventually gave up trying to study. Where was my father when I needed him? Although he knew what had happened, he was hardly ever around. Oblivious to my dilemma, he was lost in the fumes of his beloved white rum and the smoke of Craven 'A' cigarettes.

A few weeks after the incident the school informed me that I was to return to sit the CXC exams but I declined knowing that I was totally unprepared. I was advised that I could apply for entry to another school and I told my father this but he never followed up. Fed up, ignorant and scared, I left school, dropped out of football, dropped out of track and field and generally gave up all my goals.

I stayed with my grandmother and aunt for some time. In the long run I took odd jobs as a laborer when they were available . Occassionally I saw students or teachers from Camperdown who would call to me and bring me abreast of what was happening at school. This made me feel sad, also I was a little embarrassed to be out of school doing odd jobs, after being the big football and track star. Still, the hard cold facts didn't set in until much later. By then it was too late to change lanes. I got caught up in a different set of runnings (happenings) and my life changed course forever.



YOUNG MAN, YUH TOO GIRLIE, GIRLIE

While I was attending Camperdown I had had a girlfriend who used to encourage me to visit her church at 111 Windward Road. I started going to church with her on a regular basis but after I got involved with the gun incident, I stopped going. That was the downward spiral in regards to my education, my football career and my track and field ambitions. All of my talents went down the tubes and my life took a turn onto a different road. I believe that that was the beginning of my whole downfall.

My infatuation with girls grew and this became another drawing card for me in my circle. I liked women. I liked to be around them. I liked having a lot of them, pretty ones. Before I dropped out of school, I had gotten a girl pregnant and she had a son for me. He was born in 1979. When this happened my mother came down from New York and the entire family was very supportive.

I got involved with other girls and got another girl pregnant shortly after. My new baby-mother was fourteen at the time and still attending school like myself. That girl and I had some wonderful times together. At first after she became pregnant, I left from downtown and moved mainly in a group uptown because I was confused and didn't know how to face her or her family. However, after she gave birth her friends kept encouraging me to visit her, telling me that I shouldn't abandon her. Something in me knew that it was the right thing to do and eventually I went to visit her.

At first she made up her face and didn't want to see me or speak with me but I persisted. She told me that I was wicked and that I shouldn't have turned my back on her, which was of course, true enough. But I convinced her that I really wanted to work it out with her and that I would help her with the baby when I could. I gave her some money that my mother had sent for me from New York and promised to stand by her.

I also had a school friend from the Camperdown track team whose girl operated a store in Cross Roads for her sister. She drove a Honda Accord at the time and would pick us up after school and take us to stay with her at the store some evenings. We were always fortunate to get pocket money from her whenever she had spare cash. My friend was her outright boyfriend but I knew that she liked me. However, I realized that if I got involved with her it would put a spokes (cause problems) between my friend and me and I ended up being a referee for their many disputes. She would sometimes pick me up alone, using the excuse that I could reason on her behalf with my brethren to smooth over some problem or the other; for me that ploy didn't work. I believe that my friend eventually saw through her game and realized that she had a soft spot for me.

As my life took this new direction I started moving with friends from the wrong side of the track. I lost interest in school and further education. I got caught up with more girls and lost interest in anything that in hindsight could have made me a better person. The circle of friends I had around me lead me into a violent direction, in the sense that I got involved with a crowd of bad-men; I got to know and understand the ins and outs of crime. I witnessed, firsthand, several criminal activities.

Girls were like an obsession with me in those days. I attended

countless dances, movies and some swinging parties. I loved the movies and I loved going to the Carib Theatre, Regal Theatre and State Theatre. I would attend pre-releases with whichever girl was on my mind at the time. In those days, I mainly moved with older girls, maybe because of their experience, though there were a few younger ones that I just couldn't resist. I enjoyed the good life with my girls and we partied heavily. Unlike most of my friends, I neither drank hard liquor, smoked ganja or even cigarettes but I would drink Red Label Wine, Dragon Stout or Guinness Stout when we were out. Drinking was never one of my vices. Growing up and seeing my father chain smoking and drinking white rum was enough to turn me off those things forever.

Some of the top girls in the community were my girls. I remember vividly the tragedy of Michelle in West Kingston, who I met after I had gotten caught up in the criminal element, bad-boy circles. She had been a very pretty girl but very headstrong. Her mother couldn't talk to her; her sisters couldn't influence her; I was the only one who she would listen to. I recall following her home many times and being called aside by her mother, who was always asking me to talk her into doing this or that. Then I would sit her down, reason with her and encourage her to go back to school. But my relationship with Michelle and her family caused jealousies within the group as some of the guys wanted to be intimate with her and she wasn't taking them on. A group of them ended up killing her because she had rejected them. She was found in her house dead - one gunshot through her forehead. This should have been a major wake up call for me but I continued unchecked within that criminal circle.

During the time when I was with a girl I was usually able to use my attraction with her to persuade her to attend school. I helped many girls with money for books or uniforms when

things were rough. Unfortunately I never took my own good advice to go back to school. Those girls and I had some good times. We went shopping and we enjoyed ourselves and I enjoyed them. There were occasions when girls would fight over me; mothers and sisters would end up fighting other girls over me. I was seen as a girls' guy in the community, being handsome, likeable and intelligent. I dressed neatly, bought the best clothes, wore the best and my girls would have to wear the best and look good too. When we attended dances, we were the outstanding couple at the dance. I never liked to wear a lot of gold like most of the flashy youths, instead I would wear one nice chain or a ring or a good watch. Maybe it was because I grew up with so many women around me but I really admire the fairer sex and have a soft side for them. Girls were always my best friends. I enjoyed being in their company and could always be found in the company of girls and women. People thought the world of me and many looked up to me as a young man going places. But the girls kept coming at me and there was no way to stop them. Not that I minded the attention.



THE STEALING OF THE YOUTH

Getting involved with the girlie life and the bad-boy crowd placed a lot of demands on me. My mother was now living in the United States, my grandmother was getting old and my father wasn't interested in my welfare. I was basically on my own without grounding or a lifeline. My mother tried desperately but she wasn't there on hand for me to really feel her influence. I don't blame my mother for my choice to leave school and to spar with robbers and murderers.

The 1980's elections got me involved with guns. I believe that the election was to be held on the 30th of October. Tribalism in the election process was deep-rooted, especially in inner city Kingston. If you lived in certain communities, you were branded as either JLP or PNP whether or not you actually wanted to choose that particular side. Because I happened to live in a PNP garrison, I was branded as a PNP. Each side had to hold their border and there was passionate campaigning for both sides, prompted by the M. P.'s and their supporters. There was a lot of election related shootings and killings island-wide. Every part of Jamaica was at war, most particularly Western Kingston. In my area the JLP tried to challenge the PNP but the PNP was the stronger party in that constituency.

Brown's Town, Dunkirk where I lived, was Michael Manley's constituency and an established PNP garrison community. He was our M.P and also the Prime Minister. A lot of guns were issued out in Dunkirk during that period, not by Michael Manley himself, but by the cronies attached to the People's National Party. The first of many bloody events that occurred just before the general elections was the Gold Street massacre.

Gunmen invaded a dance on Gold Street and shot up a whole lot of people; I got caught up in that stream of violence. I felt good knowing that I was a part of something, even though I had not chosen it consciously. The hype of the general elections and the fever pitch of the die-hards and political stooges made it feel like Christmas. I didn't analyze anything; I didn't look into it to see how foolish it all was; I got snared in the net for the quick money and glamour that it seemed to offer.

Guns were issued in my neighborhood to defend the PNP's constituency against a possible JLP invasion; M16 riffles, pump action riffles, 9 MM 45's, 380 Spin-barrel automatics and numerous other types of assault weapons. It was an all out war zone. As it came on to evening in the Franklyn Town/Brown's Town area, the JLP people would try to come across our borders. They were defending Ryan Peralto, JLP's Member of Parliament for the area; we were defending Michael Manley. At dusk, everybody would take out their guns and hold off their borderlines. People would block the roads, with debris and junk hidden in the drains by day to prevent drive by shootings. They were trying to invade our community and we retaliated by trying to invade theirs. In the meantime, allies from other communities would come in and get ammunition and guns or enlist our help to hold off their community against JLP invaders.

Even the police were involved in the violence. PNP policemen would come in and stand up with the PNP youths, giving them ammunition and encouragement. The same thing happened on the JLP side as well. The Jamaica Defense Force (JDF) also played their part in this war. Youths from the JDF helped to train gunmen on both sides – JLP and PNP. At night, they would come among us and reason with us, even showing us certain tactics, how to use certain weapons and how to defend

ourselves. The JDF fellows taught us how to use our weapons, to be more accurate and effective sharp shooters.

Sometimes I feel that I must have been born for a special purpose; our trainers singled me out as a youth who had a lot of potential. I paid attention, I learned fast, I had leadership qualities and I excelled at everything and anything they taught us. It seemed that in every area of my life, I stood out more than most other youths. The JDF trainers said that I was the only person who had really understood what they were teaching; I was the only person who learned everything without their need for repetition.

Eventually I became a young community leader in my area. I started to visit places like the PNP headquarters, attend PNP rallies and area meetings. When any incident happened in the area, I would be one of the persons that they would come to and reason with; I would then try to deal with the problem. If somebody robbed someone or broke into someone's house, I would be one of the persons to go with the other men to assess the situation and look for the guilty party. If we were to discipline him or make him refund the things that had been taken, I was one of the persons sent out. We would catch the individual and bring him to the Ranking (Don) who ruled over us. The discipline was mostly beatings with sticks or iron pipes. Sometimes the sentence was a shot in the foot if he wasn't to be killed. In the case of a rape or a killing that might have some personal connection to the Ranking or his men, they would retaliate by killing the person or persons.

As a youngster in the community aspiring to bigger and better things I was often called upon to hide the guns and ammunitions for the established Rankings. In this way I would show my respect and loyalty to the area leaders. They showed me how and where to hide the guns and when they wanted

them, they summoned me to retrieve them. The youths in these garrison communities were made the mules for the Rankings and the politicians, the people with power and the people who shaped our nation. To me the Rankings replaced parents who were most often missing in my life and I went along this path sweetened with promises of wealth and power but backed up by threats of bodily harm and sure death for resisters.

Politics has always played a vital role in the area of crime and violence in Jamaica. From the time I got involved and even before I got involved as a young man growing up, people relied in the inner city communities, especially in Kingston, on politics for their survival. These areas were divided into garrisons controlled by the politicians and their henchmen. At the time those henchmen were called Rankings. Those Rankings were the on-site controllers of these communities. You had Tony Welsh from Jungle, Claudie Massop from Tivoli Gardens, The Hot Steppers in Rockfort, Tony Brown, George Flash and many others; you had a lot of bad men, big Rankings who controlled things. It is during those times, just before I got involved, that men like 'Copper,' Dennis Bart from the Warika Hills area were the rated Rankings in power.

In time I got to know those guys; they were all connected to a political party either JLP or PNP. These Rankings were the persons that ran the garrison areas. It was then that you had a lot of inner city wars and a lot of shootings and killings. I saw a lot of those things and at times it scared me, having witnessed many crimes firsthand. Everyone had to try and stay within his own political borderline, especially the big men who were well known and involved; they had to stay in their own areas. Because in Jamaica, remember, those Rankings, in a matter of speaking, ran your life if you were involved in certain runnings. Many politicians were a part of what was taking

place; they might not have pulled the trigger themselves but they had people who worked as middlemen, so that no one could accuse them of being directly involved. As a youth involved with bigger Rankings, I got to see and know these people and their connections.

Being a part of the whole system I got to know which politicians were linked to which Rankings and which Rankings controlled which crew in the various neighborhoods. I got to know the people who were really pressing the buttons. These politicians were power crazy. They wanted position and power and in turn they provided the materials. In simple terms – you don't have to tell a person to shoot another person, you just have to provide the arms and create the mood; from the mood is created everything happens automatically.....and the politicians benefited.

This political business is something that was entrenched especially inside these garrison areas. Everybody was branded whether you wanted to be a part of it – yes or no; whether you wanted to be involved in it directly or indirectly, you were branded. If you came from an area that was a PNP stronghold whether you wanted to say you were going to vote or not going to vote, you were branded as a PNP and for this you could easily lose your life. If you left from your area and ended up in a JLP area and somebody asked you where you came from, if you said that you were from a known PNP area, you could get stabbed, scarred, beaten, or even lose your life. The same thing was applicable on the other side of the fence; a JLP ending up in our section of town would not fare well.

So politics was used to effectively divide the people. As a result certain politicians on both sides benefited from these divisive lines and from the chaos and wars that resulted; they secured huge sums of money to see to it that everything was

run according to how certain people in the very top echelons determined that it should run – you may draw your own conclusions here. These garrison areas were run down areas, where people suffered and lived in dire poverty. Everybody wanted something and anything that they could scrape from the political table, the hand-downs or the handouts, they were grateful for and they took. In return they defended the politics of Jamaica as it was at that time. As a famous talk show host said - it was ‘butter pan politics,’ or people fighting for scarce benefits and spoils. In this way or by this method it was easy to control the masses and to get their votes. The people were easily bought – sometimes a few dollars that would buy milk for the baby, a shirt, and a free meal or just for the hope of becoming somebody.

During the political era of the early 80’s, politics started to change in Jamaica. I would really call it the changing of the guards. Some Rankings that had been controlled by the politicians were forced to migrate to the United States. I remember an occasion when one of those big Rankings got overthrown; some people in his own circle decided to take him down and take over power in that area. I had a friend that had a brother who was one of his soldiers and he also had to run for his life. Between 1981 and early 1982 a lot of these Rankings ran away from Jamaica for one reason or the other; either they were being displaced by the other party or sometimes because of the internal upheaval, they were displaced from within their own crew.

The JLP government that won the 1980 election went on an all out rampage to uproot known PNP Rankings. However, whether you were PNP or JLP you had to find safe haven in those times and so a lot of these men fled the country. Most went to the United States but some ended up in England and others in Canada. These men after going to those countries,

found even more opportunities to make a better life for themselves and achieve more in the underworld – as it is said, ‘its better in the Big Apple.’

They got heavily involved in the drug trade. This drug era in the early 80’s was a turning point even in the US as well as other countries such as England and Canada. Most of the men who went to these countries linked up with others who were already in the trade, which resulted in a big boom or swell in the drug business. They sold marijuana, imported from Jamaica and other areas. They linked up with gangs from different countries who were already doing business across international borders. In this international cartel of drug lords, these men made millions of dollars. Some owned several vehicles and amassed huge fortunes in real estate holdings including apartment buildings and commercial properties. They amassed so much money that they were able to send home large sums to set up their families and create substantial home-based nest eggs.

These men eventually connected with the Colombian families, the Hispanic families and other important drug traders. They now began to lead completely different lives; they were no longer lackeys to the politicians in Jamaica. Some become so powerful with influential international connections that their money allowed them to do almost anything. They no longer took orders from any politician nor were they swayed by any political agenda. They now had agendas of their own. The politicians could no longer control them as they had during the period before the 80’s election. A lot of these men, after making their money, got their legal status straightened out and began to visit Jamaica frequently. Some got married, bought out big businesses in Jamaica and bought new respect in the Jamaican society. Now they were in a position to buy politicians and the politicians at that point had no say in the

matter. These men had become so powerful with their financial backing and influential friends that they were almost untouchable.

The new Jamaican drug lords brought guns and ammunition into Jamaica in quantities never before seen. They had everything their way, the way they wanted it; their money assured them of that. They drove the best top of the line cars, wore designer clothes, sparkled with real diamonds and overnight became the new role models or Jamaican super stars. People looked up to them, especially poor people in inner city communities, for food, opportunities or certain benefits. The national spotlight began to shine on politicians and they began to withdraw from the limelight of certain things; they became scarce in the ghetto areas that they had once controlled.

The new elite moneyed men were now in charge. The new elites were no longer called Rankings as they had been referred to before leaving Jamaica. These Rankings were now international businessmen. Their ratings had changed both in Jamaica and abroad and they were now called DONS. They were the Jamaican Dons and the politicians had to deal with them with a new respect born out of money, power and international influence.

Some of the former Rankings were killed while in the US, others ended up in prison in the US and other countries but those who hadn't succumbed to the law of the US came back to Jamaica. They used their fortunes to better themselves, to buy out big businesses; some changed their lifestyles and became legitimate businessmen, others greedy for quick returns, continued in their underground trading activities. The US federal government tracked down and pursued a lot of them; some were caught in Jamaica and were extradited back to

the US to face trial for various crimes committed on US soil. Many of them ended up in prisons in the US.

There were also men who had made millions, who eventually got addicted to hard drugs, when the era changed from marijuana to crack cocaine. At that time the Jamaicans along with their Colombian connections controlled a substantial share of the crack market in the United States. The Jamaican crews were called posses. The United States government was worried about them because they wreaked havoc in the US. From the knowledge that I have and from those that I knew, these Jamaican crews in the US were involved in many dangerous illegal activities and runnings. When pursued by the Federal Government, they ran back to Jamaica to hide. Some were in Jamaica for several years before the law eventually caught up with them. Others are still in Jamaica enjoying the good life they have become accustomed to and are still protected by their powerful connections.



FIGHT IN DE DANCE

One Christmas in 1981 stands out vividly in my mind. The Dons in my constituency run some money (issued out a lot of money) in the community and everybody got their share. I got my share and decided to treat my second baby-mother to some Christmas things for herself and our baby. On Christmas night we went downtown to shop. My baby-mother wanted to go to a dance that was being kept at Curphy Place, but I wasn't interested in going. Everyone in the community was going out to different events and I had several invitations from the guys to attend various dances but somehow I wasn't in the vibes to go anywhere. I am a person with a laid back kind of attitude or sometimes a kind of sixth sense that gives me certain feelings. I wasn't in the mood to go anywhere on that Christmas night but my baby-mother insisted. I used several arguments to dissuade her, telling her that she couldn't go out and leave the baby so soon. Eventually, seeing that it was the festive season and she wanted to go out and enjoy herself, I told her that she could go with her friends and some of her cousins. I didn't want to put a damper on things, so I agreed for her to go.

I left and took the baby in a taxi to my grandmother at Barnes Road in Rockfort and then I went back to Dunkirk to a girlfriend's house. This girl had been one of my girls in the past. That girl's family and I got along well; her mother and father, brothers and sisters all got along well with me. I spent the evening at that house while my baby-mother was at the dance. I spent most of the evening was upstairs with my friend, reasoning with her until we fell asleep. Her brothers and sisters had by then gone out on the town to have a good time.

Around midnight my girlfriend's mother woke me up, saying that I was urgently needed outside. I went downstairs quickly and went through the back door and through the back gate. Outside, I was surprised to see my baby-mother holding her head with a rag. There was a car parked near to the house with a number of people in it. One girl shouted out to me "A girl buss her head!"

"How a girl fi just buss her head?" I inquired.

"Wi only bring her since shi did need help."

"Mi no know what really happen, mi only know sey she get a buss head."

"A gal inna de dance tek set pon her."

"Shi wi tell yu wa a goin, wi haffi leave now."

"You can tek care of her. Wi goin now."

"Yeah man, thanks."

With that they drove away. After they drove off I asked her what had really happened, why did this girl hit her on the head. Her story was that her cousin's baby-father had a girlfriend at the club and that the girlfriend had gotten into an argument with her. As a result, the girl's friends jumped into the argument, and one thing had led to another. My baby-mother said that when they weren't looking, the girl left and came back with a bottle in her hand, ready for an all out brawl. By then my baby-mother and her friends had gone back to dancing and chatting with their friends, putting the incident behind them. Armed with the bottle, the girl sneaked up behind her and hit her on the head with it. She and her friends retaliated as the girl apparently wanted to start a war inside the club. Some people eventually came and parted them, taking the girl away and bringing my baby-mother to me.

I was upset with what had happened to her but I was also upset with her because I had been against her going in the first place. "Yuh see it? Yuh si when mi show yuh sey yuh nu fi go

anywhere. Yuh see it, yuh force fi go and yuh si whey yuh get? Buss head an dem ting deh. But yuh si even though yuh ears hard an dat reach yuh, mi vex and upset an mi nuh feel pleased bout dat.”

“Laud mi head a hot mi,” she cried out.

“Where yuh cousin dem?”

“Mi leave dem up de at the dance.”

“Yuh cannot leave yuh cousin dem up there. Yuh auntie goin be upset. Yuh goin have to go back for dem some way or the other.” While saying that I wanted to go back for her cousins, I also wanted to see for myself, this girl that had busted her head. Out of ignorance and not really thinking I walked with her over to her aunt’s house and told them what had taken place. Her aunt said that she would deal with the girl when she saw her again and I told her that we were going back to Curphy Place for her cousins. She agreed and we left.

We took a taxi and went back up to Curphy Place. On our arrival I saw a youth from Boy’s Town who had played with me on the same football team. “Hey what’s up Fines?” he said.

“Yuh done know. Mi de ya an ting. Yuh waan si some gal buss mi baby-mother head...mi come fi get her cousins yuh know but mi waan si a which girl dat.”

“Mi know mi brethren. Jus gwaan in an do whey yuh a do, an mi wi si yuh outside after.”

My baby-mother and me walked through the crowd and went inside. We didn’t have to look far. The girl spotted us in the crowd and she and her friends confronted us. The girl wanted to bring back a fight to my baby-mother again. “How yuh buss mi baby-mother head an now yuh come back an waan fight her again an dem tings deh?” I said to her. “Wa yuh a deal wid?” She swung after me with a bottle in her hand. I jumped back and held her hand, wringing the bottle out of her grasp in a reflex movement. Because of the way that she had pounced on

me, an ignorant spirit caused me to react and I used the same bottle and bashed her on her head with it. The bottle broke and splinters flew all over the place. She ran off with her friends through the crowd, holding her head but I never pursued her; instead I stood there somewhat in shock. Eventually I threw away the broken bottle in my hand and began searching for my baby-mother's cousins in the crowded room.

Before long, I felt somebody grab me by the shoulder. I spun around and something hit me on the head. I staggered in the room, almost fell, and then I saw that the person who had delivered the blow was coming at me again. I held on to him and we wrestled. When I looked up I saw a man who was much bigger and older than me. He had an ice pick in his hand and tried to stab me with it. We wrestled for some time; meanwhile I could hear my baby-mother just behind me screaming. People began running up and down in frenzy; some took cover as we wrestled. Eventually we ended up against the bar counter. He tried to use his body weight to throw me down but being younger and still fit from my football training I got the better of him, though I did not do any serious damage to him. Then he draped me up by my shirt with one hand and used his other hand to sweep all the bottles on the counter towards me. All I could do when I saw it coming was brace myself for the onslaught and close my eyes. Bottles slammed into my jawbone and I felt a stinging sensation and tasted the blood that trickled down my face from the first head wound. Still holding on to him we continued wrestling.

“Unnu stop wa unnu a do!”

I looked up and saw two men walking towards us who looked like policemen. We both froze and let go of each other. The men identified themselves as plain-clothes police.

There were broken bottles and splatters of blood everywhere and I was bleeding from my left side from a stab wound. The policemen told me that they were going to take me down to the Half Way Tree police station and lock me up, which further shocked me. I argued that I was the one attacked and to prove this, the other man had sustained no injuries. They insisted that they were going to lock me up anyway and drew me outside of the club, leaving him inside.

By the time we got outside another crowd had gathered there. Some girls, eager to come to my defense, started to explain what had happened and other youths who knew me said in a rage that they were going to mash up the club and end the dance. The policemen were still insisting that I would have to go with them to the station. While they were waiting on transport to carry me away, a friend of the girl who had attacked my baby-mother picked up a brick and began charging towards me like a bull in a ring. One of the policemen spun around and saw her just before she closed in on me; he gave her one stamp that made her drop some feet away from us and the brick flew out of her hand. The girl's hostility made them realize then that I wasn't the aggressor and had been telling the truth all along.

The policemen took statements from people around who had witnessed the fight in the club. They realized that I had been defending myself both from the girl who attacked me with the bottle and from the man who she brought back into the club to fight me. I was taken to the Kingston Public Hospital, to the emergency section for x-rays and treatment. The policemen said they would go back up to the dance to arrest the man that had attacked me and left us there.

The hospital kept me overnight for observation and in the morning sometime after seven o'clock a nurse came to clean

out my wounds. The puncture wound in my side was not so bad but the bottle had split the side of my face and there were fragments of glass still lodged in my face. She clean out the wounds, picking out the embedded splinters and told me that she was going to let me see the doctor. My baby-mother by then had left to get pajamas and other clothes from home for me. On examination the doctor decided that all my wounds needed stitching; the one on my head, the one on my jaw and some minor ones caused from the splinters. When I saw the needles I shivered. I hated the sight of blood, especially my own and I will never become comfortable with the jab of a needle. However, what had to be done had to be done and I bore the pain while he injected me and sewed up my wounds. After that he told me that if I wanted to leave I could do so.

It was a wicked Christmas night. I walked down town and without a cent in my pocket I hailed a taxicab and persuaded the driver to drop me to East Kingston. I was still shaky and in a lot of pain. Back at home my baby-mother and I sat talking and going over the night's ordeal. The next day a group of friends came to look for me and told me that they knew the man who had attacked me. "Yo Fines, wi know de bwoy whey attack yuh, yuh know."

"Yeah man wi a go deal wid him, no worry."

"Wi a go dis up de bwoy an hangle him rough. Him fi feel it man."

"Wi know whey him de. Wi a go bruck him foot fi him."

"De bwoy disrespeck yuh man. Wi a go dis him back."

"Yeah man wi a go scruff him up an deal wid him."

I realized then that the girl who had attacked me was not the girl who had attacked my baby-mother; it was her friend. Apparently she had told her man that I saw her and took a bottle and hit her on the head without provocation, so he in his ignorance, not knowing if it was the truth or a lie, reacted by attacking me. After finding out who I was and where I came

from he became scared. He reported the incident to police officers who were his friends and told them that if anything were to happen to him, I should be charged. I however, had no intentions of retaliating at that time, even though I had gotten injured. My only concern was to get better and have my wounds heal before considering any type of reprisal.

I found out that the man who attacked me was a customs officer who was heavily involved in drug trafficking. He had some connections that had friends who were also my friends and they came together and decided that the thing shouldn't go any further. They were saying that what he did was almshouse (disrespectful) and that he shouldn't have done what he did. He told them that he had acted in haste without the full understanding of the story and was sorry that he had reacted in that way. He said that he wanted to see me so that we could smooth things out. But before a peace talk could take place, some other men from other factions in the area heard about the incident and went to him, trying to scare him. They told him that he had to run some money and that they would protect him because they knew me and were friends with me.

When I heard that I said to myself, *'if anything happens to this man, it is me that the police will be looking for.'* So I decided that if he needed to see me or if he wanted to meet with me, I would meet with him and tell him what I had to say.

Soon after that a friend that I respected highly came to look for me. "What a hear happen to you?"

"Dis man no attack mi inna a dance on Christmas night. Is a long story... a don't even know where to start," I said before explaining the whole thing to him.

"Watch dis brethren, go go hear what de man a sey an tell de man whey you a sey. Don't mek nobody go an scare de man an fear de man. Anyting can happen. Mek yuhself clear."

“True Sa. Mek you an me go check de man now.”

So with that in mind he and I left the house to go to the see the man. I still had in stitches but I was healing well. We went up to the man’s house and called out to him. A lot of people were looking out and wondering what my intentions were but I didn’t make anybody the wiser. At first he was afraid to come out and talk with me, so I tried to make him feel comfortable. He came out of the house eventually and we sat down to talk. He said that he was sorry, that he didn’t know who I was, that he had reacted ignorantly and that he was in the wrong. He said that his friends knew my friends and he hoped that I could find it in my heart to forgive him. He told me that his woman had lied to him and that after he found out what had really happened he wanted to know what he could do to repay me as a show of good faith. I showed him that there was nothing that he could do that would make me feel better because my face was permanently spoiled, my head was all busted up and I could have lost my life. He agreed that while he couldn’t compensate me for my wounds - because if it was plastic surgery that I needed he didn’t have that kind of money - but he wanted us to be friends. He told me to come and check him, offered me some money and explained that he was a man that dealt with buying and selling and that he had a lot of important contacts that sent away certain things by way of the airport. “Mi don’t know. Me will come back an check you a next time,” I assured him.

“Yuh fi come back an check mi you know brethren. Mi no waan you tell mi sey yuh a come back an yuh no come.”

“Everyting criss man,” I said still trying to pacify his fears. I wanted him to know that I really wouldn’t hold anything against him or send anyone after him.

He sent to call me several times after that but I didn’t respond. Then one day I heard that some men were telling him that I

was a man with a lot of influence in certain circles; that my friends were the types to just go up to his house, shoot him and kill him, so he should run a thing against me. After hearing that I went to see him again and told him that all he had heard was nonsense and that he had nothing to fear from me. He told me that he was still a bit nervous and would feel more comfortable if he and I could be friends. “Watch dis brethren, what mi do, mi know sey mi caan pay yuh back for de damage an ting like dat but mi a go run a money pon yuh. Seen?”

“Yeah man dat cool,” I said. He did set me up with some money. I don’t remember now how much it was but at the time, it was a nice chunk of change that you could really use to do something. I took it in good faith just to let him know that there was peace between us. When I left and was going down the road he shouted and called me back. I turned around and realized that he had a parcel in his hand. When I opened the parcel it contained a maroon red shirt. “Yuh si dis shirt? A giving yuh dis shirt as good faith an mi waan yuh wear it. When yuh wear it remember dat a me gi yuh it an a truce de between mi an yuh. Mi really sorry ting an tings happen but from now on mi an yuh a frien, remember dat.”

“Yeah man everyting criss.”

“Anyting yuh need man, jus shout me.”

“Easy man, mi alright.”

“If yuh have any problem, come check mi, yuh hear.”

“Yeah man, thanks, OK,” I said as I turned and walked away. I saw him once or twice after that and we parted cordially.

My wounds healed quickly and I felt fit and strong again. The cuts to my face have healed without leaving any major scars but I still carry the scars of the bottle that was broken over my head and the ice pick stab in my side.



THE CHANGING OF THE GUARDS

The Peoples National Party lost the 1980 elections. As the Jamaica Labor Party came into power a lot of the men from my area – East Kingston, and from many other areas started to run away from Jamaica. It was said that the new government would bring many PNP supporters to answer charges, especially those who had gone to Cuba as brigadistas. A lot of bandulu (false) documents were produced to help persons escape to North America in a hurry. Many of the men that were involved in crime either migrated to the US or were apprehended and put in prison. Some ended up dead.

I continued without sway in the same direction and got involved with a lot of things. During that period my respect and rating as an area leader began to develop. I was seen as a trustworthy person by the bigger men and area Dons. They had a lot of confidence in me and saw me as a young leader. As their confidence in me grew they groomed me for bigger things requiring utmost trust.

Our crew had a contact through Montreal, Canada. All you had to do was get an invitation letter, buy a plane ticket, and have somebody meet you at the airport and you were almost home free. Our guys would stay in Canada for a short time, then make contacts with the guys in the US who would arrange for them to cross the border. In New York, the Dons would show them the ropes and in a short time our guys would be living high off the hog.

By then my mother had filed for my sister and me to come up and live with her in New York. I thought that things were

taking too long and considered going through Canada. I now had certain responsibilities having two children with two different baby-mothers and I contemplated my best move.

While I was trying to decide what to do, I continued to visit PNP strong holds in Western Kingston, Rockfort, Back Bush; all the top PNP areas became my stamping ground. When the bigger guys were going to meetings in these places they would say, “come juvenile, walk wid mi,” and I would go with them as a youth that they rated or respected. During my tours with them I got many promptings, showing me that this was not the route for me. Something kept telling me that I was putting myself in harm’s way daily, yet I continually ignored that little voice. I was more clinging to the life that made me feel like a powerful person, somebody in charge, even though I was really a small fry among big fish. Being amongst them, enjoying their lifestyle, being a part of certain things gave me a good feeling as my rating grew with them.

I remember some incidents where other guys that were with us lost their lives but I was one of the lucky ones that came back without a scratch. I recall going with a driver to get stolen cars for them to use. We were given guns and told to hijack some cars. When I had the keys to a car, our designated driver would escort me back to headquarters. The first time I pulled a job like that I was scared; I had never done anything like that before. All in my mind was: *‘What if the police dem catch mi?’* – *‘what if dem shoot mi?’* – *‘suppose dem kill mi?’* I was scared but I couldn’t let the other guys know it. I tried to prove that I was tough, unafraid of anything. They would hail me on by saying: “Gwaan brethren! Mek sure yuh come back with a car.”

“Yeah man, everyting criss man,” I would reply. But deep down, I was terrified. I didn’t know what to expect.

One experience I will never forget is when I went to get a car uptown, in the New Kingston area. A man was just coming out of Burger King with his girlfriend going towards a white car. Our driver and I stepped across the road; I took out the gun and stuck it in the man's side saying: "Gi mi yuh car keys." He hesitated, so I said again: "Gi mi yuh keys." While I was doing that I felt as if I was in a trance, working like a robot. It didn't feel like me and yet I was conscious of what I was doing. The man gave me his keys; I took the keys and gave it to the driver who got into the car and started it up. As all this was going on, I told the man and his girlfriend not to move or I would shoot them. The driver reversed the car out of the parking lot and he and I sped off leaving the couple standing there in Burger King's parking lot. We went back to headquarters and handed over the car to the bigger men. After putting gas into the car they used it to perform a number of robberies.

About this time I began to feel the need to make a positive change in my life style. I knew I might be able to make it to New York illegally through Montreal and maybe put all of this behind me. A sixth sense was saying to me: "This is not your type of life. You don't need this. You can live without this type of excitement." But because I was so heavily involved, it was hard to come out. If I did break away, I reasoned, they would probably think that I was an informer or that I was opposing them; I knew a lot of things and had seen a lot of things; they would probably feel threatened and would surely try to hurt me and my days would be numbered. I decided not to make any changes until my papers for the US had come through, then I could leave Jamaica and start afresh; go back to school, maybe pass some subjects, go on to college and with any luck turn my life around. So I waited on my mother, hoping for my papers to come through quickly.

One night the Dons sent me and some other guys on the road. Six of us had been given guns. While we were traveling we ran into a police ambush; the police fired shots and we returned the fire. To tell the truth I don't know how I got away alive. Again, I was one of the lucky ones, some of the other guys weren't as lucky; two of them were shot and killed. We returned to headquarters and reported the incident to the big guys. They hid the guns and everybody went their separate way.

That was how things kept going. They would send us out or we would go with them on jobs as cover or back up. I remember vividly a bank robbery that was being planned by two crews, one from my area and one from another area. I listened carefully as they made plans and explained how it should go. They needed a car and about four men to rob the bank. They chose the car, the men that were to go on the assignment and the type of guns that they would use. One of the persons that was being sent on the work was one of my little brethren, a prominent youth in the community at the time. I was scared for him but was glad that I hadn't been chosen to be a part of such a dangerous assignment. I was in the community on the morning that they were going out to do the robbery. Certain men secured a car and then dressed like executives, the four of them left out in the car with three men in the back seat and one man in the front with the driver. This was a bank robbery in Heroes Circle.

I waited on them for about an hour and a half until they came back. My brethren told me that they had driven to the scene of the bank robbery; two with handguns went in first. When they were going through the door however, one man took his gun from his waist; the police officer at the door saw what was going down, fumbled to draw his gun out of the holster but

our guys opened fire first. My friend says that the policeman begged for his life as he lay on the ground.

The men then took the policeman's gun along with his extra bullets and proceeded to get the tellers' money. Then our other two men came in with their high-powered rifles and held up everyone in the bank. When they were taking the money from the tellers, an alarm went off and they had to make a hasty retreat. They didn't have time to get to the vault but were able to get away with everything behind the tellers' counter.

Back in the area, the money was dropped off, the guns were put away in their safe hiding places and the driver disappeared with the car, which was to be dumped in a different area. In the later, (in the night) the guys met up again to share up the loot. Those from the other area got their cut and those from our crew got their cut and everybody was nice and feeling good. The incident came over the airwaves as a news flash. The news stated that a bank had been robbed but that no one was hurt, a policeman's service revolver had been taken and that the robbers had escaped with a large amount of cash. That night everyone was jubilant. The next day some went shopping, some went to dances, some stayed up late drinking liquor and everyone was feeling cherry (high).



WHAT A CRIME!

It was a Saturday, the fifth of June 1982. I was in my area (Dunkirk) with friends talking. We were reasoning and saying: “Bwoy wi soon all gone a foreign, yuh know.

“Yea is foreign a do it.”

“Nuff man reach up an a go through.”

“Yea man. Is fi wi time now.”

“Mi only waan fi reach up man.”

“Our time a go come now.”

That was basically the tone of our conversation. The mood had been upbeat and hopeful. Late that night I decided to leave the rest of guys on the corner and go to sleep at my baby-mother’s house. I was jolted awake early the Sunday morning, the sixth of June. I had been in a deep sleep when somebody shook me saying: “Tony, Tony, Tony wake up!” Looking up I saw my baby-mother’s face, her eyes were filled with terror.

“Wha a gwan?” I asked. “What happen?”

“Bare police outta door! Bare police out deh!”

“Bare police outta door? Wha dem a do out deh?”

“Mi no know?”

Before I could leave the room, there was a knock on the door, which was immediately thrown open and I was looking down the barrels of several guns. One of the men said: “Somebody gone the next way.” My baby-mother had run from the room through another door. I could hear her shuffling and stumbling on the other side of the house. I lay on the bed with my heart beating as if it would bust out of my chest. I didn’t try to resist. I knew that these policemen wouldn’t have mercy on me if I moved, so I kept still, feigning a dead sleep. They ordered me to get up, dragging me to a sitting position; I sat down on the bed and when I looked up again, they were

coming into the room with my baby-mother. She was in her half-slip and panties. She drew the half-slip up to cover her breast and came in. “A da gal a run man,” one policeman said.

“Ehhe? Shi look good too,” said the other one.

“Gal yuh body nice yuh know?”

“Mi like whey mi si.”

“Yuh structure pretty nuh ****

“Where yuh was last night,” he said turning abruptly to me.

“What time yuh come in?”

“A come in bout after eleven or maybe after twelve, during dem hours deh.”

“Yuh a tell mi lie man.”

“Yuh name call up inna murder.”

“We know sey yuh involved.”

“Wha kine a murder unna a talk bout? Mi no know nottin bout no murder.”

They told me that they had information, which linked me to a murder that had taken place the previous night. I told them that I didn't know anything. They ransacked the house but found nothing. I was instructed at gunpoint to put on my clothes and go with them. As we were about to step outside I recognized a young policeman, a youth who had gone to high school with me. I was hoping to influence him but quickly realized that he was a fledgling on the force. I learned later that he had in fact been ordered to shoot me on sight. Later he told me that when he came in and saw me, he didn't have the guts or the courage to shoot, remembering that he and I used to attend school together.

They took me outside and were about to put me in the police vehicle when one of them shouted: “Bring de gal come! Bring de ***** gal come.”

“She fi come yes man.”

“She must know wha a gwaan.” Saying that, they went back for her and she put on her clothes to come with us. She was walking towards the car when one of them boxed her. When he did that I was so upset that I felt like retaliating but immediately thought better of it. If I had retaliated, I wouldn’t be here today telling my story; probably I would have lost my life because their intentions were definitely to kill me.

Maybe it was the will of God that saved my life that morning. That was a sharp turning point for me; it was like another era of my life; it was like I was going down a road, going down a hill fast. I felt like a runaway train with no control over my life. I followed in a trance. We were placed in a police jeep, my baby-mother and I, and taken to the Elleston Road police station. As we were driving into the police station, I noticed a woman standing outside the station in a nightgown and thought it odd. They placed me in the CIB room and handcuffed one of my hands to the chair that I sat on.

They began to question me again about my whereabouts the night before. And then I noticed the same woman in the nightgown peeping over and overheard her saying to a policeman: “A who dat?”

“A da one dem call Fines,” he answered. “ A him dem call Fines.”

“Yea man, him a one a dem. Him a one a dem,” she told him emphatically. At that time I didn’t know that she was the victim’s girlfriend. I didn’t know how to respond to any of the questions that were thrown at me. When I didn’t say what they wanted to hear, they attacked me with batons and pickaxes. As I was beaten, battered, poked and slapped, I cried out: “Help! Murder! Murder! Unno a go kill mi! Do, nuh kill mi!” Eventually I ended up wedged between a safe and a wall. Some other policemen heard the noise and came in to see what

was happening. One of them said: “ Res man, unnu ‘low him.” Then they placed me upright again in the chair.

Two policemen came over to me, held down my feet and took off my shoes. I tried to fight them off but one of them sat on my legs, another one held me around the shoulders, while yet another used the handle of a pickaxe to beat me on the soles of my feet. With each blow I felt a pounding in my head that felt as if it was shattering every nerve of my body. I think they were trying to destroy my nerves or make me go crazy, but I fought back. I resisted until I pushed off a couple of them. In the scuffle my finger scraped an officer under his eye and the blood started to trickle down his face. They eased off then but before I could catch my breath, I was hit on the head so hard that I dropped to the ground stunned. I pretended that I was going to die at which point they let up. When they saw this they threw a pail of water over my face to revive me.

They took me to the CIB central room. The girl that I had seen outside came up to me screaming: “Yuh fi dead! Yuh a go a prison! Yuh a murderer!” *‘A don’t know this girl’* I reasoned, *‘how shi fit inna dis?’* In the guardroom I was sitting beside my baby-mother when a policeman came and pulled off my handcuff. They carried me out of the CIB room through a car park to another upstairs room. That place was apparently an off duty rest room; there were several beds and policemen were sleeping in some of them. The policemen that carried me woke up the others and identify me to them saying: “Si one of de man dem whey a fire shot after unnu a night time.” They jumped on me with batons, pick-axes, broomsticks and anything that they could find and beat me within an inch of my life that day.

When I came to, I was in another room next to the other building, which housed guns and ammunitions. They

threatened to shoot me if I didn't talk and tell them what they wanted to know. Each time they pointed a gun at me and pulled the trigger I turned my head away fearing the worst. I heard the explosion and swore that I had been shot. At the time I didn't know that the bullets were blanks and I saw myself losing my life over and over and over again.

When I couldn't hold up any longer, I fell to the ground barely breathing. A policeman by the name of Zoukie took his foot and rested it on my jaw, telling me that I should die. He stepped on my chest and placed his foot on my windpipe in an attempt to cut off my air supply. I begged for mercy and for my life. After what seemed like an eternity, a police inspector came in and told them to carry me back to the CIB room. (Zoukie eventually lost his job while I was in prison when his connection to certain politicians and Dons came to light. This happened under the watch of the new Commissioner of Police, Trevor McMillan.)

I was in pain and dirty, my clothes were torn to shreds; every bone in my body felt as if it had been broken or crushed and I was burning all over. I dragged myself to follow them back to the CIB room where I saw my baby-mother again. Her eyes were filled with terror when she saw the state that I was in. While sitting on the bench where they placed me in the CIB room, another set of policemen took their turn in taunting and torturing me. This time they placed a hard cover book on my head and beat me mercilessly on it with batons. Although the blows couldn't split my skull, the pain was enough to make me vomit and lose consciousness for a period of time. As I regained consciousness someone used the butt of a gun to deliver a shattering blow to my mouth and I saw two of my teeth go flying across the room.

During this ordeal another squad led by Tony Hewitt, came into the room. They walked around me threateningly. Looking to receive more blows, I shielded my face with my hands but they only mocked me saying: “Yuh don’t have to put up yuh han man. Wi no beat people; a kill wi kill man. A jus one ting wi beg, dis morning when dem come fi yuh, dem shouldn’t come, come bring yuh in; dem shouldda kill yuh an kill yuh gal.”

“Wha yuh a kill mi fa Mr. Youth,” I cried.

“How yuh mean wha mi a kill yuh fa? Bwoy yuh no know sey dregs like you fi dead? Every day wi fi kill unnu.” Looking at my baby-mother he said: “Gal wha yuh a do wid dem bwoy ya? Yuh fi lef dem bwoy ya yuh know. Yuh have pickney fi him?”

“Yes,” she answered.

“Watch ya, tek yuh pickney an fine a next man fi mine yuh pickney, an forget bout dis ya bwoy ya. Dis ya bwoy ya a go dead! Dis ya bwoy ya a go a prison! So forget bout de bwoy.” We looked at each other and then at them; another one looked at us and said: “Dem police bwoy whey come fi yuh, dem a idiot yuh know. A couldn’t we come fi yuh. You wouldn’t a de yasso a look pon we yuh know, yuh would a de down a de morgue.”

“Whey yuh a go kill mi fo boss an mi nuh do yuh notten?” I said.

“Yuh no do mi notten? Just thank yuh lucky stars sey yuh live fi fight another day.” And with that they left us. I was there until my aunt and other family members came. Family members of the other men who had been picked up that morning were also assembled there.

That morning another dramatic incident took place inside of the Kirk (the community of Dunkirk). Another crew that was fighting for power beat up some men from my crew. They claimed that my friends and I were the powerful men in the

area and that we were well connected. At that time a lot of the more influential men had already migrated leaving a handful behind to fight for rank and power. That crew ended up beating up our men and creating a big scene.

Sunday evening I was taken by jeep from Elleston Road Police Station to the Bull Bay Police Station at Nine Miles. In the small cell where we were locked down, I felt bruised, dirty and confused. At times I even wondered if I was dreaming. It didn't seem real to me then but I had to accept it. While I was at Bull Bay lock-up, my grandmother came to visit me; a former girlfriend of mine also came to visit me. I had not been charged yet but was detained on the allegation of murder.

In due course I got to understand that on the Saturday night of the murder, some men had gone to a house on York Street and tried to kick down the front door. Shots were fired and somebody fell to one of those shots. It is not known if the fatal shot was fired by one of the men outside or if one of the men was disarmed by the Ras (Rastafarian man) inside who then fired back; but one of the shots ended up killing his father. He had gotten shot in the shoulder and in the leg and died shortly after. His mother, his little son and his girlfriend (the girl in the nightgown at Elleston Road station) were also in the house at the time. These were the stories that came to my ears about the incident while I was at the Bull Bay lock up.

The Ras, as far as I understand, was in partnership with another Ras in some drug transactions. The Ras whose father was killed had apparently ripped off some weed (marijuana) from his partner. When the partner learned about the rip off, he contacted some men to steal money from the Ras's house. The initial intention of the crime was apparently robbery but it had gone very wrong.

While at the Bull Bay lock up, the police officer assigned to the case came to see us. He took us out singly for interviews. I was the first one taken out. He told me that he had found out that I really had not been involved and that he wouldn't charge me, he would let me go if I told him who did it. I looked at him and said: "Officer, I caan tell you who and who involve in a crime dat I wasn't present to. If I should tell you who an who involve in dat crime, I would be telling a lie on somebody else, so I cannot do that." His reply to me was: "If yuh no tell mi who and who involve, mi a go charge yuh along wid de rest of man dem."

"Boss if yuh a go charge me, yuh a go charge an innocent man. I don't know nuttin bout it, so I caan give yuh no information. I don't know nuttin about it."

"Alright, is so yuh want it? Mi a go charge yuh fi murder." And so he cautioned me, charged me for murder and sent me back to the cell. Then he called the other men one by one and questioned them. Four of us were charged with murder. They said that it had been five men involved but one person had not been caught; it is alleged that that person made it to the United States where I am told he still resides.

I was kept at the Bull Bay lock up for a few more days and then taken, along with my co-charges, to the Gun Court for my first hearing. Before I left Bull Bay lock up a lawyer by the name of Mr. Anthony Spaulding came to visit me. He told me that my aunt had gotten in touch with him and had retained him to defend me. He asked me to tell him what I knew; after that session with him, he told me that everything was going to be all right, that I was not to worry myself and with those parting words, he left.



MY DAY IN COURT

I remember vividly the day that my case was slated for trial in court; it was the 10th of October 1983. I had been remanded to the General Penitentiary since June 1982. I was taken from there to attend the preliminary hearings at the South Camp Road Gun Court. My case was brought to the murder section and heard by Judge Myrie; my lawyer was Anthony Spaulding. Four of us were charged for murder; initially it had been five but one person was not held, so it ended up with four persons being charged for murder. My case was prelim'ed (preliminary hearings) and the Judge decided that I had a case to answer to at the home circuit court so the case was put for trial at the home circuit court in Kingston.

My prelims were frightening. I was petrified. I wondered if I would be sentenced or if I would get off. Coming from these hearings I felt dehydrated, depressed and totally drained. I felt restless and said to myself: *'Bwoy! How a find myself in this position?'* Eventually a date was set for my trial at the home circuit court. I was to be tried by Judge Vanderpump, a short white man, that we had heard was a good judge; It was said that he had given bail to many youths. Every time we had gone to court we prayed that we would have a judge that was cool and a judge that wouldn't be biased. In Jamaica at that time, there were a lot of judges who didn't listen and were intent on sentencing people and sending them to prison. I was scared of those judges knowing that they could end my freedom and send me to prison.

On the morning of the 10th of October 1983, my lawyer was present and also my chargees (fellow accused); a lawyer named

Green represented one of the guys, Miss Sonia Nosworthy represented another and Miss Neita Wilson defended the other. The lawyers in question had come together and decided to represent us in our case but I had a problem in the way in which those lawyers intended to defend us. Firstly, many lawyers in Jamaica are mostly interested in money. They are not interested in whether you are innocent or guilty. Many men charged for a crime ended up in prison because the judiciary system is corrupt not because they are guilty of the charge; it doesn't run smoothly. There are a lot of case backlogs, a lot of bias and carousing within the ranks. At times like these, the politicians are silent. No one knows you. You are on your own.

My lawyer didn't come to me for any detailed statement before the court date. He didn't come to visit me and I got the feeling that he didn't particularly need to hear anything from me. On the morning of the trial he came to me and said that I shouldn't worry myself and that I was going to be all right.

That Monday morning of October 10th started out gloomy and ominous. The weight of my impending trial rested heavily on my head and I prayed fervently for God's intervention. I asked God to help me and not to let me down. I told God that I was depending on him, but I was scared; my life hadn't been right. A lot of men that I had known had been recently apprehended and sentenced, others had gotten away or escaped. I didn't want to be the unfortunate one to end up on death row.

In my cell at the court I was praying and reading my bible – my grandmother had sent me a bible, telling me to read this Psalm and that Psalm also to pray and ask God to help me. I was doing all of that. Policemen took me from the cell and escorted me to Court one. Everyone was already in place, twelve jurors, our lawyers, the prosecutors, the steno typist and

the judge. The lawyers had picked the jurors themselves, which, I came to realize, after getting a better understanding of the law, was a mistake. I feel that if a lawyer is going to pick jurors he should involve the accused, that the accused can also choose and have a say in the decision. My lawyer along with my chargee's lawyers didn't involve any of us in the process.

The judge told the court that the case would commence in the afternoon and we were taken downstairs to the cells again and given lunch. The lawyers visited us after lunch and asked us if we had anything to say. I told my lawyer that I wanted his opinion; what he really felt, if he felt that I stood a chance. He said that I had a very good chance and that it was very possible for me to get off. At the appointed time the police escorts came for us and took us back to the courtroom. The judge swore in the jurors and they chose one of the lady jurors as their foreman and the trial began.

During the swearing in process, I noticed that some of the jurors couldn't read, which made me very nervous. They were to repeat something that was given to them on a typed sheet, and some of them couldn't read what was on the paper. I said to myself: *"How these people must be jurors an dem caan read? These people can just mek a decision an yuh get sentence for something yuh don't do."* Anyway, after much mumbling and fumbling the clerk of the court read it for them, they repeated it after him, they were all eventually sworn in and the case started.

The first person to be called up was the son of the deceased. He told the court all kinds of bull; how much he knew me and from when, that he and I were friends and all kinds of things. I had never seen this man before in my life. He told the court that he had been present on the night of the crime and that he saw me and had seen the rest of men. He explained the event in detail but all those details and his opinions about the

incident were all lies. It was something cooked up between himself and the police along with some other men who were in conflict with me. He said that he had observed us coming into his yard, what we did then and how we shot his father. He told the court that he couldn't make any mistake in identifying me because he had known me for between five to seven years. While the prosecutor was leading him on, our lawyers sat quietly listening without objections as he gave his version describing the whole thing that had taken place.

I was vexed, upset. I said: "*Look whey mi find myself? Wha mi a do yasso, fi dis man get up an a tell dem lie de, bout him know me and me an him a frien and all dem tings?*" Those things were just things that he had made up to convince the jury to let them believe that what he was saying was the truth. At times I wanted to get up and scream: "*Is lie yub telling!*" But I kept my cool the best way that I could and allowed the lawyers to do the talking. When at last the lawyers did interrupt, it was to point out to the court some blatant lies. Certain things that were mentioned in the preliminary inquiry had been changed. The lawyers brought them up and referred to the records of the inquiry but the judge allowed him to continue with his explanation of what he said he had seen and what had taken place.

That day after the court was adjourned, I saw my mother with some of my friends and other family members. She had come from New York to bury my grandfather. A gang of men had broken into his house to rob him. They shot him eleven times and he had succumbed to his injuries shortly after. So my mother came down for the funeral and to attend my trial. I didn't get to attend the funeral and was very sad. I said to myself: "*I really vex to know sey a in prison yub know. If I was ever out there, dem bwoy de, woulda baffi feel back whey dem do him.*" However, because I was in prison, I had to accept my grandfather's death; there was nothing that I could do about it.

My mother didn't want to press any charges against the only member of the gang who had gotten hurt during the robbery and nothing came of the case. It affected me and I wanted to 'bust my case' (be acquitted). I hoped desperately that the trial would turn out in my favor. We were escorted back to the Gun Court prison in a big black van.



GENERAL PENITENTIARY

After my first hearing at the Gun Court I was taken to the Tower Street Adult Correctional Facility (General Penitentiary or GP). I was first placed in the remand section from where I would attend court hearings. I arrived at GP in the evening after 4:00 p.m. This was my first experience being inside of a prison and it was strange. I didn't know what to expect. The guards informed me that I was to say 'yes sir' and 'no sir' when communicating with them. Because of my confused state of mind, I forgot the 'sir' and answered only 'yes' to one of their questions. They beat me with a whip several times for that blunder.

I was placed in a section of the prison that was controlled by a homosexual, which gave me cause for concern. When the cell door closed on me, I was shocked to see that three other men were already occupying the same small space and if that wasn't bad enough they brought two others in, making a total of six men to a cell approximately ten feet by probably five or eight feet wide. That small cell was to be my temporary home, at least for the time being. The men told me that I would have to get a bottle to be used as a 'piss gal' or 'girl' as it was called. The 'piss gal' is a bottle with a hole cut in the side and a string tied around the neck as a handle; that would be my slop pail for use during the night; in the morning it would be carried to the bathroom and emptied.

That first night in the cell was a nightmare; I couldn't see outside, I couldn't see the stars or anything. The men explained to me about prison 'runnings' and told me about their own experiences. Some had been sentenced and others

were in remand, still going to court. Some of them were reading their Bibles; they gave me paper to write on and magazines to read but I couldn't concentrate because my mind was confused. I was in a strange environment, which I didn't understand and knew nothing about. I didn't know what to expect; I didn't know what was coming; I was totally bewildered. I hardly knew my own self. I fought to keep my sanity still hoping and praying that God would help me and that justice would prevail or that I would awaken from this strange nightmare.

Soon enough I realized that there were chinks in the cell; they came from everywhere. The chink is a little bug that bites you and sucks your blood similar to mosquitoes but that little insect doesn't fly, it runs on its feet. We had to button up our collars all the way up to the neck, stuff our pants inside of our socks, secure our belts and pray that they would not find a way to crawl in.

Our sleeping arrangement was three men lying in a row; one head up, one head down, the other head up, with one man lying crossways across the top; the fifth and sixth men had to wait their turn for a good sleeping space. This is how we slept on the hard concrete ground; we had no beds; we didn't even have hammocks like some of the other cells.

I was afraid to sleep because of the bugs. Every time I tried to sleep I would feel something bite me and when I jumped up, I would see the little insect running away. If I was lucky to kill it, it left a stink smell in the cell. Because of the bugs we reasoned for almost the whole night, eventually falling asleep in the wee hours of the morning. I felt inhuman and degraded, a feeling that I had never experienced before. I said to myself: *Boy if this is what happen to people or dis is de place whery people involve in crime*

an violence end up, it nuh nice.' I still didn't understand why I was a part of this thing.

At that time I had a lot of flashbacks. Several things came to mind. I looked at the recent events and said that the witnesses weren't fair. To back up a little, at the preliminary hearing before the case was transferred to the circuit court, the Ras's mother had been one of the witnesses. The girlfriend (the woman in the nightgown at Elleston Road police station) was a witnesses and the Ras himself was called as a witness. The mother told the court that no one had had any time to identify the men who were outside firing into the house. She said that she had been the first person awakened and had come to the window and seen the men; all the other members of the household were then asleep. She further stated that all the men had on masks and she could not make any positive ID's. When the men started to kick down the door, her daughter in law had run under the bed; her son had struggled with one of the men who had by then entered the house. So if anybody could identify the men she said, she would have been that person.

When she gave that statement at the Gun Court hearing, her son and her daughter in law were upset and angry, saying that she was talking foolishness and that she was going to make the men get away. To me, they and the policemen in charge of the case had gotten together and formulated their own account of events to make sure that we were convicted. At the trial, the mother was sick and the lawyers, the prosecutor and the judge had to decide whether they needed her statement and if she was important enough to be carried back to the court even though she was sick. She was finally carried to the court to give her statement in her sick state but when the lawyers started to question and cross examine her, she had forgotten everything that had been said at the Gun Court preliminary

hearing, including the fact that she didn't remember saying that (1) nobody else in the house could identify the men because everybody in the household was asleep and (2) that all the men had on masks.

The only person that wasn't present at the trial was the deceased, the Ras's father. No one knew who had fired the fatal shot. The Ras had disarmed one of the men and had also fired shots through the house in the dark.

In time I found out that the whole thing stemmed from an internal conflict in my area with a core of men with whom I was affiliated. There had been some bad blood between us. The police held one of these men and to get them to release him, he called the names of some men in my crew including me. He told them a lot of lies, saying that I was involved with this and that and that they were holding an innocent man while others who were implicated were out free. Eventually they released him, which I believe, is mainly due to the information that he supplied to them about our crew.

Even before the murder, I recall being apprehended by the police and questioned about several incidents. However, each time I had been detained without being charged and eventually released. After my release, it became clear to me that the internal power struggles between a particular Ranking and me was becoming dangerous; he felt threatened by me. He wasn't getting the respect that he was used to and surmised that as a young leader, I was about to take over his seat.

In former days this man had been the go-between man for the politician and the area. Now it was the young area leaders who drew attention. I noticed that a jealousy was creeping in and that he wanted to get some of us out, but me in particular. I found out that he was the person that had mentioned my name

to the police. The policemen themselves said: “When big fish go a river, an sey river deep, river well deep.” Meaning that if a known Ranking in the area says certain things are happening, it probably is true. The truth of the fact is that this man was more involved than any of us were. He was also mixed up in several big drug deals.

I told one of his buddies that he had called my name in connection with certain runnings (happenings). What I had said was repeated to him and it made him very upset. He subsequently came to me and told me that he was going to see the police. Although he didn't say anything to the police immediately, he still carried a grudge towards me. That was the nature of the power struggle that led to my name being called in the murder case.

After the murder, it was he who first called up our names and suggested to his police friends, that my crew and I were responsible. He would have done anything to get me out. He wanted me to pay, even to be hanged. I eventually found out that he was the main instigator behind the false accusations. The Ras and his family were only too happy to have a scapegoat and the police were elated to make an example of any crewmember from my area. The witnesses were only repeating what the police had put in their minds by the Ranking and his police friends; the Ras and his family were quick to cook up further accusations as they accepted this.

During my time at GP I got into a couple of incidents with men from other areas. Prison is a place where people try to dominate you or try to show you that they are bad-men. Men tried to prove themselves in different ways. Men would attack other men with knives, jammers and other weapons (a jammer is something like an ice pick made out of wire or steel sharpened at one end with a wrapped handle at the other end).

They used either cloth, plastic or cardboard for the handle to turn it into a jammer. The men who were well connected in the prison got knives, others made their own weapons.

In that place if you knew how to flex or if you acted tough and mature, if you acted cool like you didn't want to 'bad-man' anybody, probably you would get your respect. But that didn't necessarily guarantee anything. Men still tried to attack you to see what mettle you were made of. In due course I found myself in a situations where I had to defend myself. I had to use my hands because I didn't have a weapon. In prison the guards or the warders cannot be everywhere because there are not enough of them to monitor everyone, so a man could get hurt, a man could lose his life without them hearing or knowing a thing; they would only find the man dead or injured after the fact. Nobody was going to jump and tell what he saw or what he knew for fear of being branded as an informer.

One day an orderly attacked one of my brethren on the section and because I had wanted to help defend him, the officers moved me from the section. I had been on C north when the incident took place and was transferred to A North and the other brother was transferred to B North. I stayed on A North until my sentencing where I ended up on death row. My remand time there was horrible. Nothing was the way that I wanted it to be. My family visited on occasion and brought toiletries for me. My baby-mother was then pregnant with her second child for me (my third child). She had been pregnant when I got caught up in this trouble so she had to carry the burden of the children on her own with some assistance from my family. My family stood by me and helped in whatever way they could during that period until I got sentenced and was sent to death row.



THE TRIAL

It was the 25th of October 1983 the final day of my trial. Overall the trial was a disaster from get go. In the days leading up to the final day, I asked my attorney if he still thought that I would be acquitted. He still held on to the idea that I had nothing to worry about and would be freed. But one thing kept worrying me and it was that he had decided that my chargees and I were to give an unsworn statement. That unsworn statement didn't feel right because to me as a layperson, I believed that it would have been best for him to allow me to take the witness box and to speak for myself. But he, as the professional, decided that he wouldn't allow me to take the stand. I don't know why and he didn't explain himself.

I was worried and wondered if I would be acquitted or get sentenced. Things could go either way; there was no sure indication of what the outcome would be. That morning things started out scrappy; the judge was continuing his final part of the summing up of the case; the lawyers had all summed up and the prosecutors had all summed up. The judge now had the final say.

I had been brought from GP to the home circuit court at King Street, Kingston and placed in the lock up there. I prayed and asked God to be there for me and tried to keep positive. That morning I noticed that things were looking different; the policemen that were there were acting in a different way. They looked more serious, not able to make eye contact with me and it sent chills down my spine. We were taken from the cells to the courtroom where the judge continued his final summing

up. We all held our breaths wondering what the outcome would be but we had to wait until the jurors made that final decision.

The judge completed his summation about twelve o'clock and adjourned the case for the verdict to be given in the afternoon after lunch. We were then taken back downstairs to our cells to have lunch and to await the pronouncement. I couldn't eat. Time seemed longer. The minutes dragged on. On the advice of my grandmother I read some Psalms.

Shortly after one o'clock we were notified that they were ready to carry us back into court. While I was being escorted back to the courtroom, I noticed a change in the whole scenario. Several policemen were crowding around downstairs; it seemed as if reinforcements had been called in. These policemen were from mobile reserve; they had on blue denims and brown riot hats. They were armed with long guns that could be described as SLR's. They put up barricades downstairs; upstairs, policemen were holding strategic position points.

In the courtroom the judge asked the jury if they were ready to meet privately to decide on a verdict and they said 'yes'. The jurors left and went to the jury room. They were there for about **fifty-five minutes** before being escorted back into the courtroom. I looked for some indication of which way things would swing by the faces of the jurors and those around them. Then I noticed the familiar face of a policeman who had always talked to the prisoners and cheered us up during the trial. When he entered the courtroom he looked very distressed and angry.

The place was dead quiet. I looked at every juror's face in turn but they were all looking somewhere else. No one was staring at us and I felt something deep down in my belly like

something was pulling on it. I felt panic rise up into my throat. I knew that something was wrong. My lawyer had his head down on the desk. The other lawyers were silent. Panic rose in me to a crescendo, flowing through my veins like a poison about to kill me. Then I heard the judge say to the clerk of the court: "Find out if the jurors have come to a verdict." The foreman juror told him that they had come to a unanimous verdict. "Are you ready to give your verdict?" the judge asked.

"Yes your honor."

"What is the verdict for Anthony Ashwood?" he said. *That is me,* I thought. When I heard my name called I felt as if I was in a different world. I heard the sea, the waves, the breeze.... different sounds were coming to my hearing; I was in the courtroom but my mind was somewhere else... some place where I was free. I could not hear at first what the decision was in regards to my verdict but I could hear the voices coming to me from far off...far, far off. They told me to stand. Like a robot I stood up. "Guilty your honor." Guilty, the juror had said. I drifted. When I heard that guilty verdict my mind shut off. I kept standing until one of the policemen behind me held on to my shoulders and told me to sit.

To tell you the truth, I didn't even hear the verdict for the other three men. All I could think was: *They are going to hang mi. Dem goin beng mi.* I recalled some JIS (Jamaica Information Service) programs on TV, where they were playing the part of Paul Bogle or George William Gordon, those national heroes from Jamaica whom the British pursued during slavery, and hanged for their rebellious acts against the system as it was in their time. *Will that be my fate?* I pondered. But deep down inside of me, hope refused to die; I still couldn't accept that I had gotten sentenced. When I realized and came to myself, I saw that all the female lawyers were crying. The male lawyers looked sad; no one could speak. There was a hush in the courtroom and the jurors couldn't look us in the eye. Some of

the policemen even looked sad; they had been there from the beginning of the trial and had heard all the different statements that were given inside the courtroom.

We were led out of the courtroom with a lot of crying and bawling around us. There was a large crowd of people from our area as well as other surrounding areas waiting downstairs. The police had a hard time controlling the crowd that thronged outside of the courthouse. Members of my family were crying; the other men's families were crying; everyone was sad. The rain began to fall making things even more difficult. Eventually we were told that we would be taken to the Spanish Town Prison where we would stay until they were ready to decide our fate.

On our way out from the lockup to the court truck, I tripped and dropped to my knees. One of the policemen who were escorting me dropped over my head. My hands were handcuffed behind me so that I couldn't break the fall and went down on my shoulder and face. The policeman eventually helped me up and we were led towards the truck. The crowd was crying and shouting even as the rain pelted down on them and us. I could hear them shouting:

“Hold de vibes man!”

“Hold de faith!”

“Unno don't give up.”

“God a go help unno.”

“Unno must bust unno appeal.”

“Unno must come a road.”

“No worry unno self. Unno innocent but unno must free.”

“Don't worry unno self.”

Then we were placed in the truck and whisked away to the Spanish Town Prison (St. Catherine District Prison).



DEATH ROW AND THE CONDEMNED

I was now located at the St. Catherine District Prison on death row, an isolated area where men about to be hanged are placed. When you first appeal your case it was to the local court of appeal. After sentencing, if you don't appeal, you are sent to a condemned cell for hanging. If you lose your appeal in the local court of appeal you have the right to appeal to the English Privy Council. If you fail at this appeal, then the Governor General in Privy Council decides whether your sentence is to be commuted or if you are to be hanged. If they decide that you are to be hanged, a death sentence is sent to the prison and the superintendent in charge of the prison will arrange with his guards to take you from the death row section and carry you to the condemned cell. You would be on the condemned cell for approximately two weeks.

During that time the authorities decided whether you are to be hanged on the Tuesday morning or the Thursday morning, not that it matters much. I never met a man who had a preference. While awaiting your hanging, you are treated to the best food. It is like Christmas when you are fattening a turkey or a fowl to kill for Christmas dinner. That was the scenario over by the condemned cell; they ask you what you want to eat and you can have ice cream, Milo, chicken, beef; if you want cigarettes, Guinness or Dragon Stout, all of those things, whatever you want at that time is given to you, courtesy of the Government of Jamaica. Money is allocated for you at that time and you can eat and enjoy yourself because this is the custom, like the pass over before execution. While on the condemned cell, you are weighed each morning so that they can know exactly how

to weight the sand bag, which will pull the man down through the opening on the gallows.

Men stayed on the death row section while their appeals were being processed. The culture of death row was different from that of the general population of the prison. Men banded together because we all faced the same fate – the possibility of hanging. We realized that we faced death and whatever went for one went for all.

On death row, the reality each day is that you can be hanged in the very near future. You wake up worrying about being hanged; you sleep and you dream that you are being hanged; while you are eating, only thoughts of hanging loom before you; when you are reasoning, your only conversation is about your impending doom. Everything that you do is about hanging, hanging, hanging. You are constantly worried about whether you will live or die. That fear was always there with me as it was with all of us on death row.

The culture of death row is one of survival no matter what. “Is either yuh live it out or yuh dead it out brethren,” we often said. My only other option: ‘Mad it out! Live it out, dead it out or mad it out.’ Whoa bwoy, I didn’t like the sound of the third option either. I chose to live it out, I couldn’t worry to dead it out or mad it out. I saw a lot of men lose their sanity on death row. Some of them lost it in a way that they even took their own lives before the government could hang them. They would tie up strings of torn up clothing and hang themselves from the vent; the authorities would enter their cells and find them dead the next day. Some of them would get mad and turn into fools; stop bathing, not eating. They had become stark staring madmen not knowing themselves; doing the opposite of everything. I being a young person on death row, soon realized that if I didn’t have a strong will and if I didn’t

keep the faith and hope for the best, anyone of those fates could reach me.

I chose the way of survival, not really of my own will but through the will of God I suppose because I never forgot God. I constantly asked him to help me and promised that if given the chance I would make good use of it and not let him down. But the death row culture was one of struggle. Those who couldn't read and write had to depend on people who could. I remember using the Bible to teach a fellow inmate to read and write. He didn't know A from bull foot; he couldn't count from one to ten; he didn't know numbers. Like a baby, I taught him his A B C's and numbers. He was very willing to learn and eventually grasped the basics, enough for him to help himself. The way in which he learned was to copy my style of writing exactly. I felt proud to know that even in my position I could help somebody to read and write.

The culture that I got to understand and became a part of was one of trying to keep the faith and to keep your sanity on a daily basis. On death row you are locked down most of the time. The only time you are let out is to throw away your slop or to shower. People hardly slept. Instead we would talk or read way into the night until morning sometimes. I believe that most of us were afraid that sleep would rob us of the vigilance to live; you have to be awake to be alive.

In the morning the officers would fly up and release three men at a time on each death row section; when they threw away their slop, washed their bucket, washed their hands and fetched their water they were taken back to the cells and another three men were let out until the whole section was slopped up. If the whole place were slopped up by twelve o'clock then you would get your morning tea (drink). Tea was either coffee, tea or cocoa diluted served with peg bread. Sometimes they would

give you some taste-bad calaloo (similar to spinach) or bland cabbage. Nothing tasted like normal food in there. If we didn't slop up early enough we were served breakfast and dinner in one – we called it 'two in one'. These meals were always served in diet-sized plates. These were small sized plastic containers, similar to a kid's meal.

After breakfast we were again locked down in the cells. If the time was late or if they couldn't be bothered, we didn't get any air-out before being locked down again. Air-out consisted of ten or fifteen minutes outside of the section where you could bathe or take some sunlight but that was not with any regularity and so we were at the mercy of the warders even for basic hygiene needs. The death row section was enclosed with high barbed wire fences. We didn't see or communicate with anyone from the general prison population unless the guards looked the other way and gave you the opportunity to say a word to someone on the opposite side of the fence. If someone made the mistake of going up to the fence without permission he would be beaten or locked down immediately.

My routine on waking was to do some exercise like running on the spot, push ups, stretches and whatever else I had space to do. Then I would dry off myself and sit down and maybe read a book. It was on death row that I started to do a lot of reading. I read history books, novels and off course the Bible. I read the Bible from cover to cover many times. We kept school on death row every day; everybody would come to their front ventie and we would keep math classes, English classes, reading classes or discuss historical events. We discussed foreign affairs sometimes, a topic that I became very interested in. At that time I could tell you the capital of almost every country in the world, who was its president, prime minister, chancellor, King or queen and anything else of special interest pertaining to that country. I could tell you about the different

struggles and revolutions that certain peoples had faced at different periods in history; where the coups had taken place and about governments that were toppled in their wake; I got to understand more about the running of the CIA, the FBI, the KGB, Interpol and other special agencies from the books that I read.

We used those times to try to take our minds off our dire situations; at least those who still had a mind to use participated. It eased the pressure. The only other times that our minds came off our predicament was if we were able to get our hands on a good novel. Then you could lose yourself in it for a while.

But I also did a lot of writing on death row. I learned a lot about the Jamaican judicial system, where to submit your case, certain legal blunders that lawyers made and other important information. When I reflected on my case with this new knowledge, I realized that I could probably have done a better job for myself had I been in my lawyer's position. From the advice of another lawyer, I was also told that it might have been better had I been allowed to take the stand in my own defense.

Some men on death row passed their time smoking ganja (marijuana) or cigarettes. Smoking was very fundamental on death row; most men smoked. When smokes weren't available some men were like madmen. Death row was traumatic. I witnessed a lot of inhuman behavior; a lot of injustices were meted out; nobody took notice. A lot of men were hanged in my time because some men couldn't afford a lawyer or legal assistance to help them. The Jamaica Council For Human Rights, at that time headed by Miss Flo O'Connor, along with Mr. Dennis Daley did what they could to assist some inmates,

meanwhile the majority who couldn't afford it, lost the battle for their lives and were hanged by the state.

It was an everyday struggle. I witnessed between thirty and thirty-five men being hanged. It was a sad story when the guards came for anyone; they would drape him up, handcuff him and carry him over to the gallows. Hanging most likely took place on the Tuesday. Coffins were built inside of the prison. These were crude raw boxes made from breadfruit wood, without varnish. The hangman who would pull the lever, some witnesses and a few guards were the ones present at the hanging. After the hanging the body was placed into the coffin, inspected by a doctor and buried behind the kitchen near to the football field. As a sort of sick joke, the hangman kept a mock trial after. It was like a show, in which the deceased always busted his case and was found not guilty.

There was always a run of executions, which stopped or started on death row. Whenever the time for a run had come you would hear: "Dem a come! Dangerous tings!" Then everybody would begin to wonder if his time had come or if it was the man next to him. Some men would get so frightened that they would immediately come down with a critical case of diarrhea. We could smell death a mile off in that place and it was only after we found out who the guards had come for that some men got off of their buckets. It was an awful experience, something I wouldn't wish on an enemy.



THE HOSTAGE CRISIS

While on death row things started to get complicated. Men were not winning their appeals and death row began to get overcrowded. Because of the heightened crime and violence outside, a lot of men were caught and sentenced. A lot of injustice took place during that time; we wrote to persons in the government, to human rights organizations all over the world, we linked up with Amnesty International and the United Nations trying to seek help from all quarters because the judicial system wasn't working in Jamaica. Eventually out of frustration and desperation some inmates, including me, decided that we would have to find some way or means of escape out of the prison.

But it was like God didn't want it to happen because, despite the fact that we got our hands on certain tools, it seemed that we weren't getting anywhere. We resolved to get some attention from the government and the public in general in whichever way possible and decided to hold some officers hostage.

It was the third of January 1988, a Sunday morning, when we planned our move. The first set of inmates were let out to slop up and they lured two officers inside of the building; the men who were outside held the two officers, took away their keys and flew up the whole section. Then we locked ourselves in the building taking the officers hostage. A lot of whistles started to blow and within about a half an hour, the entire prison was locked down. All the officers inside of the prison came to our section to find out what was the problem and why

we had held on to the officers. We had already planned what we would say and had something in writing that we wanted to present to the authorities. We wanted to see the Commissioner of Correctional Services and we wanted a meeting with the Prime Minister. At that time three men were in condemned cells to be hanged the following week. The superintendent in charge listened to what we had to say and we told him that we didn't want any officers inside of our locked down section; that they were to stay at a safe distance away from us.

All of us were armed with improvised weapons; some factory made weapons, knives, jammers and things like that. (There were certain guards who would look the other way while death row inmates spoke to other inmates through the fence. At times an inmate would throw cigarettes, ganga or other small items over the fence for a death row inmate. In this way we eventually armed ourselves.) We locked off the section with padlocks and chains as we controlled the keys. We told them that if they tried to force their way onto the section we would kill the warders that we held. As a result, they surrounded the building but did not attempt to rescue their colleagues. The superintendent agreed to contact the commissioner and about fifteen minutes later we heard a news flash that a hostage crisis was in progress at the St. Catherine District Prison on death row.

The Commissioner of Corrections at that time was a man by the name of Joslyn Jarrett. He came immediately to the institution to speak with us and asked us to release the officers. We told him that we needed to speak with the Governor General, the Prime Minister and either Aubrey Frazer or Dr. Lloyd Barnett, who had studies on capital punishment. (Their findings based on international statistics, had established that

capital punishment was no deterrent to murder. State killings had not worked to discourage or stop murder.)

Hours passed and we still had the officers locked in. We wondered whether our demands would have been met or if they would try to kill us all. A part of our demands to the Commissioner was that we wanted to get a review of all the cases of the men on death row. We asked that our sentences be commuted to life and for stays of execution for the three men on the condemned cell block. He said that he didn't have the power to grant our wishes but that he would consult his superiors.

That evening the Minister of Justice, Oswald Harding, came to the prison. He told us that he couldn't negotiate with us unless we released the officers. He sent back our first delegation of men and requested that some other inmates on the section come to see him. I was one of the inmates chosen in the second batch to go and speak with him.

The prison chaplain, Father Massey, a white Canadian, was sent to us as a negotiator. He pleaded with us not to hurt the officers and to end the stand off. We really had no intention to hurt or harm the officers in any way but in order to get attention we had to make it seem as if we would carry out our threats if our demands weren't met. Nonetheless, we did have men in the group who were desperate and crazy enough to make some bad moves but we, the sane ones, kept things in check.

Eventually I was allowed to go and speak with Minister Harding. He seemed interested in our case and spoke to me honestly, saying that while he did not support capital punishment himself, he wasn't the person that could make the final decision in regards to the abolishment of capital

punishment. However, he said that he could speak on our behalf to the Prime Minister and other members of Parliament on the issue. But he stressed, that before he could do that, we would have to release the officers and further stated that no government would negotiate with terrorists or people that threatened them. He said that no government would negotiate with anyone who held a gun at its head and he thought that our action was tantamount to that. I understood the logic of his words and told him that I would go back and speak with the men because I wasn't the person who could jump and make that decision. He wished me the best and hoped that I would be able to influence the others to release the officers.

I went back to the section and spoke with the other men. They were scared, fearing that if they released the officers without a clear understanding, the authorities would try to hang us all. I tried to reason with them but eventually after nine o'clock in the night I decided to take it on myself to take an action, whether or not they accepted it. I knew that I had friends on the section that could be depended on in case there was any internal struggles or bad feelings. My strategy was to release one of the officers and see if that would induce the authorities to negotiate. Some men were against this but I rallied the men that I had confidence in and we took one of the officers out of their custody. I then told them that I would stand the responsibility for the action if anything happened. I took the officer off the section and carried him to Minister Harding. The Minister was happy about this small move; the officer was relieved, though he had sustained a nick on his finger during the struggle to take him from the men and so was whisked away to the Spanish Town Hospital for treatment.

I went back to speak with the Minister who told me that even though we had released one officer in good faith he still couldn't negotiate with us until we released the other officer. I

told him that it was doubtful that the men would be receptive to that idea but I would do my best. Back on the section, I tried to persuade the men to release the remaining officer but they were skeptical. Father Massey summoned me up to the gate of the section and said to me: “Fines you have to do everything in your power to have the men release the officer. You people have proven your point; Jamaica and the rest of the world have received the news. They see your cause and they see your plight and they understand everything. You cannot afford to have a boat that is floating and allow it to sink. If you allow the boat to sink then you all would have achieved nothing.”

“Is true Father but is not me one haffi mek dat decision.”

“I know Fines but you are a leader and must stand up to see that the officer is released safely.”

“Father Massey, I respect yuh as a man an a look up to you. A si dat yuh have humanitarian feelings. Even though yuh is a white man, yuh not racist. I will go back an si what a caan do.”

“I’m depending on you Fines. I know you will do the right thing.”

The men however stubbornly refused to release the officer. Whatever their reason, they were not going to release him. I told them that even if it was going to cause a conflict between us, I was going to do the right thing. “If mi do what needs to do an any man lose him life or get hurt, is pon my head, mi wi tek de responsibility. If me lose mi life then is so fate choose it to go,” I told them. Even though I was involved in the hostage crisis, a spirit or a voice was saying to me: “Fines yuh have to si that things work out,” and that voice kept talking to me.

I realized that I would have to take this officer away from the men even though it would probably cause a confrontation but

I knew that I had to do something. ‘Let go de man nuh, unno let de man go,’ I said.

“We naw let him go.”

“Him is wi only hope.”

“A who side yuh de pon Fines?”

“Dis not doin us no good. Let de man go brethren.”

“Watch ya Fines, yuh si if anyting happen to me brethren, a you mi a go blame.”

“Just cool man. Leggo de man! Just have faith. Ongly good tings a go happen.”

Eventually they released him to me and I took him to the gate. The men on the section opened the gate and I carried the officer and placed him into the hands of the superintendent. At the same time the Minister came over to the gate and told me that he was pleased that I had gotten the officer freed without harm. Next he told me that I was to get every weapon on the section and give it to him. It may have been that the men were tired of the long stand off by this time because they collected all the weapons and gave it to me in a scandal bag (see through plastic bag) without too much argument.

I handed the bag with weapons to Minister Harding and myself and a few other men on the section went with him to the office. The keys were duly handed over to the authorities then I told the men to go back into their cells. When I went back upstairs I saw the then Prime Minister, the Honorable Edward Seaga, one of his ministers Tom Finson and his right hand minister Babsy Grange in the office. A meeting was set up for us to meet with the Prime Minister and his ministers. In that meeting there were also several journalists and a lot of soldiers on guard. The Jamaica Defense Force had been called in earlier in the day and now the place crawled with soldiers. They surrounded the building; the police were also there in a show of force going in and out of the prison.

We were seated in a room in front of the Prime Minister, meanwhile Sir Florizel Glaspole, who was then Governor General, was communicating with Minister Harding by telephone every minute on the minute. They looked up records and there was a flurry of activity until the Prime Minister called the meeting to order. "Gentlemen do you know what you have done? Do you understand the full implication of your actions?" he said to us.

"Sir, wi never have no intention to cause problem," I responded. "We are just seeking attention; trying to get the attention of the public and the Minister. Wi write several letters to the relevant authorities to try to let you people know the conditions in the prisons especially on death row; the inhuman and degrading treatment that is meted out to us and also, wi need help with the inequality of the justice system in Jamaica." He listened intently as I explained to him how ludicrous the Jamaican judicial system was, where so many poor people could be sentenced and even hanged for crimes that they didn't commit. "So wi need the public to know, and for you Sir, to do something to change the whole situation that people can get justice. Justice in Jamaica now is not for poor people. Justice is for the fortunate or the rich. So wi crying out to you, like a voice from the wilderness."

"Yes Sir, wi never intend to hurt nobody," said the other inmate beside me.

"That is all well and good but you had no right to hold the warders hostage," the Prime Minister said. "Do you know that I have the power to sign the death warrants for all of you right now?"

"Boss wi never intend to hurt nobody an wi no want yuh use that 'gainst wi."

"When the judge sentenced you, the law had to then take its course. I cannot jump and intervene in the law," he said.

We told him that while we understood that the law had to take its course we were asking him, as the Prime Minister of the country, to look into our allegations, to bring the matter of the death sentence to parliament for revision. “Why don’t you contact your friends on the street and tell them to stop killing people?” he quickly responded.

“Boss while wi don’t oppose that, what yuh must understand Sir is that these men are outside and we are inside. Wi no have no influence over dem and even if wi tell dem, dem don’t haffi hear us.”

He informed us that he had seen our demands but that he didn’t guarantee what could be done; however he said that they would look into it. It had been his intention he said to take fifty men off of death row when the hostage crises happened and was unsure now of what action, if any, he would take. We continued to reason with him, pleading for our lives and admitted that while some of us had made mistakes, many could benefit from second chances. Some men, I told him, were even framed and ended up on death row; others committed crimes of passion through jealousy; some had been caught up in old family feuds but it was a mixed bag of us on death row. We pointed out some other domestic fatalities, which shouldn’t be categorized as violent murders and should be looked into, also some of the men that had been sentenced were not criminals before and could benefit from getting a second chance.

We tried to point these things out to him in the hope that he would understand our situation, even quoting that it was the British who brought capital punishment to Jamaica and the Caribbean, yet they had abolished hanging in Britain while Jamaica still embraced the ‘Backra Massa’ legacy (a legacy from the plantation during slavery). He laughed saying that we were historians and had a lot of history to tell him. He said that he

would do what he could but that he didn't want to hear or know that we **ever** held any warder hostage again or tried in any way to hurt any warder. We asked him to grant the men on the condemned cells a stay of execution because they were good men too but he said that he couldn't do anything about that as it was the responsibility of the governor general. In general the meeting came to an adjournment and while he reassured us that he and his ministers would look into the issue, we still had no guarantees.

The one thing that he did assure us of was that he would speak with the commissioner of corrections and let him know that no inmate was to be abused ever again. No one was to be beaten or harmed in anyway in respect of the hostage incident since we had lived up to our words and released the officers unharmed. With those words we felt assured that at least there wouldn't be any negative repercussions as a result of our actions. He told us that he would keep in touch and further gave one of the chaplains the responsibility of ensuring our safety.

And this was how the hostage crises came to an end. We were taken back to our section and everyone was locked down. The next morning the incident made the headlines. They had assured me that my name wouldn't be mentioned but unfortunately I was referred to in the article on the front page of the Gleaner as being the inmate's spokesman in the meeting with the prime minister.



INSANE BEHAVIOR

If we thought that things couldn't get any worse we were mistaken. The only thing that the hostage crisis had done was to stimulate the energies, the bad blood between the warders and their charges and between the warders and the government. Some time between 1989 and 1990 the government and the warders began having dialogue with respect to money that they claimed was owed to them by the government and were adamant that they should be paid retroactively.

When it looked as if the government was not going to meet their demands things got restive and we on death row felt the sharp end of the stick. They began to fly up the gates later and later and later. On occasion we were locked down for a whole day without food or water, with the stink of our overflowing slop pails finally surpassing the funky smells of men who needed to bathe and clean themselves. Many nights we were fed three in one; that is breakfast, lunch and supper all together and at the same time – nighttime. During those days the warders taunted us to rebel, do something. In the words of one officer, “unno siddown like fool. Why unno no jump de wall or lick out? Why unno no do something bout it? Yuh no si sey man a tek unno fi idiot?”

Each day the tension on death row mounted. The pressure of being locked down without being let out to bathe, catch water, and empty our slop or to stretch in the sunlight was bad enough but the hunger was worse. This treatment went on relentlessly for several weeks with the warders literally begging

us to take action against their inhumane treatment. Eventually a few inmates busted out to search for food. With the help of other inmates in the institution who worked in the welding shop and other areas in the yard, they were thrown iron bars, and other implements, which they used to bust out of their cells. This was dangerous but men were becoming crazed with hunger and the risk seemed worth it.

The warders continued to increase the pressure with the hope that things would come to a head in such a way as to bring the government to their knees and buckle to their requests. They wanted a retroactive pay increase that also included back money for uniform allowances and they were mad as hell. Mad enough to use us as their leverage tool.

Then some men on A4 decided to take things into their own hands. They found a way to build a fire on the block and the fire brigade was called in. This was exactly what the warders had hoped for. They rushed the inmates, incited fighting and claimed that a riot was taking place. As a result the government hastily sent in the army and the police to handle the situation. Some inmates ran back to their cells while others looked for a place to hide but there was nowhere to run to as the section was fully gridded; most ended up back in their cells. They were taken out one by one and beaten by the warders and the soldiers. I even saw them viciously beat up an inmate who was a known mad man.

Three of the inmates on that block decided that they were not going to submit willingly to the beatings and barred their cell doors. The police fired tear gas into the cells to get them out and when that didn't work, the firemen used hooks and long sticks and eventually pried one out. He was beaten to within inches of his life. The other two held out in their cells using improvised materials to jam the cell doors from inside and

miraculously dodging the hooks. Then the soldiers put on gas masks and tear-gassed the cells again. This time they inserted bayonets into the end of their guns; armed and ready they waited while the police broke down the barricade. Then they rushed into the cells impaling the men with the bayonets. The firemen then used their hooks to drag the bodies out where the warders could deal with them.

Outside of the cell the warders took over. They jumped on the men and beat them to death on the spot. Skulls cracked open, brains spilled out, eyes were hit out and bones were crunched. Not one part of their bodies was spared. The blood splashed over the grills, the cell doors and the clothing of the warders. The floor looked like a river of blood. When it was finished what was left of the bodies were shoveled up, as there was no other way to collect the remains. Then the place was washed off as if nothing had ever happened. I witnessed this from outside of the fence of my section on Gibraltar.

The next day the officers came back boasting and taunting how the men had cried like babies, crying for help to God, their mother and anyone who could hear them. The first inmate didn't die immediately but eventually succumbed to his injuries after several days. The three inmates who died were known as 'Craig Town,' 'Nazi,' and 'Paul.'

The government did everything in their power to suppress the unrest with the warders so that the prisons could run normally again. A version of the incident was reported in the media; nothing was further from the truth.

During that same period another riot took place at GP stemming from the same locking down situation. When it came to the attention of the authorities some officers were prosecuted and sent on suspension for their actions. The case

was tried and the judge told the officers that they were mainly to be blamed and that what had occurred was because of their inhumane treatment to inmates. Consequently they were warned and transferred. After that incident several inter departmental transfers took place. No one was ever charged for the murder of the three inmates on A 4 cellblock, death row. The incident passed without much note.



THE END OF A NIGHTMARE

I spent ten years on death row. During that time I kept struggling to save my life. I wrote to a number of people including law firms in England. I got my transcript, studied it, stated certain grounds for appeal and sent this to the lawyers in England. They wondered how I had so much knowledge about the case and I was not a lawyer; finally they responded to me and took my case. I had lost my appeal in Jamaica and was heading speedily for the condemned cell and the gallows.

During that time death row became even more over populated due to the stay of executions. If the government had any intention to hang any man on death row they would have had to hang at least three men every week to ease the severe over crowding. The correctional services took over different sections within the institution and turned them into death row sections. Minister Carl Rattray, the previous Minister of Justice, put a proposal to the government to commute the sentences of the men on death row to life imprisonment. It was very definite that the government couldn't afford to hang all the men that were then housed on death row; if they did, it would have been a blood bath and other international organizations and governments would look at Jamaica as being a state killer acting outside the boundaries of international humanitarian standards.

In the end they amended the law (the Persons Amendment Act on Murder) and reclassified all the cases of the men on death row. At that time two inmates, namely Pratt and Morgan, won a case against the government at the Privy Council wherein the

Privy Council ruled that anyone who had spent more than five years on death row, should have his sentence commuted to life. The JLP by then had lost the elections and the PNP took back the leadership of the country with K. D. Knight taking over from Ossie Harding as Minister of National Security and Justice. However, before the Pratt and Morgan decision was ruled, the government had already accepted the advice of Carl Rattray.

This classification was organized in such a way that all men charged with police or judiciary killing would be hanged. Murder was divided into two segments; capital murder and non-capital murder with domestic murder classified as non-capital murder. If two people were involved in a murder, the one who pulled the trigger would be charged with capital murder, the other would get a non-capital murder sentence. All the cases of death row inmates were reclassified. Some were ruled on capital and others were ruled on non-capital. Fortunately, my case was ruled as a non-capital case and my sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. On or around the 15th to 25th of January 1993 my sentence was commuted to life and I was told that I would have to serve at least twenty years more before becoming eligible for parole. By then I had spent ten years on death row. To serve another twenty years or more meant that in all I might have to spend some forty or maybe fifty years in prison before I could come out. By then I would be an old man with my back bent and my eyesight almost gone.

However, when my sentence was commuted I didn't give up hope. I still had my appeal in England, which I continued to pursue, refusing to give up the struggle. Coming off death row made me feel like a new person. I was elated that at least I had won the battle for my life; the battle for my freedom now took on a new perspective. The first thing that I did was to

thank God. The experience of death row was like a bad nightmare from which I had at last escaped. I could hardly believe that after spending so many years on death row, God would have worked it out so that I would be given a chance. Maybe justice was in fact served, not the way that I would have liked it, but perhaps I was meant to go through what I did, even though I was innocent of that crime. Maybe this was God's way of teaching me; could this be a second chance for me?

For the first time in ten years I felt like I could breathe without inhaling the imagery of the gallows and imminent death. I didn't feel bitter as I had when I was first sent to death row. The experience of having the death sentence withdrawn from over my head gave me new hope. The years on death row had humbled me; I was now more accepting of my fate and willing to work with whatever else came.

In all about one hundred men were taken off death row as a result of the reclassification. It was a turning point on death row; the first time that anything like that had ever taken place. This made a dramatic impact on the population of death row. The inmates that were left whose cases had been ruled as capital now got the opportunity to appeal against the capital ruling of their cases. However, the non-capitals like myself were told that we would not get the opportunity to appeal again before being eligible for parole. At that time England had made their ruling on all the inmates, both capital and non-capital; as long as you had spent five years on death row, your sentence had to be automatically commuted by the governor general.

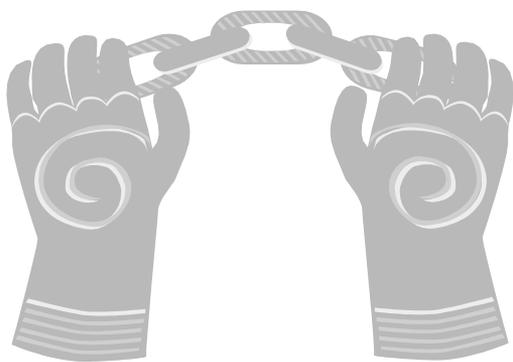
The Jamaican government at that time was reluctant to accept the ruling from England but because England is the highest court that a Caribbean country can appeal to, they had to

accept it. They in turn decided that they wanted to cut off ties with England in the court system. Setting up a Caribbean court of justice remains an item under discussion even in 2005 while this book is being written. The Jamaican government is adamant about setting up a Caribbean Court of Appeal in conjunction with other Caribbean countries, where they can deal with their own cases, instead of depending on England to be the final court of appeal. Jamaica has not given up capital punishment though they have suspended hangings.

I was transferred from the St. Catherine District Prison to the General Penitentiary (GP) where I pursued the right to appeal. About eight years passed, and then through our persistency and by the intervention of a human rights organization, the government decided to grant us the right of appeal against the predetermined parole time. England by then had made a ruling, which specified that the government should commute all inmates on death row to ordinary life sentences, because they had been on death row before the act was passed. Furthermore the ruling was that if they were being taken off they should get life sentences. All those who were sentenced after the law had been amended would get the prescribed period of time.

The government held out and it wasn't before a period of seven to eight years before they decided to accept this. Our case by then had to go back to court because England had said that there was no way that a single judge could have made a decision like that, instead the case should be heard before a panel of judges. Eventually our cases went back to the Court of Appeal; the President of the Court of Appeal at that time was Justice Carl Rattray. Every inmate's case could not go back at the same time but a few were heard under Justice Rattray and they got back their time. (Those who had been on death row for say ten, fifteen or whatever number of years

were given back that time added towards their sentences; also the time that was given to them when they had just been taken off death row was deducted. After these calculations men would then become eligible for parole.) My sentence was twenty years before parole and when my case eventually went back to the Court of Appeal, it was not reduced. Some however were lucky and had their time reduced but my twenty years was not changed. I was given back the ten years that I spent on death row and I had to do ten more years; at that time I had already completed a total of eighteen years leaving only two before I could be considered for parole.





REVERENCE FOR LIFE

During my time at GP I noticed that many prisoners were downhearted and hopeless; everybody was looking to the next one for a direction but hope was a scarce commodity. Some men were serving long sentences while others were serving short sentences but within the prison community it all felt the same – hopeless. The short sentence men were the more fortunate ones. Inmates like me had years in prison either ahead of them or time already served. We needed an outlet; we needed something to look forward to; we needed a guiding light to direct our path and a champion to build our self-respect and self-esteem. We needed a reason to live; a vision for our lives, someone to give us hope for another day.

A new commissioner took over the Department of Correctional Services by the name of Colonel John Prescod. When Colonel Prescod came in he had a vision; a belief that there was a new way forward for the system which he had inherited. In the old regime hopelessness, inhumanity, deplorable conditions and regular blood baths were the norm. There were all kinds of war, violence and atrocities in the prisons; prisoner against prisoner, warders against prisoners and in general mayhem reigned. Men tried every known route to escape the horrors of their captivity. A few succeeded.

A change was needed. The timing was ripe for someone like Colonel Prescod. We needed somebody with new ideas to reform the old system of chaos, which over time had bred

more dangerous individuals. At that time the main focus of all the institutions was to contain, restrain, dehumanize, castigate, discipline inmates and discourage change; a certain number of bodies, identified by their number tag were given into the charge of an institution with little thought to how those persons were kept. After serving his sentence, that inmate was let out with almost a guarantee that he would return. Rehabilitation was considered successful if the inmate was locked away until he died or had served his time.

Probably it was the intervention of God that sent Colonel Prescod to us. He came with a vision of rehabilitation. He had many new rehabilitation ideas and he enlisted the help of many people who believed in his vision; people who had a heart, people who knew that some crimes were the end result of a corrupt system and that the society in general needed to be awakened to that fact.

I knew that I was as guilty as the politicians who solicited the services of the Dons, and the Dons who recruited me to work for them. The police who issued guns to us under the cover of darkness sanctioned by their party leaders were guilty; the soldiers who trained us as young men to defend their political party were guilty; those in the judiciary system who ignored evidence when money changed hands were also guilty. Society's guilt lay in the fact that it knew what was going on and still turned a blind eye. In Jamaica it was downtown versus uptown or simply we versus them.

Colonel Prescod introduced a lot of good rehabilitation programs. I seized the opportunity to enlist in many of them; I wanted to be a part of progress so I enrolled in a lot of programs inside of the prison, many of them being academic. I took courses in peer counseling and mediation and got certificates for both mediation and conflict resolution.

One of the persons enlisted by Colonel Prescod in his new rehabilitation campaign was Mr. Desmond Green. Mr. Green had started a movement at the South Camp Rehabilitation Center (Gun Court) called Reverence For Life. In time word of this movement and what it stood for reached GP. In due course I met Mr. Desmond Green, Founder of the Reverence For Life Foundation. He visited GP with some inmates from Gun Court. He gave us hope and said that the Minister of Security and Justice, K. D. Knight, had good intentions, especially towards those of us who were long sentence men. Mr. Green had a lot of good ideas.

Reverence For Life was a non-profit organization that any inmate could join. While it sounded like a Christian organization, it didn't interfere with a man's religious point of view, be he Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, Moslem or Rastafarian. The organization came about in a time when there was a lot of war and violence inside GP; there were incidents of stabbings and beatings every week and some lost their lives. It was then that Commissioner Prescod gave Mr. Green the authority to introduce the Reverence For Life movement in GP.

Mr. Green came into the prison and sought out men with leadership qualities who would have influence over the general prison population. I immediately got involved with this organization. I realized that this organization could be my ticket out. I learnt, even while on death row, that if I had any intentions to leave prison with my life and my sanity, I would have to get involved with good programs. Hence I got involved with every positive thing that came our way inside GP.

The Reverence For Life program under Mr. Green was introduced into GP and quickly became the institution's

beacon of light. We formed a Reverence For Life chapter in GP and held regular meetings. This chapter gave all its members certain privileges once they stopped the war and violence in the prison. 'One Love,' 'One Unity' and 'One Harmony' for the benefit of the individual was promoted as the main message. We kept meetings on weekends and special rehabilitation workshops, in line with the needs of the prison community, were encouraged. For the first time men got a chance to be heard and it seemed that the commissioner and his rehabilitation team were listening. Many concerts were organized during that time by our team.

The Reverence For Life organization also arranged meetings with the officers, the commissioner and head office staff to discuss things that could be implemented inside of the institution to help inmates fulfill their highest potentials. Many educational programs were introduced and set up by our Reverence For Life chapter. Several focus groups were formed under the new Reverence For Life umbrella; some groups were involved with music, some with literacy programs, others specialized in craft, woodwork or sports. The Reverence For Life sports groups played a big part in the lives of many inmates. Energies that would normally have run wild were channeled into football (soccer) and cricket and Mr. Green was instrumental in organizing friendly matches with teams from other institutions and with outside clubs.

This organization was directly responsible for the peace and unity that eventually became the predominant culture in GP. GP was quickly transformed into a culture where life was valued and where men were involved in cultivating the best in themselves. Through the eyes of Mr. Green men began to see themselves as worthwhile individuals instead of thrown away trash. The value of each human life began to take on a new meaning as the men began to value their own lives and have

respect for themselves and each other. From around 1998 until the time that I got paroled in 2003 the Reverence For Life organization kept a positive influence on the institution and abated much of the violence and mayhem that had once reigned. Reverence For Life chapters at GP held the unity and the oneness inside of the prison and gained recognition and respect under Commissioner Prescod and Mr. Green.

Mr. Desmond Green played a vital part in everything. Rehabilitation programs were implemented that gave inmates hope. New rehabilitation programs were introduced for good behavior, where inmates could leave the prison compound on weekend passes. Most of these passes were issued to men who had embraced the Reverence For Life culture and who were passed as being trustworthy by their peers and by the Correctional Services (this was an important aspect to the success of the program). Many groups went on church type programs to minister to inner city communities and church groups all around the island. Other groups went on counseling programs to schools and interacted with youth at risk. These groups passed on the message that crime led to prison and that getting a good education was essential. The message was strong and convincing coming from men who were still behind bars. We attended different types of uplifting programs on the outside under the leadership of Commissioner Prescod and Mr. Green with the blessings of the Minister of National Security and Justice, Mr. K. D. Knight.

Each Reverence For Life chapter had a president, vice president, secretary, chairman and many assistants to the chair. We had persons in charge of education, human rights, legal affairs, music, sports and 'unity'. Those in charge of unity were called unity lecturers. These people would go around and ensure that violence and war inside of the prison was squashed before it started. If a man drew a weapon on another one,

these men would be called upon to settle the dispute. These groups were also known as the 'guiding angels'. On every cellblock their work was to basically keep the peace. In fact, this group helped the officers to run the prison and keep a calmness and unity throughout the facility. The way things were structured, men were anxious to play an active part in the organization because they saw the opportunities that could result. Inmates who were doing long sentences and hadn't seen their families and children for years got the privilege to go out on weekend furloughs. Some of these men were ex-death row inmates who had never imagined that they would one day get the chance to see their mothers, their daughters, their sons or even the girlfriends and baby mothers whom they had left on the outside so many years ago.

When I got the privilege to go out on my first furlough, it was hard for me to believe that I was the same person that could have been hanged on death row. It was like a dream come true. When I returned to the prison, I had to pinch myself to see if it had really happened. Things started to take an upward trend from then on and I began seeing some light at the end of my tunnel. I have to look up to men like Colonel Prescod and Mr. Green and others who became part of the Reverence For Life Foundation. They did what no one else had ever done for the institution.

The Reverence For Life organization never tried to control or dictate to anyone how they should run their lives or even the GP chapter. It was an organization that took the needs of the men seriously and gave each person the chance to express himself. It was willing to listen to each person's viewpoint and suggestions for changes. It provided opportunities to make things better so that the men looked forward to a different life and constructive changes. Suggestions came from inmates as well as warders during numerous meetings that were held. I

was happy to be a part of that organization and initially served in the area of education and school activities.

As the years went by many of the leaders of various focus groups were released and the mantle of leadership of the GP chapter fell on my shoulders. At first I was given the responsibility of assistant chairman, then I was given the chairmanship and eventually I was elected president of the Reverence For Life Foundation. I was regarded as a good leader and tried to meet and speak with the teammates and the officers to ensure the achievement of Reverence For Life goals and objectives. We arranged meetings with persons in and out of the institution who were interested in our welfare or who gave a listening ear to what we had to offer in regards to crime and violence in Jamaica.

I feel that to change crime and violence, you cannot leave out the prisons. The government spends more money on guns and ammunition, to buy vehicles for the police force to fight crime and violence and not enough money is diverted to the prisons to set up programs that will improve the living conditions of teammates or to give men a chance to become productive persons.

As a result of the inbred culture however, backed by some individuals whose minds were negative about everything, Colonel Prescod faced a lot of resistance to the changes. During his term (1997) a riot took place at GP. The cause of it was a statement, which he had made to the media relating to *'the issuing of condoms to prevent the spread of AIDS and other STD's in the institution'*. Officers used this statement to pressure Colonel Prescod, interpreting the statement to mean *'officers must use condoms'*. Some inmates took it to mean something else *(that all prisoners were gay)* and a wave of violence broke out. The officers said that Colonel Prescod was disrespectful to have

made the statement. At GP eleven inmates lost their lives and there were uprisings and chaos within all the other institutions island wide.

What Colonel Prescod meant however was that while homosexuality could not be prevented within the confines of the institution, the responsibility of the Correctional Department would be to prevent the spread of disease since these individuals could not be isolated, condemned, executed or made to disappear. The commissioner's proposal was to freely issue condoms to inmates without any type of judgment or stigma attached.

The real truth of the matter was that most officers hadn't bought into the new rehabilitation thrust. They wanted the commissioner to listen to them without the inmates having any say. Reverence For Life programs had empowered the men and some officers felt that teammates were overstepping their bounds. The older ones feared losing some of the free rein stranglehold they had previously enjoyed over the prison population. The commissioner however was interested in hearing both sides to bring about reform.

Rioting took place for days before things were brought back under control. We blamed the officers who had started a rumor, saying that Colonel Prescod himself was a homosexual. The officers then staged a major sickout and as a result about eight hundred of them were put on interdiction. To the amazement of the establishment it was mainly the Reverence For Life chapters that kept the peace throughout all the institutions during this period.

Colonel Prescod did everything that he could to change the system with the help of Mr. Green and the Reverence For Life organization but a few persons had other agendas. We as

senior persons and leaders in the organization tried to let everyone see the opportunities the program offered and that it did work. In the end Reverence For Life programs came under a lot of scrutiny. Two men actually ran away bringing the furlough program to a halt even though the program had had a long run of success.

There were other blemishes too, which should not be contributed to the Reverence For Life program but which cast a shadow over it. There were men who claimed to be a part of the program who didn't embrace the tenets of the program, yet many times these individuals were placed in a Reverence For Life program to undermine it from the inside.

For instance, at one time the officers classed out an inmate (an inmate who is classified as one who can participate in projects on the outside) called 'Dread' for a project party. He went out on a project with a staff officer by the name of Spencer to fix something at a staff doctor's house. That inmate should not have been classed out as he had not been in the institution for very long and had appeals pending. (When you have an appeal pending you are not allowed to be a part of any outside work detail.) That inmate however was classed out through friendship and special connections. As a result he went out with the officer and never come back. A rumor was spread that he was a part of the RFLF rehabilitation program. But Dread was never a part of any rehabilitation curriculum nor was he a part of the Reverence For Life program.

The incident with that inmate's escape caused RFLF's outreach programs to be shut down. Though 'Dread' was never a part of the Reverence For Life movement it caused a spotlight to shine on RFLF's outreach programs and many became stagnant after that.

Colonel Prescod did his investigation and found out that Dread had gone out on a regular work program, not a Reverence For Life Program. He explained this to the new Minister of National Security and Justice, Dr. Peter Phillips who gave Colonel Prescod the OK to take all the RFLF programs off suspension.

The success of the Reverence For Life program can be measured in many ways. If one hundred men went out and one man ran away, it couldn't be considered a failure. I believe that in things of this nature there can never be one hundred percent success. As a matter of fact between GP and Gun Court hundreds of men had been given the opportunity to be on the outside through numerous Reverence For Life outreach programs and weekend furloughs and had returned without incident. *(It was later ascertained that the men who ran away had been given furlough privileges before being initiated into the Reverence For Life culture)* I and other inmates had agreed that when we went on furloughs we would return so that other men could get the same opportunity and that the program could spread to other institutions.

The Gun Court inmates along with Mr. Green and Colonel Prescod successfully spread the Reverence For Life culture in GP and I believe we proved that rehabilitation is possible. I got the opportunity to speak on several radio programs, to explain myself to society and to let people understand that many teammates would benefit from a second chance. There are a lot of brilliant minds in prison. Many individuals only need somebody to listen to them or help them back on the right path. I think most times it is not the inmate alone who is responsible; his community, the society and several other factors play a major part in his downfall.

The Reverence For Life program was more a success than a failure and was re-launched in 2000 at King's House under Governor General, Sir Howard Cooke. Inmates from GP, Gun Court, Spanish Town and Fort Augusta all participated. The Governor General in support of the program said that he considered it a success despite the bad mouthing that it was getting from some quarters. At that time Reverence For Life was the main rehabilitation program in the institution. Inmates were highly praised by the communities that they visited for their involvement and commitment to the program.

After Commissioner Prescod left another inmate by the name of Andrew Peart, AKA 'Mampie' escaped. Mampie had spent many years in the St. Catherine District prison, where he became involved with a gang that called themselves 'Naw Live Fi Nothing.' This gang instigated a lot of violence and war in that institution. He was transferred from St. Catherine District prison to Gun Court on the advice of Colonel Prescod who believed that if he were placed in a more harmonious environment it might change his attitude and style. He became involved in many rehabilitation programs at Gun Court and within a short period of time he was sent on outside projects escorted by officers. Before long he was given a privilege pass to attend the funeral of one of his nephews. Following that he requested a weekend pass. This drew the attention of some officers who didn't agree that he should get that privilege. These officers along with some RFLF inmates felt that Mampie wasn't ready for a weekend pass and they opposed it. Other people influential in the running of the institution however used the weight of their office to ask the Acting Commissioner, Mr. Fearon, to grant the weekend pass for Mampie. Most officers frowned upon this and Mampie did not leave the Friday as was customary, but after much deliberation was sent out on the Saturday. He should have returned the following

Monday but he never come back. Because of this the program was shut down again.

The shift in the administration after Colonel Prescod left and a resurgence of the old way of thinking caused a new wave of anxiety. Inmates sought every opportunity to escape the administration of oppression and disregard for their lives. The other incident that prejudiced the eventual shut down of all RFLF outreach programs involved an inmate called 'Sutu John' who was out on a day release work project without any escort. Sutu John was an inmate who had been a part of the Reverence For Life movement from its inception. He was allowed to go out to work at a music studio each day by himself. On the same Monday evening that Mampie should have returned Sutu John was coming back into the institution when an inmate called out to him and told him that Mampie had not returned. On hearing that and fearing to lose all his privileges, Sutu John turned back from the gate and ran away. This news also caused two other inmates to run away from another work detail. That night an ex-inmate by the name of Fox went and found Sutu John in Spanish Town. He talked some reason into him and escorted Sutu John back to the institution.

Andrew Peart is still out and at large. Rumor has it that he is either in the United States or England. Because of his escape and his selfishness Minister Peter Phillips shut down the program permanently.

After Colonel Prescod, Reverence For Life programs continued successfully at GP under the stewardship of Superintendent Ramsey and still have a strong presence there.



GOOD ADVICE AND GOD SPEED

I was fortunate to get a second chance. My advice to all those who will come after me, to all the children of Jamaica and to children of the world in general is: Don't follow wrong doings; try to be focused even though life might be hard and things tough. Understand the consequences of your choices, for every choice has a price. There are a lot of bad influences that might look glamorous and appealing but try to think before you get involved. Realize that if you choose to take the wrong road you will invariably suffer the penalty and you might also lose your life. You will cause your family pain. Crime and violence is not the right way to go, it can only lead to prison or worse.

So my advice to you is: Focus on the positive; don't take the wrong direction or let people influence you to go astray; don't suffer the way that I suffered because of a few glitters that were offered to me. Try to be conscious and bear the burden until you pass through the darkness into the light. Don't let down your guards for one minute and don't let people with bad intentions use you for their conveniences. Take good counsel and support the weaker youths who need help. Be the best that you can be. **DON'T FOLLOW WRONGS.** It doesn't matter how hard life is, just keep the faith. In the end it will be better for you. Go to school and get an education. Knowledge is the key to life. It will help you to reach any goals that you set for yourself.

If I had my life to live over, I would do a lot of things differently. I would have kept up with my education and

pursued my sporting career. I would have stretched up to my fullest potential and lived my dream.

I spent almost twenty-two years inside the institution before being paroled on the 5th of April 2004. I went in at nineteen and came out at the age of forty-one. I wasted a lot of my youth in prison but probably God knows best. I was released from prison on the 16th of April 2004. That experience was something that I cannot explain even now. I felt elated, I felt alive and I felt great. It moved me to tears. I couldn't believe that I was being given the opportunity to leave the institution for good; I was getting my freedom at last. Even when I was told that I would be freed that Friday morning of April 16th I was still not convinced. I said to myself, "God you must know the reason why you chose to free me after so many years. I have no one to thank but you and my family who stuck by me over the years."

I awoke Friday morning after a fitful sleep. I was too eager to come out. I couldn't eat. All on my mind was coming out but I had to wait on the people who were in charge of my parole to release me. I waited until about twelve o'clock. By then I had bathed, put on new clothes, new shoes and was rapping with the other guys. I told them that they were not to give up hope but to keep the faith. "Unno use me as de example an believe sey your time will come one day if yuh keep de faith. No bodder get involved wid no almshouse inna de institution."

"Yeah man is a true ting."

"Attend school and get involve wid positive tings. Be a part of any good program in ya."

"Yeah, yuh done know sey a we dat."

"Unno fi put down de violence. Don't encourage war for if yuh do those tings then yuh won't get the opportunity dat me get."

"Is true mi brethren."

“Remember sey I had to humble myself; I had to tek all kind of insults and all kind of blame fi reach where I reach. If unno want to get through yuh will have to follow my footsteps. Just like unno used to believe in me, allow me to be the role model and believe that your time will come one day.

“Blessed, blessed,” they all said.

Eventually the warder took me to the office where I saw the lady from the parole board that had come to release me. I signed the papers for my release and was told that I could go. I kept looking behind me to see if someone would come to stop me. I said to myself: “Probably dem a go call mi back as mi reach de gate or probably dem naw go worry release mi.” A kind of fear was there but while I was being escorted to the prison gate, I heard the inmates calling to me: “Good luck Fines, walk good.”

“No bodder get involve wid no almshouse people out de. Jus stay pon de right.”

“No worry yuhself, mi a go right dis time,” I answered. “Me couldn’t tek another prison life again. Mi a do right by miself dis time.”

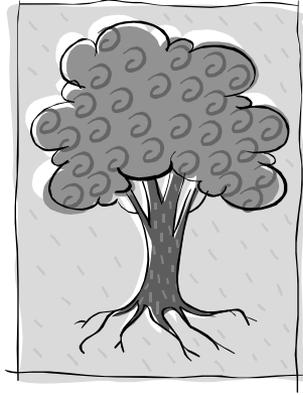
“Easy Fines, gwaan mi brethren an res good.”

“Don’t forget us. Wi a go tink bout you all de time.”

“Wi a depend pon yuh to live de right life. Wi heart an soul de wid yuh.”

“Blessed, blessed mi friend,” the men shouted cheering me on.

When I reached the gate I was overcome with mixed feelings. I didn’t know what to expect or how I would feel on the outside. Things had changed so much during my incarceration. The institution had been my home for almost twenty-two years and while the experiences were not all good, it was what I had become accustomed to. Change meant opening up myself to a new world and that was a little scary but I was ready.



REFERENCES

(1) Briefing Paper/ S. B. P. McCullogh '00

The Central Role of the Reverence for Life Foundation in the Inmate Rehabilitation and Human Resource Development Programs of the Department of Correctional Services

The Reverence for Life Foundation (RFLF): Origins and Organisational Composition

The Reverence for Life Foundation was founded by Mr. Desmond Green in 1994. The philosophy which underpins the activities of the RFLF has evolved from the life experiences of Mr. Green in his work as a psychologist over a period of 35 years in the United States and for the past 7 years in Jamaica.

A central principle of the RFLF is that building a strong sense of self worth and self esteem is the first step in achieving self respect and respect for others. All RFLF activities are designed to reinforce this principle. As part of the process of breaking down and counteracting prison stereotypes the RFLF replaces the descriptive term 'prisoner' with the title team player. All participants in the RFLF initiatives are therefore referred to as Team Players.

The RFLF is administered by and operates under a board of five directors with Mr. Desmond Green as Founder Director. Collectively the Board brings to the service of the RFLF skills and experience in a variety of disciplines which include psychology, human resource development, law, finance management and administration.

In summary, the mission of the RFLF is... *To Create a Culture of Life Affirming Values.*

In the context of the DCS initiatives, the long term aim is to,

To establish a human resource development philosophy, management structure, and organisational framework within the Department of Correctional Services, which will result in a working environment within which human resources can be fully developed and all the resources now available within the system, can be efficiently utilised.

This is a long term program for the transformation of hearts and minds which must embrace the complete DCS system.

Achievements in Rehabilitation and Human Resource Development

The involvement of the RFLF in the rehabilitation and human resource development program of the Department of Correctional Services started in 1995. To date, the main thrust of Foundation initiatives has been at the South Camp facility. A list of the RFLF activity groups now operating at the South Camp Facility with summaries of their respective activities, is presented as attachment I. In summary, 10 groups with specific cultural or human resource development/support interests and responsibilities are active. The total inmate population represented by these team player groups is approximately 215 out of a total population at South Camp of 240 inmates.

Support for the RFLF initiatives amongst the inmates is very strong and the Foundation activity groups are growing in number and membership. A considerable number of Department of Correctional Services (DCS), staff from the Commissioner downwards have become active supporters of the Foundation philosophy and approach to rehabilitation. However, many staff have yet to be convinced of the soundness and effectiveness of the philosophy which guides the rehabilitation process.

The RFLF has a very active community outreach program which seeks to spread the message of the Foundation philosophy into the wider Jamaican community by means of meetings and workshops organised and presented by RFLF team players¹. Various RFLF groups have featured in television programs, on the radio and in the print media.

The nut Reach Program has generated great public interest and the DCS has been overwhelmed by community requests for RFLF participation and services.

In summary, the impact of the Foundation rehabilitation and human resource development initiatives has been as follows:

- At the South Camp facility where the Foundation has been most active, violence amongst inmates which was prevalent before the intervention, has been practically eliminated. The beneficial effect of the RFLF philosophy is spreading from South Camp to other correctional centres by means of the out reach activities of the South Camp team player groups.
- The interest amongst inmates to make reparations for the damage which crime has caused in their communities, is growing. The Outreach Program has been enthusiastically endorsed by the public and there is an increasing community demand for the services offered by the team player groups.
- The Foundation philosophy is steadily spreading within the DCS system and significant numbers of DCS staff now identify with it. However, it must be said that enlightenment has not yet reached all.

The RFLF experience to date demonstrates that there is amongst the inmate population of the DCS a reservoir of human resource capability, energy and enthusiasm which is waiting to be tapped and put to constructive use.

The Role of Information Technology (IT), in the DCS Rehabilitation Program

Information technology has an important role to play in connection with three broadly defined aspects of the DCS Rehabilitation Program.

Progress Monitoring

Though most observers would recognise the effectiveness of RFLF rehabilitation interventions, little has been done in a formal way to put in place mechanisms for measuring the impact of what has been achieved. In this connection, the Harvard University Law Society has indicated in writing an interest in participating in setting up a progress monitoring unit. The Foundation is also developing a connection with Columbia University.

¹ RFLF team Players go out into the community as part of a regular program of visits with minimal DCS warden escort. While a handful of inmate participants in these visits have absconded, these have been relatively minor difficulties when compared with the strongly positive educational impact of the Outreach Program.

Education

An important feature of the rehabilitation process is that inmates (team players), should be provided with the opportunity to acquire an academic education and qualifications or tradesman skills which will in the first place provide a therapeutic focus while they serve out their sentence, and also equip them to achieve a fulfilled and normal life after their release.

Team players should be provided with educational opportunities and training in the discipline of their choice up to the level which is commensurate with their motivation and abilities. This implies that a high degree of flexibility must be built in to the educational program in order to cater for the range of educational needs which are likely to emerge. Some of these educational needs can be satisfied by developing linkages and partnerships with local educational institutions. However, the Program will be greatly strengthened and enhanced by the provision of facilities for computerised distance learning and access to the world wide web.

Communications and Public Relations

The rehabilitation processes which have been set in motion can be reinforced and consolidated by astute publicity. An important component of the publicity effort will be to change the stereotypic perceptions of rehabilitated prison inmates in the public consciousness. Taking a wider perspective, the image of Jamaica will be improved by publicising the RFLF rehabilitation initiatives and achievements at an international level. Access to electronic communication via the world wide web will facilitate such world wide publicity. Such access will also facilitate the development of partnerships and the interchange of ideas with international academic institutions and other interested organisations.

In 2000 The Correctional Services engaged the services of British consultant S. B. P. McCulloch to compile a research paper for the purpose of restructuring COSPROD (the Correctional Services Production department). The above is the section of McCulloch's briefing paper as it relates to the Reverence For Life program in the South Camp Correctional facility at that time.

(2)



MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, COMMERCE & TECHNOLOGY
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August 25, 2000

Colonel John Prescod
Commissioner of Corrections
Correctional Services
King Street
Kingston

Dear Colonel Prescod:

RE: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN REHABILITATION OF INMATES

Further to discussions in respect of the above, I am now in a position to provide some further details of the proposed project, and to formally request your support of the programme.

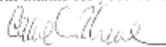
The attached document outlines some of the elements. You would note the interest of Harvard University, who would like to work in conjunction with the University of the West Indies in their research area. The questions posed will be relevant as the project gets underway.

Your permission to access information and relevant files would also be necessary, as we seek to document the rehabilitation model and use IT in the application. In that regard, I wish to confirm my role in respect of the Doctoral Studies (DBA) programme at Nova Southeastern University, and the work that I would wish to do with the inmates.

It is recommended that the Carl Rattray Human Resource Development College, staff college for the Correctional Services, along with Mr. Desmond Green of the Reverence For Life Foundation, take ownership of the programme and monitor the execution.

Once there is formal agreement to proceed, a work plan and a budget will be prepared, and the project formally submitted to the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Technology for approval. Memoranda of Understanding will have to be signed with Harvard University, the University of the West Indies, and Columbia University, in order to clearly define their role in the project.

With thanks for your consideration,


Camella Rhone
DIRECTOR GENERAL



AICTC/Rhone
1000.08
NTEC Inmates



MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, COMMERCE AND TECHNOLOGY
INTEC PROJECT
(COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT)
2000/2003

*An IT model for supporting successful
rehabilitation of inmates in the Correctional Services in Jamaica.*

In conjunction with
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES,
HARVARD UNIVERSITY,
and the
THE REVERENCE FOR LIFE FOUNDATION,

Introduction

The project will be in support of a rehabilitation program for criminal offenders who are serving out sentences of varying duration up to life. Information Technology (IT) would be used as an enabler in the process.

IT would be the vehicle for training, retraining, creative pursuit, legal defense, and community outreach, and to empower the inmates, as useful citizens. The ultimate goal is to speed up and enhance the change process to develop citizens who are useful to society, from within as well as outside the walls of the Correctional Services. IT would provide inmates with bankable employment skills during incarceration (and it provides also welcome anonymity), and a growth path for those who are released.

Discussions with inmates have indicated a desire for -

1. Retraining in basic education skills
2. Training in computer repairs to technical certification
3. Training in creative applications and media technology
4. Computer programming skills and CAD/CAM technology

The technology could further be used in administrative management of the inmates, and to track their growth towards rehabilitation.

All inmates in the rehabilitation programme, have expressed a wish to benefit from exposure to the technology. IT could become in the future, a most potent device for control with one sanction being the more humane, "electronic solitary", for example, denial of password for a time, or tailored exclusions. The potential for electronic rewards and punishments may also prevent potential abuse of the use of the technology.

The interest of Harvard University is to be noted. That Universities has expressed interest in developing a research project, facilitated by information technology.

The project aims to build on the successful rehabilitation programme established by Mr. Desmond Green, of the Reverence for Life Foundation (RLF). The leadership and teambuilding practises of the RLF, improve the self worth of inmates within the organisation, resulting in a motivation to change behaviour. The 250 inmates at the South Camp Adult Correctional Centre are part of the project. A total of three thousand (3000) Tower Street and Spanish Town inmates have made formal requests to be on the programme. The medium of information technology will provide the vehicle for training and rehabilitation in these as well as the Juvenile Correctional Centre and the Women's Centre at Fort Augusta

It is expected that the Carl Rattray Human Resource Development College, the staff training college for officers of the Correctional Services, along with the Reverence for Life Foundation, will take ownership of the project.

Background

During the past two decades, Jamaica has been faced with a rising prison population, as well as a surging crime rate (Jamaica Constabulary Force Statistics, JCN Network Bulletin, (2000)). Nationally and internationally, interest in alternatives to incarceration has been high, and rehabilitation programmes, have found favour in response to the overcrowding problem in the prisons. The high level of crime as well as the large number of persons who have passed through or are still a part of the prison system, have an undeniable social impact on the economic development of Jamaica. Jamaica, an island state with a population of approximately 2.5 Million, is heavily dependent on Tourism as well as its human resource services, for economic stability. All efforts must be made to ensure that the country makes the most of its human resource.

The RLF rehabilitation programme was introduced in the prison system in Jamaica in 1996, through training of Correctional Service Officers at the Carl Rattray Human Resource Development College. The aim was to inculcate in the supervisors a new way of managing the inmates. Supervisors were to be the leaders in guiding inmates in finding self worth and to enable them to spiritually redirect their life attitudes in a more lasting support of their rehabilitation. The RFL concept is based in social-therapeutic treatment. Of the multitude of criminological theories on crime and recidivism, social therapy uses mostly psychology-oriented ones, the focus being in particular on the tangible person and personality of the inmate as well as on his immediate social environment (Ortmann, Rudiger, 2000).

The correctional officers did not take up the challenge, and the status quo remained until two years ago when eleven inmates of the South Camp Correctional Facility, under the persistent leadership of one, established the first core group and the Reverence For Life Foundation was formed. The principles of the RLF integrated the four prominent theories of motivation (Maslow, Alderfer, Hertzberg, McClelland), incorporated three basic human needs – security, social systems and personal growth, with a heavy emphasis on self actualisation, personal system goals, competencies, beliefs and values to strengthen self-worth and esteem. Inmates are encouraged to share their strengths with others in their community.

Inmates work as highly focussed teams in the pursuit of specific activities in which they have interest. They have the shared vision of making the South Camp Centre into a model rehabilitation institution. They have taken this on as their responsibility in the face of

resistance from some warders. They are guided by the knowledge that they are using their diverse talents to work at supporting their personal growth and development, and hold themselves accountable for building the trust necessary in support of their rehabilitation objectives.

They further shared, that when they are confined, the environment forced a measure of survival and reckoning with oneself. In that situation they were forced to take a good look at themselves. They all wanted to better their position, but if they could not change their surroundings, all that was left to change was themselves, and the perception they had of their environment. They had to change the nature of what a prison was.

Significance of IT in the Study

Treatment advocates recognize that not all rehabilitation programs are equally effective. The task for researchers and practitioners is to identify the conditions associated with effective rehabilitation. The tangible result of the RLF project is a furlough and mentoring programme, which is the final step in the rehabilitation. Inmates participate in one of several teams, focussed on activities, which exploit their talents - singing, drama, music, mentoring and ministering. They choose their activities and name the teams to reflect that focus. Teams include for example – the Suns of God, Gospel Choir, Transformational Unit, God Messengers, Righteous Reggae Vibrations, Students Expressing Truth (SET), Council of Elders, Corner Youth Ministry. Their activities are directed at giving back to their community, and as such they practice within the closed community of the Centre, and most critical to their rehabilitation, return to the community to entertain, to mentor and to minister. The result has been a growth in the level of trust in the inmates, and their positive re-socialisation, as evidenced by the increasing number of inmates who are allowed out on such activities as well as those who are allowed to visit family on day and weekend furlough passes.

The measure of the success of the programme has been the growing number of inmates who are participating voluntarily. The initial number of eleven inmates in one team, have grown to one hundred and eighty-five active participants and twelve teams, representing more than seventy five percent of the number of inmates at the South Camp Centre. In addition, a formal request to the Commissioner of Prisons, has been made by the three thousand inmates of the other two maximum security Correctional Centres, for the programme to be implemented in these facilities.

The weakness of the programme is reflected in the absence of resources to ensure that it reaches as wide a cross-section as possible. There has been to date no formal documentation or assessment related to tracking the degree of its success. It is reported that for most inmates on the programme sentences have been shortened and parole

granted at a faster rate than for prisoners not on the programme. This cannot be substantiated, as administrators are not required to track and record information on the prisoners who are or have been on the programme, or to document change in prisoner attitude and the level of recidivism.

The application of IT will assist in this regard. IT will play a supportive role in a process of documentation and study. The programme, which has come a long way without documentation, will be facilitated by supplying appropriate electronic equipment and organizational advice, both to the RLF leadership and to the prison administration with which the RLF leadership is working very closely. The process of studying it will give it legitimacy and might regularize the programme with the aim of replication.

CONCLUSION

The behavioural principles identified as important motivational characteristics in the existing process are: (1) challenging the process, (2) inspiring a shared vision, (3) enabling others to act, (4) modeling the way, and (5) encouraging personal development

The SUNS of GOD Gospel Choir grew out of one such set of experiences. This team sings professionally at concerts all over the island. They are allowed to sing at concerts with minimal supervision and then return to the Correctional facility which they have shaped as their home. They enjoy the trust of their warders, and the respect of their fellow inmates. They mentor in their communities and support the development of other inmates in the institution.

Some of them have spent years on death row. They have had their sentences commuted to life with a chance of early parole for good behaviour.

The study will seek to validate the RLF model in the first instance and seek to add value to that model, through Information Technology applications in the other.

The Information Technology project will support the rehabilitation process, enable inmates in their development in the following ways -

1. Education and retraining through distance learning modalities. The education and retraining will be done at several levels -
 - Basic teaching for inmates who have not acquired the basic tools of learning - reading, writing and mathematics.
 - Retraining of inmates in IT skills, to provide an avenue for employment inside as well as on release from prison

-
2. Enable the participation of our international partners, using the vehicle of the internet for collaboration. Harvard University, through The Berkman Center, the Criminal Justice Institute and the Prison Legal Assistance Project at Harvard Law School have expressed interest in becoming involved in the study and, also in the documentation of the existing RLF program (Please see the attached extract of an e-mail correspondence in that regard). The undertaking by Harvard University is to document and study the program, through the introduction and application of information technology in a supportive role. The focus will be on the role of information technology on supporting the documentation and study of the existing program. The plan would establish an internet-based strategy for assembling and presenting data, and overall, for organizing and monitoring progress of the study

The attached extract in that regard is explanatory.

C. Rhone
2000/08

Attachment/

MICT/C: Rhone
2000/08
INTEC: Inmates

Extract from an E-mail Correspondence of August 27 2000

Professor Charles Nesson of the Berkman Centre for Internet and Society, Harvard University, to Mrs. Camella Rhone, Director General, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Technology

.... The more I learn about the RLF program, the more extraordinary and worthy of study it sounds. It is not only a successfully functioning furlough program, but also a program that seems to have been generated by inmates. It has overcome substantial opposition from warders, has expanded both in numbers and scope of activities, and now seems on the verge of expanding to other prisons. This is certainly a program that deserves to be documented and understood.

How information technology fits into the picture is a separate question. I can see infotech playing a supportive role in a process of documentation and study. It is remarkable that the program has come so far without documentation. There must be a considerable amount of record-keeping in some form – records of who is in which group, who is authorized to leave on furlough, when, for how long, time of return; schedules of when teams are able to gather, to rehearse, to perform, some sort of budget control on resources allocated for materials, transportation, communication; some record of what the leadership structure is and who is in charge. It may be that information about the program is distributed and needs to be brought together and centrally organized in order to make it accessible. It seems certainly to be the case that much information about the program will have to be gathered in the first instance. Such a process could well be facilitated by supplying appropriate electronic equipment and organizational advice both to the RLF leadership and to the prison administration with which the RLF leadership must be working very closely. This is the project with which the Berkman Center, the Criminal Justice Institute and the Prison Legal Assistance Project at Harvard Law School could become involved -- a study of the existing RLF program. Although the process of studying it might change it in some respects, might for example give it greater visibility and might regularize parts of the program by the mere act of documenting them, our objective would nonetheless be to study the program, not to change it.

The undertaking to document and study the program will involve us in introducing and using information technology in a supportive role. This is very different from a proposal to introduce computers and Internet

MICT/C. Rhone
2000/08
INTEC Inmates

into the prison for the purpose of running a new program of distance education with the prisoners. For a number of reasons we are not prepared to do this. Such a program would become a whole new project in itself, and one that is unlikely to succeed. The existing RLF programs are easily accessible and low-tech, grounded in music, drama and ministry, and suited to building community involvement and spirit. Computer training through distance education seems at the opposite extreme, difficult to do hands-on, even more difficult to do at a distance, and not an enterprise likely to embrace a wide audience. There are very few models of it succeeding even in the most conducive circumstances, and the skills it seeks to inculcate are typically individual. My biggest concern is that starting a program in which learning computers is the focus would actually undermine the existing RLF program rather than enhance it.

My suggestion, then, is that we eliminate the distance learning element from the draft proposal and focus the role of information technology on supporting the documentation and study of the existing program. A next step would be to assemble a documentation and assessment team, and to organize a site visit, out of which would come a specific plan. This plan would include an information technology component. It would identify what documentation and assessment tasks need to be done, who would do them, what infotech resources would assist them, and how the skill training to use them could be delivered. It would establish an internet-based strategy for assembling and presenting data, and overall, for organizing and monitoring progress of the study.

Conducting this study will require cooperation from prison authorities as well as RLF inmates. It seems highly likely that offering infotech resources would be useful in obtaining this cooperation. But, on this vision, the role of technology would be ancillary and supportive, not the main focus....'

Copy of a document addressed to Colonel John Prescod, Commissioner of Corrections from Mrs. Camella Rhone, Director General in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Technology, Jamaica, outlining an IT model for supporting successful rehabilitation of inmates in the Correctional Services in Jamaica in conjunction with The University of the West Indies, Harvard University and the Reverence For Life Foundation. This copy was sent to Mr. Desmond Green, Founder of the Reverence For Life Foundation.

(3)

SPEECH GIVEN BY JOHN BROWN

(At the first anniversary of the official movement of the Reverence For Life program in the Tower Street Adult Correctional Center – (General Penitentiary or GP). Desmond Green however, had already planted the seed of the Reverence For Life culture in that institution from as early as 1998.)

TITLE: RETROSPECT

(John Brown was the General Secretary of the Reverence For Life Program at Tower Street for the first year. Some names have been changed where necessary in this article.)

Once upon a time not long ago the Tower Street Adult Correctional Center was like a jungle where only the strong survived. Everything that was bad was associated to this institution. We stepped over those who were less fortunate, we inflicted pain and wounds and caused even death to those who we perceived to be our enemies. Our culture and lifestyle was mainly to create mayhem among each other. We forgot that we are all one under God.

As the year 2000 arrived, people around the world were celebrating the new millennium and making new resolutions but at GP (General Penitentiary - another name for the Tower Street Adult Correctional Center) nothing changed. For the first month eighteen inmates were treated at the institution's hospital for stab wounds and other injuries. On February 22, 2000 we saw our first fatality, when Rudolph Hylton was found with multiple stab wounds. He died on the spot. This incident sparked a new wave of violence within these walls. By the end of March thirty-nine more inmates were treated at the internal clinic, and a lesser number taken to the Kingston Public

Hospital. In that period two more inmates died, one was found with his throat slashed, the other was beaten to death. While this violence was creating havoc inside the institution a section of society was crying out for their loved ones who were incarcerated.

On March 3 the commissioner, Col. John Prescod, held a meeting inside the institution where he asked for two inmates from all the troubled sections to attend. His aim was to obtain peace between the warring factions. After this meeting the commissioner called for an amnesty. He asked for all weapons to be brought in; however, this plan did not work. The weapons remained in the hands of the perpetrators and the violence continued. While all this mayhem was taking place, there was a small group of peer counselors who were working assiduously to put an end to the madness. The institution's psychiatrist and his team trained these counselors. As counselors, one of our assets was to solve problems without using violence.

Our brothers at the South Camp Rehabilitation Center were very disturbed by the news that was coming out of GP. With the blessing of the commissioner and Mr. Desmond Green, Founder of the Reverence For Life Foundation, seventeen inmates from South Camp were invited to GP on March 3 to discuss the problems we were having here and to find solutions to solve them. After the visit Mr. Green and some of the teammates (inmates) from South Camp visited us over a five-day period. Between those five days Mr. Green and his team beseeched us that fighting each other was not the way forward. They asked us to form a group like the one at South Camp called the Reverence For Life Foundation (RFLF). They said this organization could lead us toward rehabilitation.

While there was a lot of debating going on about how to put together a Tower Street RFLF group, the peer counselors were busy putting the plan into action. As counselors we believe that if the teammates get something to occupy their time, the wave of crime would be cut drastically. A small group approached the Superintendent and asked for a few cases of exercise books and pencils. We also informed him of the activities we were about to embark on. He gave us the items without delay. The counselors then came out in force armed with exercise books and pencils. We targeted the troubled sections first. Our message was simple; crime and violence cannot pay; Education is the way.

Something peculiar happened one weekend. We were speaking to some teammates on the remand section, when a young man asked for a book and a pencil. When we handed them to him, he gave us a 24-inch homemade jammer. We called the superintendent and handed it over to him. We did not stop with just the books and the pencils. We as counselors along with a consensus of teammates came together, got ply board and black paint that we used to make black boards. We also sought out teachers from various sections who had the ability to teach. We then placed black boards on 99% of the sections. Our effort put a brake on the wave of violence but not completely.

When I see the rate of the mentally ill that are being admitted in this institution I can only come to one conclusion, that some judges in this county are using the penal institutions as a dumping ground for the mentally ill. Within three days, twelve mentally ill inmates were sent from one court to this institution. They were from the Mandeville RM Court, saying they are unfit to plea. When we have a system that holds a mentally ill person in prison for over ten years under the guise

that they are unfit to plea, something is wrong with that system.

This organization is calling on the relevant authorities to place these sick people in a home where they can be cared for by trained staff and not be dumped in institutions like this because they are poor. As the days go by, social groups, churches and government agencies are crying out for peace, but how can there be peace when there is no justice? The security forces physically abuse the young and the elderly, they teargas our children. They beat Michael to death.

If you are poor and live in this country, you can find yourself behind bars today because some police officer didn't have a good night last night. When some inmates relate their cases to you, you wonder how some judges' sleep at night. All these sayings about giving the accused the benefit of the doubt do not apply to the poor. Because there are two sets of law books in this country, one for the rich and one for the poor.

In our society justice is a luxury that can only be afforded by a few. This organization believes in equal rights and justice for all. We believe each individual deserves a second chance to prove his or her self. Last June when fifteen of us went to Ranny Williams Center, many warders placed bets that some of us wouldn't return because we went out as ambassadors for this organization (RFLF). We returned because we have respect for ourselves and respect for the authority.

I want to congratulate all members of the executive for the tremendous work they have been doing. I want to say well done to Mr. R. Brown, Mr. C. Murray and all the Guiding Angels. I want to big up all the members and supporters of the Reverence For Life Foundation. I want to say a big thank you to Mr. Owen Pearson from Roots FM, to Princess M and Mr. Errol L. I must say special thank you to two people; first our

former Chairman, Mr. Howard Martin, and the one and only Mrs. L. F-B, even on her sick bed her mind is on her brothers and her sons in this institution. May God bless you Mrs. B always.

On March 25, 2000, the newly formed executive met with a group of positive thinking inmates led by Mr. D B, and Mr. Raymond B. They came up with an idea that the executive endorsed. This idea was to form a body called the Guiding Angels. This group would require five influential teammates from each section. Their duty is to (1) monitor their respective sections, (2) if there is an altercation they should squash it before it becomes physical, (3) if any weapons come into play they should be seized and handed over to the authorities.

This Guiding Angel group consists of ninety-nine. They take their duties seriously and go about it without fear. As the weeks turned into months more weapons were seized. The word was out that no one is to be seen with a weapon. Little by little the institution became a place where inmates could walk around freely again. Yes we were called warders and police but we believe what we were doing was for the good of every individual in this institution.

We decided that we would keep our Guiding Angels and Executive meetings on alternate Saturdays. Everyone knew we were embarking on a dangerous path. There was always an element within the institution that saw us as obstacles and determined to see us fail by any means, so much so that on 31/3/2000, two executive members were attacked and wounded while carrying out their duties. One was treated in the institution but the other was admitted at the KPH where he received eight stitches to his head.

On April 1, 2000 Commissioner Prescod called our executive members to attend a meeting with him and the superintendent. At the meeting the commissioner congratulated us on the bold steps we had taken. He gave us his assurance that he would assist us in any way possible. He also stated that if we maintained a level of calmness in the institution we would see positive changes towards rehabilitation in the near future. The executive members decided that one of the first aims was to sensitize the prison population of what RFLF is all about. Therefore we formulated a plan and approached the superintendent for his approval. After he gave us the green light we prepared inspiring and motivational speeches. We then visited twelve sections with a public address system and spoke to the population on various topics. At the end of a five-day campaign that ran from May 28 to June 1, we estimate that a total of 60% of the population actually listened to our presentations.

We then implemented a registration system, where inmates interested could register to become members of the organization. Our second aim was for all registered members to form groups. On April 4 our first group was launched. It was called the Suns of God Gospel Choir, now changed to the God Sons. This choir started out with thirty members, now reduced to sixteen. This group rose to be the most professional within the institution. Presently there are ten groups under the banner of Reverence For Life. We have gospel, reggae, DJ, drama. Etc.

On June 4, history was created when fifteen executive members from this institution were invited to a gospel concert at the Ranny Williams Entertainment Center. Fourteen from this number were ex-death row teammates, teammates who had never been to a social event for up to twenty-two years. But with the confidence that the commissioner placed in us we

were able to attend this function and came out with flying colors.

After this positive result, a large number of teammates decided that this organization was going places; therefore we saw a sharp increase in membership. Through hard work and determination of the members of this organization we saw the rate of crime and violence reduced to a level, where both inmates and the authority are pleased. As a result on July 4 one teammate was given the privilege of a weekend pass. One month later on August 4 six inmates, three of whom are executive members including yours truly, were given the opportunity to spend the weekend with our loved ones. To date approximately fifty teammates benefited from this weekend program. On July 26 we held our first gospel concert under the RFLF banner. Our special guest was the number one gospel group in the Caribbean, the famous Grace Thrillers.

While we were celebrating the success as a young organization, a small but violent and rebellious group of teammates were activating their plan of destruction. On September 28 to our surprise and dismay one of our Guiding Angel's Mr. Joseph Christie was ambushed and killed. This brought another wave of violence and gloom not only on the organization but also over the entire institution.

Within twelve days two more inmates were killed and a larger number wounded and hospitalized. Teammates were afraid once again to move freely from section to section. It is normal in cases like these for people to be intimidated and withdraw from their day-to-day activity or even from the organization that was under siege. But the majority of the executive members were determined to overcome evil with good.

We called a number of emergency meetings where we worked out strategies to counteract the plans of those determined to maintain the negative culture and lifestyle of the past. We invited the superintendent and the Major of the army to one of our meetings. There we made suggestions and recommendations to them. The authority and we as inmates worked in tandem to put a stoppage to the nonsense that was taking place in our institution. It was noticeable that after these meetings and with renewed effort by the authorities, the crime rate went down to zero within one month.

We then called a general meeting where we informed our members that this organization would not just disappear or bow under pressure, we will move forward and get even stronger than before. At this meeting the superintendent informed us of an event in November, called Correctional Services Week and inmates from all penal institutions were invited. He stressed that we had to maintain a level of calmness if we wanted to attend this function. We needed this chance to demonstrate our talent at the highest level therefore we activated all our groups to prepare for that function.

There was a special woman who had been working with us since July, she coordinated our July concert and coordinated the entertainment segment of the Correctional Week celebration, and her name is Mrs. LFB. Mrs. LFB has been assisting our teammates at South Camp and decided to share some of her time and wealth of knowledge with us. She was here two to three times per week assisting us with our rehearsals.

On November 8 this organization created history again, when the authority headed by the commissioner himself allowed forty-seven of us to attend and perform at the Ranny Williams Entertainment Center. At this function our performance was

second to none. We didn't only surprise our audience with the wealth of talent that we possess, but our behavior was exceptional and this led to an invitation for the God Sons Gospel Choir to perform at a concert on December 10th. At this function the God Sons thrilled the hearts of its audience beyond expectation.

With the assistance of Food For The Poor and Mr. Mahfood himself, we were able to refurbish an old building and convert it into one of the best band rooms in a penal institution in Jamaica. As a result on January 5, 2001, representatives of Food For The Poor handed over state of the art band equipment worth over 1.6 million dollars to us. As the year 2001 arrived we decided that we had to find something to occupy the time of the teammates. The Chairman came up with a plan that was backed by the executive and endorsed by Superintendent X. This plan was to start a football competition. This competition would not be as it normally was in previous years. Our aim was to obtain sponsors for the competition. On 19/1/2001 we welcomed our first set of sponsors who brought us football gears and technical assistance. We received sponsorship from the following companies and individuals: Solid Agency, Western Sports, Traffic Jam Sound System, Presidential Click, Victoria Place, Crystal Night Club, Jade Lee Promotions, Errol Leys, Clement Ebanks and Mr. Bissy Campbell.

On January 21 we kicked off our 'One Love Football Competition.' We created history again when our game was broadcast delayed on Roots 96.1 FM, the sponsors were allowed to watch their teams play. On February 19, 2001, six executive members were allowed to assist in the refurbishing of a building at 157 Windward Road. This building will house the head quarters of the RFLF national and international.

As we complete our first year as an organization, it is a short time, but it was an up hill task, nothing came easy. Like any great organization, we expect the unexpected; we know our weaknesses and our strengths. We acknowledge our limitations. We grieve and mourn for those who died for the cause; today we congratulate those who shed their blood and still stand for this organization believing there is no way back for those who are moving forward.

In my conclusion I will make a short summary. I must congratulate Mr. Desmond Green for introducing Reverence For Life to us. Without this organization, this institution would continue on its path of destruction. But why did our brothers adopt this antisocial behavior and act as if it is the normal thing to do? I am no psychiatrist but I will share a few facts that I know enhance these behaviors. They are poverty, illiteracy and over crowding. Seventy percent of these inmates came from inner city communities, where poverty is the order of the day and survival is the name of the game. Eighty percent of these inmates are illiterate. Combine the above with a lot of idle hands with nothing to do, followed by frustration, depression, anger and stress and any psychiatrist can tell you that the above mentioned can cultivate multiple personality disorders.

There is a saying that 'where there is no vision the people perish.' It took the executive of this organization, to put in place the machinery to revolutionize the minds of the teammates and teach them that no one gains from these barbaric actions.

I must also congratulate Dr. George Leveridge and his medical team for taking the time out to teach us the basic skills of counseling. With this knowledge we can help our self and assist others. When we as peer counselors and other well thinking teammates spearhead the move to educate the inmates

on ninety-nine percent of the sections, it was not our duty. That was the duty of the authority but here is where we live and we need an environment where we can exist in peace and not wondering as the moments go by, if I will be the next one to die. Therefore we took the initiative to show the authority that as teammates we can do what they should be doing.

The fact is that no one seems to be learning. When there is an uprising in the inner city community the authorities send in more police and soldiers with their guns and ammunitions. Likewise in the prisons, they don't comprehend that fighting fire with fire is not working anymore. I am saying to the authorities out there in society, send back the soldiers to their barracks and educate the youths. Create jobs for the unemployed and eradicate poverty and illiteracy, then and only then will we see the decrease in crime and violence, because there will be hope to learn, hope to earn and hope to put food on their tables.

In the penal institutions I believe the commissioner was given basket to carry water. The evidence is right here; over 1,300 inmates in this institution, yet we have over 1,000 with nothing to do with their time. RFLF is asking the powers that be to implement programs that when an inmate completes his sentence he will not only walk through the gate a free man, but also will have a skill of his choice to better himself and be an asset to his community.

I know that the commissioner is for rehabilitation one hundred percent but some of his subordinates think the opposite. Some warders believe inmates should remain illiterate and dumb because some of them get personal satisfaction from inflicting pain and wounds upon inmates with their baton stick, but RFLF says enough is enough, we must eradicate that culture.

I must say a big thank you to all correctional officers from all ranks that stood for and support rehabilitation. You know yourselves and we know you and we appreciate your efforts, but I must mention one name, Staff Officer X; Sir, you are a beacon among your peers, RFLF will never let you down.

To all the warders who hate rehabilitation, I say to you, you need to be rehabilitated. Some people in society believe when a person is charged with a crime they should be put in a box and the keys thrown away. They are so short sighted that they don't realize that the person that is convicted today, more than likely has a date to return to society. Rehabilitation does not only help an inmate to reform; it helps the community to which he returns. If a person was a thief or a murderer in his community, and he comes to an institution and spends five to fifteen years and leaves as a mason, plumber, or carpenter, you tell me who benefits; not only him but also the community as a whole.

I must pay tribute to our commissioner, Col. Prescod, for his effort towards rehabilitation; he has demonstrated that if we trust ourselves he will trust us also. Sir, you have a big heart and we all thank you for the stand you took. Lot of thanks to Mr. Ferdinand Mahfood and Food For The Poor, for this lovely building and a wonderful band and also for the chairs you are sitting on.

(John Brown was released from GP in 2001 and is a free man today. The Reverence For Life Foundation wishes to thank the General Secretary and the entire teammate population of Tower Street and South Camp for their tireless work in changing the culture of violence in the institutions to one of reverence for life. We would like to encourage teammates in all institutions to keep the faith and press on to the greater goal of wholeness and personal empowerment.)

(4)

REVERENCE FOR LIFE © 1993 Desmond Green
FLAGSHIP PROJECT IN JAMAICA

- South Camp Rehabilitation Center (Gun Court)

Mr. Desmond Green introduced the Reverence For Life program unofficially within the Department of Correctional Services in 1994. The program was officially launched in 1996 and the South Camp Rehabilitation Center carried this beacon of light to other Penal Institutions and out into the wider Jamaican community.

In 2000 Mrs. Camella Rhone in her capacity of Director General in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Technology (Jamaica) introduced the Reverence For Life philosophy to Harvard's Berkman Center. Professor Charles Nesson of Harvard saw this as a great opportunity to use information technology to amplify the RFLF processes described to him by Mrs. Rhone and confirmed by Col. John Prescod.

A 20-member research team, headed by Professors Charles Nesson and Charles Ogletree of Harvard University came to Jamaica to look at the Reverence For Life rehabilitation program in two of Jamaica's maximum-security prisons.

Ten groups with specific cultural or human resource development/support interests and responsibilities were active at South Camp. The total inmate population represented by these groups was approximately 215 out of a total population of 240 at that institution (approximate estimate given for the year 2000).

A central principle of the RFLF program is that building a strong sense of self-worth is the first step in achieving self-respect and respect for others. All RFLF activities are designed to reinforce this principle. In support of this program RFLF supplied reading material to inmates that was inspirational, motivational and formed a framework to substantiate the RFLF initiative. In addition to the reading material the foundation issued "T" shirts with the Reverence For Life logo that reinforced the message and helped to build a positive identity.

Results

The tangible result of the RFLF project was a furlough and mentoring program, which is the final step in rehabilitation. Teammates participated in one of several teams, focused on activities, which exploited their talents – singing, drama, music, mentoring and ministering. Teammates worked as highly focused groups in the pursuit of specific activities in which they have interest. Teams included – the Suns of God Gospel Choir, The Transformational Unit, God Messengers, Righteous Reggae Vibrations, Students Expressing Truth (SET), Council of Elders, and Corner Youth Ministry. Their activities were directed at giving back to their community, and as such they practiced within the closed community of the Center, and most critical to their rehabilitation, returned to their communities to entertain, mentor and minister. This resulted in a growth in the level of trust in the teammates, and their positive re-socialization, as evidenced by the increasing number of teammates allowed out on such activities as well as those who were allowed to visit family on day and weekend furlough passes.

Growing number of teammates participated voluntarily in the program. The initial number of eleven teammates in one team

at the South Camp rehabilitation facility grew to two hundred and fifteen active participants and twelve teams, representing more than eighty-nine percent of the number of teammates there in 2000. In addition, a formal request to the Commissioner of Corrections was made by the three thousand inmates of the other two maximum security Correctional Centers, for the RFL program to be implemented in their respective facilities. As a follow up, RFLF began and progressed with an extension of the program at both Tower Street and Spanish Town maximum-security institutions.

For most teammates on the program, sentences were shortened and parole granted at a faster rate than for prisoners not on the program. Most importantly, the rate of recidivism was reduced from 90% to 30 % between 1995 and 2001.

CONCLUSION

The behavioral principles identified as important motivational characteristics in the existing process are: (1) challenging the old process, (2) inspiring a new shared vision, (3) enabling others to act responsibly, (4) modeling the way, and (5) encouraging personal empowerment.

The Suns of God Gospel Choir grew out of these experiences. This team sang professionally at concerts all over the island in the early days before the lock down of the outreach programs. They enjoyed the trust of their warders, and the respect of their fellow teammates. They mentored in their communities and supported the development of other teammates in the institution. Some of these men spent years on death row and have now had their sentences commuted to life with a chance of early parole for good behavior.

(5)

**REVERENCE FOR LIFE © Desmond Green 1993
– A DEFINITION**

Reverence For Life is a culture, which recognizes the sanctity of all life and includes everyone irrespective of his/her personal or world-view. It casts no judgment, it throws no blame, and it projects no guilt. Its nature is UNITY through the understanding of the self and the achievements of self-consciousness.

Reverence For Life is not rooted in dogma. It is a culture based more on practice than on creeds. It is an attitude of honoring life at its deepest levels and in all of its forms. Every aspect of creation has within it its own spark of the Divine Life. Reverence is the acceptance of Life as the out picturing of this spark and is therefore of Divine value. Through reverence we honor ourselves as we understand our interconnectedness with the entire universe and perceive ourselves as being one with the mineral, plant and animal Kingdoms. An attitude of reverence accepts our lives as sacred and accepts every living creature as being equally sacred. The essence of Reverence For Life is outlined in the manual 'PASSPORT TO A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE,' a 7-step practice of conscious deep breathing, positive self-talk, nutritious diet, regular exercise, clear purpose for living, unconditional self-acceptance and a spirit of generosity.

(6)

AFFIRMATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Affirmational Psychology is the language and practice that fuels Reverence For Life. It is the Art and Science of maintaining conscious mutually beneficial relationships between living energy systems. It is the field of study, which calls the human family, to order and poses critical questions concerning the manner in which we have conducted our affairs to date. It impacts on the personal and universal quality of life and is equally significant to all at once. Affirmational Psychology as a discipline proposes not only unlimited opportunities for self-actualization and environmental understanding, but also provides a framework to develop personal and interpersonal communication tools and skills, which are both workable and transferable.

The principles being presented for identifying and affirming the all-pervading intelligence are contained in the term "Affirmational Psychology." These are the factors, which tenderize tough science and likewise toughen tender arts. It is the explorations of those inherent factors, which generate and facilitate relationships between pre-discernible organisms and mighty galaxies as well as unifying energies with invisible cords of time in space. Emergent also will be the imperative most of all to identify and present the perceptual tools and emotional skills necessary to prove the study beneficial both at the individual and the collective levels.

The function of the Arts in Affirmational Psychology is its imperative to maintain nurturing cultural tenets and identification with Religious, Psychological and Philosophical schools of thought, which unify living energy systems.

Affirmational Psychology evaluates whether our emphases, both in the Arts and Sciences, do as much to fragment or unify our world. Here it would be a matter of exploring to what extent the heart and the head perceive their mutuality and are therefore, ready to transmute their long held perception of behavior patterns into life sustaining partnerships for the benefit of all.

We examine schools of thought and their historical efforts to provide conscious direction and guidance to human behavior thereby determining personal and collective attitudes. As Affirmational Psychology addresses the resultant psychological and physical waste sites brought about by the individual and collective non-accountability attitudes, its place as an authentic discipline and mission as a restorer of sanity to academia increases. We examine personal and collective accountability for the conditions of our physical as well as emotional environments with the aim of linking them in cause and effect cycles.

We explore and affirm the Science in Affirmational Psychology as the technological advances of humans to repeat the relational patterns, which abound in nature and to reiterate the intelligent relationships which link, all living energy systems. In this manner, we seek to concur with the rest of life that both the physical sciences and the liberal arts are indivisible and vary neither in their content nor intentions, but only in their respective modes of communicating their observations of the common phenomenon of living energy systems. Affirmational Psychology is perhaps the new forum from which a more relevant view of dynamic living will emerge. In it the perceptual and emotional tools needed to facilitate personal and collective understanding of present day living can be more vigorously forged and nurtured.

I believe that through this discipline, we will grasp more clearly the significance of the elements of choice we exercise in determining the quality of our environments.

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY MIRRORS AFFIRMATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AS A REPLICATION OF OUR OWN BIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

Ø Divine Intelligence burns images into biochips called cells, which we call concepts and perceptions, and stores them in recall stations from which they function as habits or attitudes.

Ø All living organisms can be likened to Biochips

Ø Divine Intelligence, as the given data base of all biological and technological energy systems, invites full affirmation from all living creatures; as human beings we carry out this necessity through the exercise of faith and works. In fact, faith is only the affirmation of what we already know and how we are conducting our affairs in accordance with its laws.

Ø Nature is the original power source and living database of all its creatures or organic terminals. Earth and its activities or its computing capabilities is only being copied, simulated, or duplicated by computer technology.

Ø Technology

The language employed in the computer technology is easily transferable to describe the behavior of living organisms; for instance, electricity is accepted as the given power source which gives a computer terminal its capability to process data. The same electricity or energy is the power source, which gives living organisms their individual and collective capabilities to create and duplicate themselves.

Ø In nature's schema however, the ultimate database is light, which activates itself and ignites all processes. This light or intelligence is (the God designate) called by many names throughout literature.

Ø the comparisons in the nature of computer language are easily seen if we call each living organism, living computer chips. These living chips differ only to the extent that they are self activated and operated. They also access their database or light source through their self-initiated intelligence. Humankind operates in the same way and the human brain is nature's ultimate computer terminal.

Ø Human beings as living computer terminals access the cosmos or nature, which is its power source or database. For us, a psychology based upon this admission would make us responsible for the kind of world we have and the capability to reprogram it.

Ø This psychology will see us as nature's conscious programmers who have the choice of creating programs, which reflect nature's laws, or programmers who put anti-nature programs in operation to our own peril and disease.

Ø Nature, being indestructible, and light energy, its database, likewise being self-generating, gives us the room for developing any kind of programs we wish along with their consequences.

Ø As we, however, grasp the range of our capabilities and take responsibility for the programs or cultures we have designed, we will change them more easily to satisfy our personal and collective needs.

Ø If, for instance, we recognize that we are self-programmers; we would also change our behaviors more easily. The facts are

if we change our programs our perceptions and our behaviors will change automatically.

Ø Our self-programs are known as our attitudes – beliefs – concepts and psychological frame of references but they all amount to the same thing, our self-regulating programs which we have designed and which we reinforce with our actions.

Ø A psychology, which reflects humans as the computers (which we truly are), will enable us to be more responsible to our intelligent database in nature. It will help us to see that we are accountable to our ultimate light source. It would also give us the courage to reprogram ourselves more readily. It puts responsibility for ourselves in our hands without burdening us with guilt. It shows us that the rewards of our programs are our own making.

Ø Such a psychology puts us in a working relationship with our database instead of in conflict with it. Affirmational Psychology is a start in that direction.

Ø The basis of Affirmational Psychology is that light energy is the database of all of nature. All of nature's creatures are living, intelligent, organic computers. We are in a whole system of relationships, which compute as one.

Ø Human kind as a master programmer, should accept the challenge to respect his or her database and learn how its laws operate and build our self-serving programs around this knowledge.

Ø It is true that all things are done in light and therefore as we use our eyes to see the things that we are doing, we will make sure that they fit into the database to which we are accountable.

Ø Affirmational Psychology affirms us all as nature's programmers and invites us to be accountable to our data base of intelligent light energy to which and in which all that we are and do must eventually compute, individually and collectively. Learning how to access our data base, how to change programs which do not compute in their present forms and accepting the responsibility to change programs which we have created, are possibilities that put us squarely in the driver's seat of our personal and collective destinies. We will then have faith in life because we know how it works and we will know how to hold ourselves accountable, without feeling guilty.

Ø We will know that each culture is a program created by a particular group of programmers and see such programs for what they are. We will finally hold ourselves as living terminals creating and recreating experiences from a database, which is all supporting.

(7)

'PASSPORT TO A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE'

By Desmond Green

1. Conscious Deep Breathing

Conscious deep breathing is the first of the seven principles under-girding the passport to a healthy lifestyle program. Breath is life. We are living because we are breathing. Breathing fuels clear thinking and creative actions enabling us to fulfill our potentials.

2. Self-Talk

Self-talk determines identity. We become what we think and say about others and ourselves. Words create images, which give birth to actions and experiences. There is always a direct correlation between actions and innermost thoughts. Ultimately, self-talk is the blue print for life experiences, which is regulated by breathing patterns, thinking, and actions.

3. Nutrition

The kinds of foods that we eat directly impact both our physical constitution and our emotional wellbeing.

4. Exercise

We simply function better if we exercise regularly and pay attention to our body, mind, soul, and spirit.

5. Vision or Purpose

Purpose is like the steering wheel of our lives and when we act

without a clear purpose, we often have mishaps, accidents, or tragedies. Without a clear purpose for our lives we wonder aimlessly.

6. Unconditional self-acceptance

Self-appreciation is the most important practice to develop. Know that you are the best that life is expressing right now. Accept yourself as perfect and whole. Take full responsibility for what you feel, think, say, believe, and accept about yourself. As you decide to become conscious of how you breathe, how you talk to yourself, what you eat, and your exercise program, you are practicing the infallible formula for healthy living.

7. The spirit of generosity

The spirit of generosity captures what life is - an open source energy system, which is continually sharing itself with all of its creations.

Behavior

Your outward behavior expresses your inner feelings and thoughts. This reinforces your beliefs and self-images. Your inner agenda determines your outer actions. Your behavior is the only statement about yourself that the world is constantly viewing.

(8)

SELF-MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP MODEL

The full program is designed as a 72 hour 12 – week workshop

INTRODUCTION

Self-management workshops help participants to sharpen or develop life skills which enable them to do the following:

- ◆ Have reverence for their lives and the lives of others
- ◆ Build a culture of life affirming values
- ◆ Overcome addictive and abusive habits
- ◆ Eliminate violent behavior
- ◆ Manage anger and stress
- ◆ Build meaningful relationships
- ◆ Develop effective communication skills
- ◆ Build self-confidence to withstand peer pressure
- ◆ Become productive community members

ADVANTAGES OF THE PROGRAM

- It is based more on practice than theory
- It is anchored more in personal experience than speculation
- Simple daily practices produce measurable results
- It amplifies self-awareness
- It instills accountability and responsibility
- Group participation and open sharing
- Participants move from alienation to interdependence
- Adds value and meaning to daily experiences
- Provides engaging, interactive life coaching sessions
- Creates a balanced perspective on life
- Gives shared support

PRIMARY SELF-MANAGEMENT TOOLS:

1. Mirroring beliefs and attitudes
2. Identity mapping
3. Visioning
4. Accountability
5. Responsibility
6. Capability thinking
7. Conscious process living

Self-management is a course which goes to the heart of the concept of training. It is designed to develop workable tools to expand self-awareness, change behavior and help individuals to discover how and why they create their experiences. It helps the individual to see the direct link between their beliefs and experiences.

The self-management model is the most up to date approach to behavior modification. Participants will develop an expanded vision and purpose and move into peak productivity modes of functioning. Capability thinking becomes the approach to all situations. Participants become solutions oriented because they are better equipped to make creative responses.

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