

## FROM THE INSIDE, OUT! # 1

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*An article that reminds society that everything in the dark comes to the light. This is the first piece in an ongoing series of short stories by the author, who reports on his experiences being incarcerated.*

This story starts with a young man named Greezy. He was fresh out of prison when he got caught sleeping with his brother's girlfriend. He and his brother got into a fight and when his brother started winning Greezy pulled a gun and shot his blood brother in the stomach, killing him in the front yard.

When the police came Greezy committed suicide. He was only 24 years old.

They had two remaining blood brothers and they both were in county jail. One's name was Poppy, a 20 year old thug freshly sentenced to 50 years in prison, and the other was Meech. He was 22.

I was in the county jail in 2009 also freshly sentenced to 50 years and one night I awoke to the sound of Meech crying on the cell block's wall phone.

After his call he and I talked and he told me he just found out about his now two dead brothers. I was shocked when he then told me he wanted to kill himself! We must have talked for hours that night and at the end we made a deal. I had just got sentenced to 50 years in prison. As long as I hold it together he had to do the same.

That was the deal and with it I like to think Meech and I became friends.

The very next day we all went to the jail's gym for recreation where a man I knew got into a fight with a smaller, younger man. Unfortunately the younger man started to win so I jumped in and the police came in ordering everyone to the floor. I took the full blame for the entire incident and was locked in a hallway holding cell while everyone else was let go. As I sat there everyone walked past and the man we jumped on looked me in the eyes and gave me a head nod.

In that head nod he was saying, "Thanks for taking the blame," and I like to think in that moment we became friends as well.

Anyway, the officers didn't feel like dealing with me, or took pity on me and finally let me go as well, but when I returned to my cell block I was surprised to see Meech sitting in the front looking beat up and obviously upset. I asked him what happened and I then learned that the person we just jumped on in the gym was Poppy, his last remaining blood brother.

When everyone had got back to the cell block Meech tried to avenge his brother and was jumped by half the block!

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<sup>∞</sup> Brandon Lewis is a writer and author who has been incarcerated for the last 16 years and has engaged in revolutionary work for the last ten. He has written novels, screenplays, articles and essays, and hopes to continue developing his prolific literary career for years to come.

I felt horrible! If I would of known that was Poppy I would of just broke the fight up. Now I was with Meech and together we walked to the bed area and started assaulting inmates that beat up Meech. The officers heard the commotion and ran in, placing Meech and I into cuffs. They took him to one lock up unit and me to another.

The same night an inmate who was out for his hour recreation began yelling and screaming, kicking the door trying to get the hallway officer's attention. In a hallway holding cell was Poppy. He had got into a series of fights in his cell block after finally hearing about his two dead brothers on the streets. The officers placed him in that hallway holding cell and left him. He tied a sheet to the bars and hung himself.

Poppy committed suicide.

Meech was the only brother left!

Understanding where Meech's mindset would be I told the officer to go get him and place him on suicide watch.

The next day I was transported to prison to begin my 50 year sentence. Unfortunately I still had another case to fight so a year later I returned to the county jail. I got into a fight and was taken to segregation. In a crazy instance of fate Meech was also in the unit, back in the county jail on a class C robbery.

When he came out for his recreation I apologized to him for having placed him on suicide watch a year ago. He stopped me and thanked me, saying I saved his life.

Sadly it was only for a moment because Meech told me he was more suicidal than he had ever been. He said upon his release he was going to get his girlfriend pregnant and run into the courtroom trying to kill a judge!

I spent the entire hour trying to talk him out of it and many more hours for all of the days we were on the lock up unit together, but it didn't seem to help. He needed a professional's help that I wasn't able to provide. The charges against him were dropped and he went home. Soon after he was pulled over for a random traffic stop. He got out of the car and opened fire at the cops. They in turn shot and killed him, just like he wanted them to. Months later Meech's girlfriend gave birth to his son.

At this date I have been in prison for 13<sup>1</sup> years and not only have I lost many more friends to suicide, I have noticed more men coming to prison with serious mental illnesses. Once they get here there is very little help for them and they are left on their own to deal with environmental and social realities that they are ill-equipped to handle.

For example, my neighbor is a very young European American who sits up half of every night screaming and kicking the door and walls until he falls asleep. He stockpiles dirty trays of spoiled food and lashes out at almost everyone. And his only assistance is one mental health professional who is responsible for 199 other inmates by herself. She may talk to him once a month for five minutes through a door.

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<sup>1</sup> As of the time of publication, Mr. Lewis has been incarcerated for sixteen years.

So now I come to the important questions. Why should you care about any of this? The answer to this question illustrates the very essence of the Inside Out concept and brings us back to the beginning.

Greezy was inside of prison. He got out and murdered his brother and then himself. Poppy had a 50 year sentence but one day he would of been released. Meech got out of the county jail and tried to kill the police! And by the way, my neighbor, the one who screams himself to sleep and lives in filth, he only has a couple years left! Soon he's going to be in the checkout line at the grocery store behind your family.

He only has two years left but is really ten years from being safe to being released into society. And many people have decades left but could be released tomorrow becoming productive, tax paying citizens. Society and prison are one and the same and that fact must be remembered when we rethink reincarceration. We need to move away from set time mandates, to condition based mandates where people are released when they are ready to be, and for this to be realistic the mental health and rehabilitative systems must increase ten fold!

All of these programs that are optional should be mandatory and release should be conditioned by the prisoner's understanding and adoption of concepts. This should be overseen and decided upon by professionals from all sorts of behavioral backgrounds still taking years to complete.

I know there is no appetite to be soft on prisoners but remember, all criminals were once civilians and them becoming criminals are the societal sniffles and sneezes that denote a troubled society.

Precious reader, thank you for your time. This was another report, From the Inside, OUT!