

## THROUGH THE EYES OF A SUBURBAN WHITE KID

First and foremost sincerely thank you Oyez for encouraging and inspiring the writer and dreamer in me.

First allow me to share a little bit about myself.

My name is Jake Morrow. I'm a 25-year-old suburban white man from the Cleveland, Ohio area. I am currently serving time in Lake Erie Correctional in Conneaut, Ohio.

I have been in and out of trouble my entire life.

Unlike most of the people I have come into contact with and befriended the last 10 years of being institutionalized, I had everything I needed growing up and most of what I wanted. However me and my brother Joshua didn't have parental love and guidance.

When my brother Joshua and I were growing up we lived with our mother who use to be a raging belligerent alcoholic.

We were belittled, screamed at, punished, made fun of, arrested, and kicked out for situations that never existed all the time.

Since we were continuously accused of things we had no clue of thinking as the children we were we started to make trouble since we were always accused of it.

Our first crime spree we were breaking into stores in the Parma/Old Brooklyn area of Cleveland.

Initially the police said they were looking for two 40-year-old men. However when we were finally caught my brother was 13 and I was 15.

After that I probably spent 4 of the last ten years on the streets. I can't even say free because I was on probation.

I shared that about myself as a passage to the following point.

Being able to do what we wanted because our mom was always passed out left too much idle time to do whatever we wanted to do good, bad, or indifferent.

We've stolen cars, robbed drug dealers at gunpoint, discharged weapons throughout the city, amongst many other things I have to take to my grave.

My brother Joshua was my partner in crime and my best friend. Joshua committed suicide August 23, 2013.

Joshua was 18 when I found out. I was living in a homeless shelter because I tried crack cocaine which I've been addicted to every since.

I lost everything that mattered including my ex Kandice and her son Jacob. To this day I love and miss them both dearly.

Soon after I took my first trip to Cuyahoga jail. Once released I'd seemed to always return.

During my incarceration time I met some of the most solid dudes I've ever known. The majority of us share mirroring stories and struggles wholeheartedly or in part.

Most of my friends and associates were of color and most of them were "heartless felons" one of the most feared gangs throughout the Ohio prison system.

I was respected by them because I always stuck up for myself. I never started fights but I finished them.

I never portrayed to be something I'm not. I've shared my story and struggles and listened to theirs. We embraced one another for that.

Even though I was in the worst jails I always carried myself like the educated suburban white dude I am.

To this very day I have respect for people who don't pretend to be something they're not.

In many white communities on the outside looking in, in black communities being smart is frowned upon.

I've seen a lot black and white people who really struggle education wise. I've also seen a lot of smart black and white people act stupid.

The reason I wanted to share my story was to bring black and white America closer together.

I also wanted to show the black and white communities that racism exist everywhere.

I'm not saying this to offend anyone but in my opinion black people are just as racist as whites. Simply put racism is propelled by ignorance and the blind.

In memory of the Dave Chapelle skit where he was a blind black man and he believed he was white and he was racist against blacks. The message was racism is taught which holds very true.

Regardless our races there are people and personalities we simply don't like. That's not racist at all.

Sitting in prison right now there are plenty of people who hate me because I'm white or think I'm rich. The fact of the matter is I'm poor as the poor.

Some people in my family have money like any other family. But me I don't have nothing but faith in God and what little family I have left.

My baby sister Rylee who had it so bad I cherish most. I love Rylee more than I love myself.

My generation has been so messed up. I can only imagine what the next will be like if we don't bite the bullet. We have to do something about it.

All these younger people like myself like to claim that they are grown because they maybe over 18.

In my opinion to be grown you need to be a provider, a leader, a survivor, and be willing to sacrifice.

The prison system has messed us up to the point where we conform to it. We are not only use to it we embrace it.

It is so hard to get out once your in that mind state. In fact once released that mind state makes it hard to get on your feet and stay out.

Regardless our individual crimes if we did it the legal way switching our hustles to legal products instead of drugs and taking their will possibly be less fiends and more millionaires.

The prison system makes so much money off of taking, drug dealers, and the poor its crazy.

We could literately use the court fees, the commissary money, the lawyer fees, etc. and rebuild the 216, my area code I love so much.

Understandably the black communities are always worried about getting shot by the police.

However in my humble an ignorant opinion you have to also assist this process by stop carrying guns, stop giving the police reasons to think your armed and dangerous, stop black on black crimes.

Although my opinion may rock the boat does any part of opinion make sense?

We must stop the pointless retaliation mentalities and resides with humility and equality. We can't want help as human beings but refuse to help our fellow man.

Written (12/25/18) by Jake Morrow

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