

The Vision of A Positive Future For Youth
By Bobby Bostic

I woke up this morning with a vision or should I say a dream. I saw myself mentoring a dispute between two 16 years old youth. I explained to these young brothers how I ended up in jail at 16 years old and was sentenced to die in prison for my part in a robbery episode where no one was seriously injured. At first they were so enraged and boiling over with anger at each other that they didn't want to listen to me. It appeared to be some kind of gang dispute or neighborhood beef because each of these youth had his own gang there edging and rallying him along. The only thing that slowed down the brawl and ensuing gun battle was that it was a public event with many people and media around.

Tensions were running high and somehow I made my way right into the epicenter of the commotion and got between the would be combatants and tried to talk some sense into these young brothers and reasoning with them. It was a typical everyday thing where we come from. Two young black men so full of testosterone that they feel as if they have nothing to lose and everything to gain by proving to each other who is the toughest. In their misguidance they figure this is what makes them a man. I understand what they are feeling because I myself have been there a 1,000 times. But as I kept speaking, something that I said began to resonate with these young brothers.

At first it was a pure battle of the egos. Because when I explained to them that I had spent over 20 years in prison they looked at me and each one said: man I care about no prison shit as if it never occurred to them that one day their current behavior would land them in prison. When are that young and naive you somehow feel invisible and believe that you can't be caught or either that what happened to you can never happen to me. Yeah sure, I thought the same thing until I was arrested at 16 years old and eventually sentenced to die in prison although no one was even seriously injured in my crime. I explained to them that this is how serious the consequences of our random actions can be.

As I continued to counsel these young men the anger on their faces somehow began to fade away. By some miracle I had went beyond their hard exterior and touched on their humanity. I reasoned with them that their anger was not so much at each other but was really about their condition of poverty and hopelessness in their urban blight conditions. I had to talk their own language to them. It was a language that no one else there could understand but us. The spectators only saw trouble and some possible violent chaotic entertainment. But the consequences that would have followed could have easily proven fatal.

When I was able to break through the hard outer core of these young brothers in my vision (dream) I realized right then that part of my purpose in life is to reach the troubled youth and help them to turn their lives around and to find their purpose in life. That's what I want to live for. Because when I resolved the dispute between those two rivals I felt a sense of worth in myself that I never felt before. I felt so meaningful and inspired. Then I looked back on my journey and realized that this is why I had to go through this. I had to go through these rough decades in prison so that I could teach others not to repeat my mistakes.

Yes, I have a true story to tell, but first I have to get out in the world and be able to tell it. Nevertheless, this vision (dream) of mine is so strong that I had to write it down and record it for others to share. Right now I am still serving a virtual death sentence of 240 years in prison. But I will never let that kill my dreams (visions). I believe in my future just as I believe in the brighter future of those, two young street guys. In fact the more that I talked to them the more I got them to believe in their own futures.

At first they said that they didn't care to almost everything that I attempted to explain to them. I know how they feel because I have been there. I know what it is like when you don't care, and things feel hopeless anyway. In that culture you have to put on the I Don't care persona or get ran over because in that world nobody really cares and that's just how it is. I lived it and I felt his lil brothers but I also saw their potential. I was aware that my simple conversation wouldn't solve their conflict.

Their beef was over today but what about tomorrow when their homeboys saw each other? When the cameras stopped rolling who would really care about them then? When the gun blasts the headlines will read "3 black males dead and several wounded in an apparent gang dispute that apparently spilled over from yesterday's city wide festivities". Where I live this is an everyday thing. It must stop, but the question is how do we stop it?

I don't have all of the answers. But it is men such as myself who can contribute to the cause. Yet, here I am sitting in prison. I am not serving society any purpose merely wasting away in prison when I could be out there helping the youth change their lives and contributing to the world. I refuse to give up on my dream of helping these young brothers.

It is so many of them out there trapped and feeling hopeless. Believe me I know, I had been out there hopeless myself and then to come to a hopeless place like prison with a virtual death sentence I had to go inside to find hope gain because deep inside I always believed in something better in life. Those troubled black youth and frustrated middle class white kids stand in the same shoes on the same streets I once walked on. My purpose is to reach them and show them a better-way. A psychologist or someone who merely took criminal justice courses can never understand these younger people's mindset the way that I do, because what they live through and feel can't be taught in a classroom, it must be lived and experienced to fully understand. Nevertheless, I know from experience that these young can be reached and learn positive things in life.

I dream of getting out there to help them. The community and trained professionals must include former troubled youth like myself in the conversation and into a possible strategy solution. Most importantly my shared experience with these troubled youth makes me keenly aware that after the initial conversation (intervention) I must present them job options, educational opportunities, housing, clothing, transportation, and other necessities to get them off of the streets.

Through my nonprofit organization Troubled Teens With Dreams I want to provide them with all the above things. This is my goal, the vision (dream) that I wake up with each morning because i have a positive vision for the troubled youth of today and tomorrow.