

Messages from the Mound



In 2007, I began my prison ministry where I facilitated my Relationship First Aid spiritual based personal development classes at Mound Correctional Facility in Detroit. After Mound closed in 2012, I continued to communicate with the inmates through newsletters, birthday cards and attending/speaking at events at various facilities. It is suspected that the facility got its name because of the many ancient mounds that were found all over Detroit, and I believe the most concentrated and/largest ones were along what is now known as Mound Rd.

"Messages from the Mound" is named after the newsletters that I send out to the inmates since that is where we all initially met. Because the classes that I was teaching them focused on spiritual elevation allowing the negativity within them to die, thus ultimately elevating their consciousness, I thought it an appropriate name because a "mound" is defined as: an "elevation" formed of earth overlying ruins, a grave etc., a heap or raised mass. The following articles are from men that are currently incarcerated or released and this serves as an opportunity for the voiceless to have a voice. If you have a loved one that is currently incarcerated and would like for me to send them newsletters, please forward their contact information with a MDOC number to: Relationshipfirstaid@yahoo.com or contact me at: Relationship First Aid, Attn: Ma'at Seba, 15224 W. 7 Mile Rd., Detroit, MI. 48235.



**EVERYONE
HAS A PLACE,
A VOICE,
AND SOMETHING
TO CONTRIBUTE.**

What incentives do we have?

By Derek Bishop
SPECIAL TO THE SUN



Thank you Detroit Native Sun for allowing me the chance for readers to read my mind via this article. My DOC number is 887139.

My existence has become more numerical than actual. To me and few others I'm still alive, but what am I to do when no matter where I turn, I'm reminded, physically, mentally and financially that I'm a number on a machine's conveyor belt that doesn't reward you for good deeds but punishes you excessively for your indiscretions? If circumstantial evidence can be used in cohesion with theories to convict us, why not use that method in regards to our potentials be used to free us, besides a commutation that takes 9-15 months to get either a public hearing or a denial? I haven't lost faith but it's been shaken.

I work daily to stay focused and act in a way conducive to me getting and staying out. Price of living inside is going up, no prison good time or credits program, no classes to release us early and the administrations are becoming more tyrannical. What incentives do we have to follow

the rules of oppressors who don't follow THEIR OWN POLICIES OF CONDUCT?

I'm on an island. I've outgrown my conviction. Rather purposely or for lack of faith I'm being ignored. I'm screaming for some help, belief in me, and assistance on finding resources, I'm still being ignored. I'm a writer, author, recording artist, public speaker and aspiring life coach. Should I be unsuccessful in completing goals in those fields before my release in two years I'd like resources and information to prepare me for my release. Nothing's worse than being exhumed from a casket via telephone and hearing those you love are just as dead in society as you are in prison.

There's a wall and/or bubble around the MDOC, a lack of information inside and drought on testicular fortitude in the way of brotherhood. As I write this there are "men", a term I use skeptically, who tried to discourage me from

writing in fear of collateral retribution because of association, a slighted waste of time and one I HATE, "It won't ever change anything". These are the "men", robber's murderers dealers etc. that surround me. I'm convinced that my eventual death or establishment of docility, not just my incarceration, was the desired goal. How do I excel the mediocrity around me? I don't fit in with prison nor does my circle in society fit in with my needs. How do I exceed mediocrity of function of those in power and of my circle whom I rely on for certain things? How do I pride myself on being above

average while, with limited help, surrounded with mediocrity of belief, thought and action, succeed in my endeavors?



Conclusion to Life History

By Kenneth Gilbert
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

A lot of things happened wrong in my life, things I had no control over. I think that's true of nearly everyone though, and what separates successful people from addicts and criminals is the ability to respond to life's less pleasant circumstances in healthy, constructive ways.

I had many opportunities in my life to do better, to be better. I chose to steal when I knew it was wrong, to lie when I knew it was destroying the ability of others to trust me. I chose to run from the pain felt, building a fantasy life with books. A fantasy image with my knives, a fantasy world with alcohol and drugs...

I pushed away the people who cared for and about me. I stiffed-armed them and then felt sorry for myself because I felt so lonely, when my loneliness and alienation was, in large part, of my own creation.

Without a doubt, my self-confidence was damaged by the actions of my grandfather. It was further wrecked by the teasing and ridicule of others. I saw violence when I was young and it was hard for me to trust people. I was a child who was genuinely hurting on the inside. I was lost and afraid. I was confused.

While I could not choose for those things not to have happened, I could choose what to do afterward. Moreover, it was my responsibility to choose, my job as a human being to shoulder the yoke of personal accountability and take action in my own life.

That is a tough spoonful of medicine to choke down. It would be so much easier to say that I'm here because my grandfather molested me, or because I got picked on. If I could lay the blame at someone else's feet, I could be absolved and at least feel a little better.

But it just wouldn't be true.

I'm here because I chose to hide in response to my pain. I chose to not seek help when I was hurting. I chose to do things my own way. I chose to be angry and judgmental of my parents when they were just as confused by me and my actions as I was by them and theirs.

One of the greatest lessons life has taught me is that if I don't like the way I feel, I have to change the way I think. If I had done that throughout my childhood, instead of trying to hammer the world into what I wanted it to be, I would have been a lot happier and more successful. I would have realized that the people who didn't like me because of my clothes or my haircut had the problem, not me. I wouldn't have spent all of my time trying to convince them that I was okay, doing things that I knew were wrong. The difficulties that tripped me up when I was young weren't the real issue. The real problem was the way I thought about and then handled those things: the lack of confidence, the distance in my family...

As difficult as it is to accept that level of responsibility, it is necessary in order for me to effect change in my life. If everything is someone else's fault and I can't control other people's actions, how can anything ever be different? But if I realize that I'm responsible for how I respond to life's twists and turns, then I can make better choices and improve my life.

I saw it too late, but you don't have to.

I'm telling you right now that no matter how much your life sucks, you have the ability to make it either better or worse with your actions and choices. If you truly want something more, if you don't want to let the outcome of your life fall into the hands of others, if you want to be successful and happy, then step up and take responsibility. Don't wait another minute, because the longer you wait, the more of your life you lose.

There is tragedy and adversity for us all. There are obstacles - big ones and little ones. Irritants and life-changers. At the end of our lives the measure of us all will be how we handed those obstacles. I threw up my hands in defeat and let mine smash me. What will you do?

(This excerpt is published in the "Lost Innocence: Understanding Youth Who Kill" by Kenneth Gilbert)