



P R O F I L E O F

M I C H A E L " S I M B A " E D W A R D S

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| Full Name | MICHAEL "SIMBA" EDWARDS |
| Prisoner Number | 203782 |
| D.O.B. | January 4, 1974 |
| Crime(s) Convicted Of | First Degree Murder |
| Date of Crime | May, 1989 |
| Conviction Date | August, 1989 |
| Age at Time Crime was Committed | 15-years-old |
| Age at Time Entered Prison | 15-years-old |

Prisons Resided Within/Dates

RCF 1989; RMI 1989; TCF 89-90; AMF 90-94; LRF 95; SRF 95; SMI 97; JMF 98; JCF 98-99; ECF 00-01; DRF 01-03; MCF 03; SLF 04-05; NRF 05-07; KCF 07-present

Brief description of offense and prisoner's role in it.

Two co-defendants, one of whom I did not know prior to that night, and myself attended a party. Leaving the party for brief moments to socialize with friends nearby, one of my co-defendants launched into a man who owed him money. The second co-defendant and I joined in briefly. Once a crowd started to form, I moved away from taking part in beating this man. Subsequently, the man was placed into a storm drain where he sadly drowned from being placed in the sewer. I and several witnesses earnestly contend that I had nothing to do with placing the man in the sewer. However, one witness out of twenty, whose vision was obstructed by a large tree, claims that logical conclusion holds that I must have did it. The sentencing judge found this one witness more credible than the others.

Never in my wildest dreams would I have ever conceived that I would be sent to prison for anything, let alone murdering another human being. As a youth I enjoyed attending house parties. Sometimes after these parties a skirmish would break out, bottles would be thrown, there would be an excessive amount of vulgar language being hurled back and forth, and essentially it would appear to be anarchy. But everyone would walk away alive. This night to me was no different than any other night, except that this time a person lost his life. It was never our intent to kill anyone. We were just doing what we had been doing as kids and not realizing the severity of our actions. In hindsight, yes I was wrong and I accept responsibility for my actions. And although a man lost his life, I maintain that my involvement in the incident didn't warrant a natural life sentence.

What difficulties have you experienced as a juvenile living among adult prisoners?

Initially, upon my entering prison I would suffer numerous amounts of verbal abuse and one time even had a grown man choke me. Being removed from my family and forced to grow up witnessing rapes, stabbings, beatings, and verbal abuse by staff because they assumed I didn't know how to "jail." Racism and discrimination for young African Americans runs amuck in prison. So if you weren't a hater of others before you went to prison, you will gradually begin to dislike others because of what those who are responsible for you, who are of a different race than you, may be doing to you.

Have you been negatively affected by your experiences as a juvenile living among adult prisoners? Please explain.

As for the negative effects, children are taught to be trusting of adults as they are the custodians to what has been bequeathed to them from previous generations. To be trusting of people in here will often times cause you to become a victim of some kind. As a child I lost my ability to trust, therefore, when someone, even JAIL approaches me, I am leery of their motives. The Prisoner Industrial Complex doesn't foster or encourage progression in the human being, but instead idly watches as predator becomes super predator and the prey are those unsuspecting souls who thought someone was a good guy because they were offered something to eat for the night.

How have you resolved these difficulties or dealt with them?

Although there exist many negatives in prison, one cannot say that God doesn't shine His light in the dark or allow light to grow out of darkness. Men who may have accepted their fate of being here for the rest of their life see their experience as a way of helping others who may have a chance of returning to the free world. I was so privileged to encounter men who embraced me and encouraged me to grow in the wisdom of God that I may see the redeeming qualities that exist within us all even in all our madnes. So my way of dealing with not trusting people is believing that God is present within us all. And realizing that as it takes the sun degree by degree to rise until it reaches its zenith, so too does the same process take with humanity. We all reach different stages of development at varying times in our lives. I don't know if you can truly ever absolve yourself of the things one has experienced while in prison. But I do know that God is Love and He says He will not give us a burden bigger than we can bare.

How has a life of incarceration changed you?

I'm almost twenty years into a natural life sentence. Since I've been incarcerated I've received approximately 15 major misconducts. I know some people who have less and been locked

up for as long if not longer than me. But as stated previously, people grow and the hope is that they grow into productive people. I, through lectures, encourage young people to center themselves and accentuate the best in them as opposed to accepting the number they've been given as an identifier or termed "criminal." So you ask how it has changed me. The fact is, I am changed and I thank God for allowing me to grow and see that change.

Have you remained in continual contact with family or friends since becoming incarcerated?

Relationships with anyone when they are miles away are difficult to maintain. Coupled with the hard life of living behind prison walls makes it doubly hard to maintain communication. Although I have a functioning relationship with my family, I wouldn't describe it as functional. Because I was so young when I came to prison I wouldn't say that I established genuine friendships in society, so all of whom I may consider friends today are men who left prison, men who respected me enough to want to maintain a connection with me.

If you were granted a second chance and released, what would you do?

I've been asked this question so many times. The most honest way I can answer it without sounding pretentious or spouting a lot of rhetoric is to simply say, "I desire to live life."

Accomplishments/Achievements since you've been incarcerated.

I earned my GED while incarcerated. I received a certificate of completion in Custodial Maintenance. Prior to college courses being taken out of prison, I attended two semesters of college. I received a medical certificate in Bloodborne Pathogens. Also, through groups like the NAACP I learn to speak and enjoin others to transform their lives for the better.

Make any statement you'd like (100 words or less, please).

HELP!