

Join Ray's Freedom Struggle



*"The People will get
me out of prison
because I believe
in the People . . ."*

Echoes From My Soul

by Ray Charles
Fulgham

When I finally leave prison there will be no turning back, looking over my shoulder for a final glance of the misery and degradation that I have just abandoned. There are many experiences that I have encountered that I can never forget, nor forgive, nor even fully justify. I am surrendering my youth to the dungeons of the prison society.

It is a terrible feeling that a man often gets in prison. The moment always strikes when he concludes that he is lower than garbage—the filth that has been left behind to rot by the way-side—his fellow country-man's victorious disposition is his hell forever and ever.

The days are extraordinarily long and the nights are bitterly lonely—if this is my station in life—I want no part in it! I have failed in my task of being worthy of my fellow citizens respect and consideration. It must be dealt with by me and always in isolation, for no one should be able to see my profound despair.

I want to live the life of a man—responsibility, integrity, accountability and a balance consideration for others, appears to be the call of the day.

...I accept full responsibility for my crime—I place the blame not on the polite society but on my own shoulders.. I do assert that the larger community inadvertently conspired to predestine me because they could have taught me the fundamentals of the world—but they were preoccupied with more pressing worldly affairs to bother teaching a mere child the secrets of the world. Now they have dealt with that child because it struck out in anger in a society that exhibits hostility in the face of naive childhood inquiries.

I wasn't born to lose; however, I will have to admit that I became a loser when I attempted to take advantage of another's individual freedom. I am bitter towards none but I expect that the society can't afford this particular type of compassion.

I recognize the rationale of their system—I am willing to live by their rules and regulations regarding human conduct—but I do not consider myself a criminal, I reject that name and consequently, I am not a criminal and I shall not ever manifest otherwise. What I am about to relate to the reader is the unadulterated truth of my situation—if anyone should attempt to dispute my candid story after he has completely read and understood the contents herein I challenge him, her or them to throw the first stone!

Approximately four and a half years ago, I offended the polite society, that is to say, the citizens of Michigan in general and the community members of Genesee county in particular. I was subsequently eliminated as an un-wanted element by a Genesee circuit court judge who subjugated me to a tremendously lengthy incarceration of twelve to fifteen years, as a consequence of my so-called "iniquitous" opposition in the free community. I am certain that I am experiencing cruel and unusual punishment for the offense that I originally perpetrated—armed robbery with a broken BB-gun!

I have been forgotten. The citizens don't realize that I even exist. They don't understand that prison is making me the real criminal that the bureaucrats and politicians said I was. There are many individuals like me in this place who have been left to be polluted, contaminated and dehumanized for long lengthy years without any real justification for such foul, treacherous, treatment. I am tired.

...I am tired of my punishment-rehabilitation. I am afraid that both of them have failed me. I have been betrayed and manipulated by some abstract autocratic elements. My tyrants won't even identify themselves because to do so would be a trap—their own...! They have stripped me of my credibility, individuality and have verbally violated my manhood.

I am expected to act normal in a totally abnormal environment. I am expected to be always agreeable and never questionable. (It appears to be extremely undemocratic expectations). My humiliation has overflowed inside of me and my mind is no longer innocent and optimistic as it once was. My fellow prisoners have subjugated me to the most cruel, barbaric and harsh forms of ridicule as a consequence to my intellectual endeavors.

My mind is obscured and dazzled because of my uncertainty concerning the prison administration expectations of me when visitors are around. I can't equivocate. I am starting to get some recognition as a semi-savage now. Many politicians and bureaucrats have come to this particular institutional establishment and have observed, examined and discussed us strange creatures. I am totally indignant. These people appear to be afraid of catching some strange tropical infection or what other reason could there be for them not engaging us prisoners in their conversation?

My life is constantly in a dreadful state of turmoil. I have been completely stripped of all initiative and motivation by the prison-society and given a dilemma—(1) conform to the stereotype of a convict and his mentality or (2) perish in an alienated individuality. I have encountered almost every indignity, inequity and double-standard proposition imaginable from the abominable elements within the prison-society.

...Although I am still struggling for the salvation of my soul, I am desperately afraid that I have been involuntarily transformed into a beast. I came into this institutional hell-hole meek and humble. I have had the frightening opportunity to observe hundreds of young first offenders leave prison-society with an anti social behavioral disposition that could only be depicted as totally vicious and destructive. I diligently tried to be understanding of and accepting to my surroundings—I have failed miserably. I am an outcast amongst the outcasts. I am searching for a solution to my present plight—a reason that will at least attempt to explain the society's apparent indifference and contempt towards prisoners. I often ask myself if there is any hope or will I be doomed by all?

WHAT YOU CAN DO

RAY CHARLES FULGHAM HAS SPENT SIX YEARS BEHIND BARS - SIX YEARS LONGER THAN MOST 17 YEAR-OLD FIRST OFFENDERS. IT'S TIME THIS UNJUST SENTENCE CAME TO AN END.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

* WRITE LETTERS SUPPORTING RAY'S RELEASE TO:

- 1) THE FLINT JOURNAL
200 E. FIRST ST.
FLINT, MICHIGAN 48502
- 2) JUDGE DONALD FREEMAN
COURTHOUSE
FLINT, MICHIGAN 48502
- 3) PAROLE BOARD MICHIGAN DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS
STEV T MASON BLDG.
LANSING, MICHIGAN

* PICKET THE GENESEE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

* INVESTIGATE JUDGE FREEMAN'S RECORD BEFORE THE NEXT ELECTION

* SHOW THE HALF-HOUR VIDEOTAPE OF THE WCMU SHOW ON RAY TO A GROUP OF PEOPLE (AVAILABLE AT HOTLINE FOR FREE)

* OR CALL HOTLINE AT 742-1230 after 1 p.m. TO JOIN THE COALITION



Ray with his family and friends at graduation in prison; From "culturally retarded" to the Dean's List