

POST FROM JACOB

17 March 2015

I recently received a letter from someone that had a comment I'd like to address openly with everyone. It read:

On the internet I read you were/are a member of a white supremacist group. I hope that is a part of your past.

Mary S. , New Mexico

The short answer is , yes , I use to be a member of one of Oregon's most notorious white supremacist groups. Not just a member , but third in command.

I left the group in 2006 for a number of reasons. Not only for myself , but for my daughters. But Chief among the reasons was my inability to live and think the hate. My involvement with the group was largely due to the prison environment rather than any true beliefs. Rather , I parroted the "political line".

Regardless , I lived hate , spoke hate and acted on hate. I was part of the problem in prison rather than part of the solution.

Leaving the group marked me for death. They have an open hit on my life. It is not a matter

of if they will get me, but when.

I have written about my involvement in the gang in past. One thing you cannot do is hide from your past. But neither does it define you. I believe that my past gives me a very unique understanding of how racist minds and attitudes work and how to turn others away from it.

I also turned myself towards trying to right many of the wrongs of my past and my past thinking. I openly fight for and defend the rights of the LGBT community and advance anti-racist thinking.

I try very hard to be a better person and leave this world a better place.

I would not take on this hunger strike for other peoples rights and to combat racism and homophobia if I believed otherwise.

I am not proud of my past, but I am proud of the man I have become. People become members of gangs in prison — all types of gangs — for all kinds of reasons. When they leave those gangs they cannot be defined by them, they become new people. They deserve that chance (or chances).

I can't and never will again live hate. Time and time again it has been gay, transgender and colored prisoners and citizens who have picked me up, dusted me off and been there for me in the roughest times. It was through them my heart opened. (As well as through others).

I believe very strongly that every experience in life we have has purpose and meaning. It is part

of our souls journey to the Divine, to gain enlightenment. Both good and bad. Whether we learn from it is another matter.

I have had a very unique and unusual life experience. But I believe that the Gods place us where they want us, not necessarily where we want to be.

If someone wants to judge me by my past they wont need the excuse that Im an ex-gang member (and have been for 9⁺ yrs), they have a plethora of other reasons they could use. But I have become very wary of those who spend their time hating and judging others (for any reason) or who look for reasons to dislike them. It makes me ~~wonder~~ wonder what secrets they hold.

My faith has helped me develop a sound and wholesome moral foundation. I am certainly not the person I was 10 years ago. How many people are?

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear."

Within the prison walls there is a festering hate which the current American penological philosophy has developed, fed and fostered. It sucks many men into its grasps. Some never recover. Some of us claw our way back to the rim.

I rededicated my life nearly 10 yrs ago to becoming a prisoner rights activist. I hope to be part of the solution, not the problem. Judge me by something from my distant past, or know me for the person I am now.

I once read a book about a Russian prisoner in Soviet Gulags. In the book it had a passage that

said something to the effect that if only we could draw a line through the heart of all men and say "he is evil, he is not", the world may be an easier place to live. That is not the case, for we can never see into the hearts of any man. But as Thomas a Kempis said, "Be assured that if you knew all, you would pardon all."

When I humbled my heart, I became a new man. Take it as you will.

In Solidarity,
In Spirit,



Jacob