

## **The Hate Prison Breeds**

### *Bobby, A Texas Prisoner*

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**T**here is a saying in the prison system. If you're not a racist when you come to prison, you will be before you leave!

As a man who served 18 or 19 years of his life in youth centers, state schools, jails and prisons in Alabama, and the Texas prison system, I speak with first-hand knowledge of the hate prison breeds. Before going to prison the first time in Alabama in late 1986, I had friends of all races. When I went to prison, I was going down on a burglary charge. I broke into a neighbour's trailer and took a black and white TV probably worth 20 dollars. I had got certified as an adult when I was 16, but that robbery charge was non-processed. So, I had already been in the County Jail and I had been to the Youth Center of the Alabama Department of Youth Services two or three times. But nothing could have prepared me for the violence that awaited me. When I was arrested for the burglary, I sat in the Mobile County Jail for several months as I could not make bond. My case was bound over to the Grand Jury and I was awaiting trial. The cell I was in was a fairly laid back cell. Half and half, black and white!

Well, my court appointed lawyer persuaded me to take eight years. I went before the judge who sentenced me to eight years in the Alabama Department of Corrections. That evening, as three other white dudes and I were playing cards, I was told to pack up, as I was moving to a state cell which houses prisoners coming and going from the state prison system. Many men in that cell-block had life sentences and were back on appeals. When I entered the cell-block, I looked around me, then made my way to a top bunk which was empty. Every other man in the cell was black. It got very quiet in the cell. I was a small guy - probably 5'2" and 115 pounds - and I had long blond hair. There was one guy in there whose arms were as big as my legs. I could smell marijuana. I put my stuff on the bunk, turned and noticed all eyes on me!

I go over, get on the phone, call my grandma collect. After my call, I go over, get up on the bunk. I don't know how long I had been lying there when I was punched in the face. Blood splattered everywhere from my nose. "Get up, ho!" As I tried to fight, someone grabbed my legs and another, my arms. Somebody had me by the hair. I was slammed so hard to the floor that the back of my head busted open and the breath was knocked out of me. I was kicked and stomped, beaten so bad my eyes were swollen shut and my nose was broken. The back of my head was gushing blood so bad that a black guy tried telling them, "man, that dude needs stitches". They dragged me over

to the corner and one of them grabbed me by my jumper and tried tearing it off. I began hollering and screaming, realizing they intended to rape me. I was beaten unconscious and when I came to, one guy was over me from behind trying to put his penis inside of me. I squeezed my muscles as I lay there on my stomach. Hatred, shame, embarrassment and fear all went through me. I made my mind up I would die before I would surrender and be gang-raped. When they realized I could not be penetrated, two or three of them stood over me and masturbated. I was not raped that night but it wasn't over. The way prison bullies and gangs operate is that after every rape or sexual assault or beating, they try and persuade you not to tell the guards by promising it won't happen again. After they backed off, I sat up and got my stuff. Some guy gave me a towel; there was semen all over my buttocks and back, and blood everywhere. I got in the shower. I was crying, and so full of hatred I didn't know what to do. I knew I was going to prison and snitches get killed in prison. When I came out some men were arguing about some blood that had got on a guy's bunk. They started fighting and four of the same men who had jumped me, jumped him, beat him down.

I got up on my bunk. I sat up all night listening to them talking. One guy said, "let's make the white guy suck our dicks". They were laughing, smoking dope, slamming cards. When breakfast came, everybody got in line. There is a tray slot that opens, and the guard cannot see into the cell. They just pass trays in. I got up to the slot and it slammed on me! I looked around and one guy was dumping food from one tray to another. I knew if I was going to survive in there, I had to stand up and prove I had heart. I went over and said: "Hey man, you grabbed two trays." "Man, you better get your ...." I hit him. Needless to say, he beat the crap out of me! I lay on my bunk seething. I had the covers pulled over my head and the tears made my eyes burn. That day, a guard came down the catwalk, saw me and pulled me out.

What happened to me that night 20 years ago led me eventually to join the Aryan Brotherhood (AB). I have been in and out of prisons in Alabama and Texas on several occasions. All prison ever did was teach me to be more criminally-minded and I always walked out worse than when I had gone in. "The Hate Prison Breeds" title is a true reflection of what I would say 95 per cent of new incoming prisoners face and go through. The other five per cent are already haters, in gangs. Every time a new man enters the prison system, all eyes are on him. Within the first couple of days, he will be checked, tested and tried. If he surrenders, he becomes a prison punk,

paying protection and being sexually assaulted, bought and sold on a regular basis. If he is white and makes it through the blacks and Mexicans who jump him, he becomes a Peckerwood, and then has a label on him he had not asked for. On most prison units, the way the black and Mexican gangs look at whites coming in is, you either prove you have heart by fighting or you catch a ride, agree to pay protection and sit on a bench designated for "ho's"! And if you get approached by three blacks or three Mexicans, "Are you going to fight?" You say "yeah", they jump you. When you make it through that, you are now told you have "your respect" and get to sit on the Peckerwood benches. There you are with the KKK, skinheads, Aryan Brotherhood, Aryan Circle. Now you are sought out to "prospect" for one of their gangs. The Independent Woods may as well join one of the gangs because as far as the Crips, Bloods, Texas Syndacutt and Mexican Mafia all go, they all label you as a racist because you sit with them. When a gang war or race riot breaks out, Independent Woods are caught right in the middle. Every prison unit is different. It is up to each individual prisoner to decide whether he will do his time the easy way or the hard way. I chose the hard way and have been cut and stabbed many times over the years; jumped in my sleep; jumped from behind.

In 1995, I was given 10 years for possession of a controlled substance. I did four years and paroled out to the Dallas area. I started selling dope and on September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2000, I was set up, jumped, beaten, robbed and shot several times. I had four wounds in my lower belly, one through my right hand, one in my back and one in my buttocks. As I lay there fighting for my life, I thought about my life. I had never accomplished anything. Locked up all my life and now my life was over. My stomach was damaged so badly, I was told if I lived I would have a bag. Thank God when I came out of the operation, I did not have a bag. My mother was holding my hand, looking down at me, crying. It had been many years since I had seen my mother because I left Mobile when I was released from prison in Alabama in 1991. I violated my parole and went back into the Texas prison system in March 2001.

I was miserable. I saw myself as a complete failure. I bought into the mentality that I was institutionalized and would probably end up spending the rest of my life in prison. But then, September 11<sup>th</sup> happened. That day was the turning point of my life. Before September 11<sup>th</sup>, I had been at the Gurney Unit. Every prison unit is different. In some, men of all races sit together. In others, people sit by race. On some units, people actually claim

seats and fight for places to sit. At Gurney, everybody got along and only if you so choose did you stay amongst your own race. Being AB, I ran with three other men on the dorm who were also AB. I did not even like these people. The only reason there was unity was that we all belonged to the same gang.

Things on our dorm were getting out of control and we needed to handle up. We were sitting at a table, and at the next table four whites were playing dominos, when two Gangster Disciples walked over and one of them slapped John, knocking him to the floor. The other black guy stomped and kicked him. I jumped up and went over to confront the one who had slapped John and we got into a fight. Then I was punched from behind. Not one other white stepped up. I was pissed after that; sick of these dudes who want to sport swastikas and lightning bolts, and claim Aryan Pride yet are not willing to step up and take care of business when the time comes. Over the years, I had stepped up many, many times and was beaten down, even stabbed. But I never ever let anyone openly disrespect me and the men I ran with.

There are many AB members who have heart, whose only family are the other members. Being in a gang for some men fills a void left in the world. They find like-minded men, love, respect and unity. Some men do not have any family, love or support. They live to smoke cigarettes and weed, and being AB gives them access to the drugs and cigarettes. I have been on units where we would be 20 deep in one dorm. Of the 20 AB members, only five or six had outside love and support. So those few found themselves having to buy extra food and drink items. Each member is required to pay dues to the treasurer who does for the bros on 23-hour lockdown. Many members could not even come up with toothpaste, deodorant, stamps or coffee to pay their dues. They were mooches; AB in name only. Then there are the men who join a gang because, on their own, they are weak and cannot survive. They think all their fellow gang members put a shield around them. I have seen many of these men from different gangs exposed over the years. Then there is the criminal element of every gang, the diehards that understand money brings power. Those who have the heart to step up, step out, rather than taking by force cigarettes, weed and commissary from weaker prisoners. They are the ones who extort prisoners with big money, establish relationships with female boss ladies to get people in their areas to locate their families in order to approach them and tell them “do this” or “do that”. When I look back, I understand why men doing life - 99 years

or lengthy sentences - are willing to be so loyal, true to the game, and will take whatever steps necessary to ensure they have everything they need to make life on the inside more convenient, more bearable. The problem is when a young man, regardless of race, gets a property offence, or a less serious offence such as unlawful use of a motor vehicle, burglary or theft, and the courts give him anywhere from two to ten years. Instead of putting them around other people with similar offences, they send these young men, first-time offenders, to gladiator units or hard-core units where murderers, robbers and hard-core gang members are, and these young men are suddenly in a hostile environment and sadly they are around criminally-minded older convicts. These young men become hardened criminals themselves.

September 11<sup>th</sup> happened at a time when I was not very content with the men I was running with. I missed my family, and after seeing my mother so heart-broken, her baby boy all stapled and stitched up, my Momma told me she feared the call that one day would come if I did not take control of my life. After Outlaw, Cowboy, and Carter let the two Gangster Disciples jump me and did not help me, I pulled back, angry. I fell out of place to another dorm and asked Mike, the district captain speaking for AB on that unit, what we were going to do about the three men who stood there while I was beaten. I was told I was the one in the wrong; that jumping that guy was none of my business. I just walked away. These guys were not truly down with representing. Every gang loses respect when the gang fails to step up and be real.

So I pulled away the day I stepped up to the TV, saw the planes crashing into the Twin Towers, people jumping to their deaths. Cowboy stepped up beside me, laughing as the first twin tower fell: "I hope there's a lot of Jews and Blacks in there". I went to my bunk, covered my eyes and cried. Not just for America, but for my being so blind, so ignorant, so quick to be a follower and not a leader; from the age of 13, when I first stuck that needle in my arm. Up until September 11<sup>th</sup>, all I ever did was hate, hurt people, break my mother's heart. What would it take for me to become a better man; to be able to get out of prison and stay out? What September 11<sup>th</sup> made me realize was that tomorrow is never guaranteed, and how precious life really is.

I don't know if it was God or Fate. But on September 11<sup>th</sup>, that mask was removed, the hate replaced with understanding, compassion, love. I stepped up and stepped out. But this time, not as an enforcer, ready to bust heads, stab or kill. Rather I stepped out as a human being wanting a better way of life. I went to Mike and told him I was dropping out. He asked me would

I “blood out”. I told him, “Ya’ll do what ya’ll gotta do, I’ll do what I gotta do.” I knew I had become a marked man, but I knew if I continued down the path I had been following all my life, I would end up dead or spending the rest of my life in prison, or possibly even end up on “Death Row”.

I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. It was time for me to make choices for my own life, not to have others in a position to tell me “bust this head, stab this guy”. I dropped and became who I should have been all along - a human being!

One week went by and I was through being classified and sent on to one of the major institutions. Usually if you’re in a gang, as soon as you arrive on a new unit, you seek out your people. This time I kept to myself. I didn’t know anyone as I was not from Texas. My name was known throughout the Texas prison system and AB had sent out a mandatory SOS to all AB members throughout the units. It was a direct order from high rank, to smash on sight no matter where they would see me - in the chapel, the dining hall, commissary line, education department. It is usually a severe beating since the men know that an SOS “hit” means having to hurt or jump someone in front of the guards. If you are going to jail anyway, you may as well hurt the target as badly as possible.

A couple of weeks after being there, I was going through the chow line. I got my tray. Usually on most units you sit by order. As I walked up to the table where there was a seat open, I spotted Jim Bo. He and I were Road Dogs years earlier on another unit. I knew as soon as he saw me that he would have no choice but to stand up. He had seen me issue some pretty severe beat downs and take some pretty severe beat downs. The question was how loyal would he be to his people. Would he jump me or give me a pass? I knew that somewhere in that chow hall, of the 150 to 200 men, AB members were spread about. I knew if Jim Bo and I fought, his people were going to be all over me. When I sat down, Jim Bo said “What’s up, dude?” and put his hand out. I shook it and he asked me, “What dorm are you on? Have you hollered at Ace yet?” I said I was on B7 and no, I had not hollered at Ace yet. He told me Casey was on my dormitory.

When I got back to the dormitory, I laid back and pondered my situation. There are over 100 units in the system. When an order goes out, it goes out from rank to rank, unit to unit, and by word of mouth on transfer buses, et cetera. It was possible that no one on the unit had received word on me yet. I knew time was critical, as AB had people who are clerks who can very

easily find out where I went. I got up and went to see Casey who was sitting with two other whites and a Mexican mafia dude. I asked him if he had a few moments. I knew he was rank because he had two bars on his neck. He was a Second Lieutenant. We shook hands. I told that he would probably be getting a letter about me, and that I wanted to come to him out of respect. I explained everything and told him that whatever needed to be done, I respected it. We parted ways.

Not long after, probably two weeks, Casey told me to go outside. I knew I was in trouble. Outside was where the gangs congregated 15 to 20 deep. I went out and saw Casey pointing me out. About 12 men were gathered. I went over to them and Casey told me “3 on 1” behind the handball court. I look over to the handball court and saw two whites already waiting, and a third one who was talking to two Mexicans, asking for a few moments. I walked over, got in the circle, took the beat down.

After that, I began focusing on getting educated. I completed electrical, and I got involved in Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Winners’ Circles. Today as I sit here writing this, I have less than 50 days and I discharge. I have already had it approved to go straight home to my family. Sadly, my family has already pretty well written me off as “gonna fail”. Society has written me off as “gonna fail”. The deck is stacked against me as the area my mother lives in has no bus route. She does not have a car and she lives in low rental housing. My mother is very poor.

There is another thing I am going to have to face. When I came to prison I wore 30” waist and 29” length pants, XL shirt and size 8½ shoes. Now, it’s a 38” waist, 30” length pants, 2XL shirt, and size 9 shoes. I will walk out of the walls with only the clothes on my back. So many questions with no answers. I want to get out, go to work, help my mother, possibly speak at youth centres, schools, colleges, jails, prisons. I don’t want to be a statistic anymore. I want to be a success story. Can I make it? Yes I can. I am a winner not a quitter, a leader not a follower, a success story not a statistic; a human being who just wants a chance to live a free happy life in society. And I will because I am sick and tired of being sick and tired.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Over the past 25 years, this 39 year old writer was incarcerated on numerous occasions, serving a total of 18 years in prisons in four states. He was recently released after the expiry of his last 10 year sentence.