

My Testimony

Chris Maddox

Unlike most children in my community I grew up with both parents in my life. My mom and dad got divorced when I was about eight years old. It seemed as though it did not have an affect on me, but it did, I continued however, to be an honor student for the next two years.

When I used to walk to school I used to go pass this block where there seemed to always be excitement. I was curious about what used to go on there. One day on my way home from school me and my friends decided to walk down that block. While walking through we saw people standing on corner, talking loud, rolling dice, selling drugs, talking to women, drinking alcohol, and countless other things. This lifestyle seemed exciting to us.

We wanted to be just like them. I held my first gun when I was in the sixth grade. I smoked my first blunt of marijuana around the same age. Slowly I was inheriting this street lifestyle that I thought was so fun. On Friday nights a group of us used to go to the train station to look for Latino men to jump them and rob them. We used to steal bikes. We started getting deeper and deeper in the lifestyle. We were no longer satisfied with riding stolen bikes, now we were driving stolen cars. At this point I was in the street lifestyle.

I was hanging out late nights drinking and smoking. I was basically void and without substance. I was fighting in school on a daily basis, cutting classes, and leaving school when I wanted. In 1998 my lifestyle went to a whole different level. I started gang banging. I was initiated as an Outlaw. I went from doing petty crimes to big crimes.

It was 53 Outlaws in Hempstead. We had dreams of taking over the hood. By 1999 we were recognized by all street gangs, police, and government officials. On Friday nights we use to have meetings at a local park to initiate new members and discuss things we thought need improvement within our set.

We were organized criminals. On Nov. 30, 2000 my life took another major turn. I got arrested for an armed robbery. This was my first time ever going to prison. I was sentenced to 5 years. While in there I met up with my Outlaw brothers. It was almost like a disease that we all were catching. While in there it opened my eyes. It let me see who my true friends were. I was not really upset that I was in prison I knew what I did was wrong.

I had to handle my time. But I still was angry because the people who I thought were my friends didn't come through like I thought they should of. So I spent my whole time in prison reading and working out. I prayed at night here and there. Then it was time for me to come home. I thought I had all the answers, I thought I knew what I

wanted out of life, but something about me was still empty. When I came home I was talking to one of the men and I was telling him that I needed a job. He took me to meet Bishop J. Raymond Mackey. While talking to him he challenged my thought process. From the start I saw his love and passion for saving lives. I know it wasn't just another job for him. When I strayed away, he consistently called me and did whatever it took to get me back on track. His vision for H.E.V.N. became my vision. I wanted to help save people and be a mentor to others also. I no longer wanted to be recognized by gang bangers and street hustlers. I wanted people to see the good work I was doing in the community. No I sit before all as a program Assistant Outreach Worker for H.E.V.N.

Lord Knows!