

Homework Assignment  
Divine Allah  
September 12, 2017

### Personal Narrative

My name is Divine C Allah and I am a New York, Bronx native. I grew up in the South Bronx - in Patterson Housing Projects. I grew up with both my parents, a brother and two sisters. My childhood memories are centered around pain, sadness, and sorrow. These troubling memories placed me in a perpetual state of despair. As I reflect on my past, my earliest memory of my childhood was when my family and I lived on Bathgate Avenue in the Bronx. Those were the days of tragedy.

When I was young, in 1975 my sisters and I were playing on the fire escape. Being a kid, I was bored and wanted to play, so I said to my sisters, "look what I can do," and I jumped to the opposite side of the fire escape across the opening leading into the apartment below us. I jumped a few times and I remember my sister saying, "You better stop, I'm going to tell Mommy", but I continued. As I recall my sister Joanne said, "I can do it better than you" which is when she took off her shoes. She had on red socks with white flowers on them. She was trying to outdo me. I felt like telling her not to do it because I felt as if something was not right. But I couldn't get the strength to say it. That is when she jumped. She made it across the hole the first time. When she tried a second time she slipped because of her socks and fell to her death. To me it was like she was trying to grab me but I didn't reach out to help her. That part is vague but her death burdened my soul. I felt like I caused her death. In fact, my mother blamed me for her death, a claim she currently denies. Subsequently, I became the product of her pain and sorrow. In those days, I was disciplined poorly. I was punched, smacked, stomped; hit with shoes, belts, brushes and even a baseball bat. My mother recalls those days as proper way to discipline her child. To me it was abuse.

I spent the last twenty years living in various New York State Prisons serving a 20-year sentence for a choice I made that could have been avoided. In total, I have spent over 25 years of my life behind bars. Luckily, today I am out of prison, on parole, and living at the Fortune Academy on Riverside Drive.

Throughout my life I have faced many hardships which include witnessing the death of my sister, being shot 7 times and losing use of my legs, addiction and several run ins with the law—just to name a few. I have been arrested more than 20 times and have served 3 state bids. The first time I was arrested I didn't really think about it much. It was part of the life I was living. I never thought I would be sent away for 25 years but consequences for my choices were not something I thought of. Because I was incarcerated for over 20 years in total, I have very strong feelings about the prison system. In prison, the environment was one that promoted a culture of abuse of power among most of its employees. I feel those who are poorly represented in

court in most cases get screwed. Prison is imposed punishment; however, once in prison inmates are at the mercy of the corrections officers. It is an unfair, toxic, and highly abusive environment. Any attempt at rehabilitation is being undermined by the direct actions of the Corrections Officers. It wasn't until the last 10 years of my bid that I decided that I had to take responsibility for my life and make the changes needed if I were to ever be considered for parole and/or avoid recidivism.

While I was incarcerated I obtained my GED, became a Facilitator in Transitional Services, and was the Facility Chairman for Alcohol Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA). It was while working in Transitional Services that I discovered my passion for helping others in the criminal justice system though sharing my own personal tragedies and experiences in hopes that someone might hear something they could connect with to change. I am extremely proud of myself for the hard work I did to take control of my life and fight for the type of life I want for myself. Because of my love of helping other people, I am excited to take my 25 plus years of incarceration and put them all to good use in hopes of making a difference in someone's life. I have experienced being shot 7 times and living with paralysis, family tragedies, addiction and lack of positive influence for most of my life. I want to be a Mentor to help others who are struggling with many of life's problems in hopes that they can avoid taking the path I took by becoming 87B1417, 93B6336 & 99A1557.