

Path to Freedom

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Narrative Writing

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Chris Wilson's childhood made him the man that he is today. All along Chris knew he was a good child, but the violence that surrounded him and his family caused him to make a decision that changed his life forever.

Wilson was a young man navigating changes before he ever rose to fame as an author and advocate. Grief was frequent in his Baltimore area, where gunshots were as frequent as school bells. Chris's father's throat was sliced in the family's kitchen, as well as being murdered when he was a young boy. "A man attempted to assault him," Wilson remembered. His early ideas of justice and survival were influenced by the misery and terror that occurred.

By the age of 17, all those factors came together in a single instant that altered everything. A man was shot and killed by Wilson. His classroom was turned into a courtroom. His teachers were replaced by a judge. Life in prison is a sentence. He recalls thinking that the world was already giving up on him at that very moment.

However, his eyesight was not restricted by the walls of the prison. They sharpened it, at least. In a chilly cell, feeling angry and disoriented, he was confronted by a con who acknowledged his intellectual ability yet challenged his spiritual foundation. However, the con remarked, "I never hear you talk about God." That question kept coming back to Wilson, making him think about who he wished to be rather than what had occurred to him.

He then started writing. A plan, not diary entries or letters at home, but a comprehensive strategy.

He drew up a plan for redemption on his bunk in the gloomy jail light. He would eventually obtain his release after earning his GED, going on to gain a college degree, and learning Spanish. In addition to improving his own life, he would go back to support the community he had previously felt compelled to defend. He claimed to have developed a plan outlining how he would obtain his freedom, college degree, and high school diploma.

Despite the harsh surroundings and steel doors, Wilson was able to find support in unexpected places. One of his most loyal supporters, his grandma, never wavered in her beliefs. She reminded him to just go to school and not worry about it. Wilson, in the meantime, struggled with himself. He asked himself, "With whom are we at war?" Was the environment at stake? His situation? Or the belief that the only language he could hear around him was violence?

He recalls the time when, despite the world's demands for him to mature too quickly, he nevertheless felt like a child. Wilson recalled his youth prior to going to prison, when he should have been focused on school and girls rather than violence and survival, and remarked, "My beard and mustache had just connected." Instead, long before he saw a courtroom, pain and anxiety forced him to make adult judgments.

Inspired by Wilson's unwavering transformation, a judge gave him a second opportunity sixteen years after he had been imprisoned. He had a mission in addition to a list of goals when he was set free in 2012.

His path is presented to the world today in the novel he wrote, *The Master Plan*. Speaking in offices, youth centers, and classrooms, he shares his tale to inspire possibility rather than pity.

Wilson reportedly told his mother, "I love you, and that's who you raised me to be." It was a commitment kept, not only appreciation.

Chris Wilson demonstrates that even the most damaged futures can be restored with a plan, discipline, and faith. He went from an eternity in jail to a life filled with purpose.