

"Let This Be A Lesson For All Of Us"

By: Rufus C. Rochelle

Sometimes it can make others laugh; sometimes it can make them sad. It all depends on what particular side you are on and the heart of the person. Standing at the window where I work in the Education Department, I often see the visitors entering the prison gates in wheelchairs and the kids singing and playing while asking "Mom, when is Dad coming home?" It's always that very last kiss, handshake, smile or words, "I love you!" that often linger in our minds as we head back to our prison rooms. Now, put yourself in my place and imagine being in a prison-like setting, and more importantly, see your son or daughter for the first time in the visiting room at the prison.

This was the case with me, and I'm sure there are many others like Rufus, the writer. I have been imprisoned exactly eighteen (18) years this May 2006, day for day. Yes, sadly prior to being relocated to Coleman Correctional Complex (Medium) facility in March of 1996, I never got a chance to see, hold, nor talk to my younger daughter in person. We only spoke to each other on the telephone throughout the years, and I think her curiosity was that one day if it's God's Will she would meet her biological dad in person. Her mother, Michelle, was pregnant with her prior to my incarceration and even after I was sent to prison she had no one to help raise this child other than herself.

I obviously feel bad because I always wanted to be much more than a dead-beat dad to my kids, and always wanted the best for each of them, but once I was convicted in Federal Court for what is called a "dry conspiracy" of 50 grams of crack cocaine, in which I have always maintained my innocence up to this day. I was shipped far away from family and loved ones. This was a common practice back during that particular time frame. I know you often heard the 'ole saying, distance love is hard for both people involved, and more so. It brings many changes in a person's life, especially when the other half of that person, meaning the man is behind bars. The two of us, numerous miles away from each other and as much time as I have, a thirty-five (35) year sentence is a lot of time. As a matter of fact, it's considered a life sentence mainly because the sentence was imposed with no chance of parole. I have always throughout my years of incarceration maintained a good relationship with my kids' mom and the kids themselves. I realize the kids' mother has become involved in another relationship, but that doesn't stop us from being friends. I can truly say I'm extremely proud of my daughters and all the positive things they are trying to accomplish. I often let them know Dad loves them and will not stop loving them. In other words, I'm committed to writing them, sending cards, phone calls and other little gifts that I'm able to purchase from behind bars for my daughters, even if I have to sacrifice the little funds I might get. It's not all about me, it's all about them now, and God knows I feel

good about it.

I further realize throughout the years of my imprisonment, primarily all my friends have disappeared and went on with their lives. And some have even passed. It's amazing and sad, especially, when you see your mother or father enter the prison gates and knowing the pain and suffering we have created and they are still there for us regardless if the road is bumpy or smooth. I often let Mom and Dad know I love them and exactly how much I truly and sincerely appreciate them for everything throughout the years.

I was told years ago as a young kid growing up concerning a relationship and Mom, and that saying goes 'if you have a bad relationship with Mom,' the chances are in most cases you as men will have a bad relationship with your spouse. I ask the brothers or men to be respectful to the ladies, men, and each other and pull those pants up! If you know where the low-rider, 'pants pull down thing' that many of you think is so cool, that is showing your behind. If you only knew where that derived from, you would pull those pants back up and not wear them hanging off your butt!! It allegedly derived from prison years ago. It was stated that when a young guy came to jail, he was taken advantage of, in other words, 'raped' by the older or savage style prisoner, and the prison guard allegedly took the youngster's belt to keep him from hanging himself because of the traumatic experience. Therefore, with no belt, this caused his pants to sag. They went to the streets once they were released from jail wearing their pants like that. Now, this generation has adopted what they thought was a style and look where it has taken us today. We must put GOD in our lives and let Him lead us, because He won't deceive us, even in prison.

Publisher's Note: If you, the reader, would like to comment on this article or any other articles written by Rufus C. Rochelle, feel free to contact him at the following address:

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