

2-4-19

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Hey Fam,

I heard about the "cousin letters" a few weeks ago from my mom, but kind of forgot about it until I got Matthew & Emily's letters a couple days ago. Why haven't we done this sooner?! I think it's a great idea, and I've been wanting a way to rekindle my relationship with everyone for quite some time but didn't know how. I know that I have distanced myself from the family the past couple of years because I was embarrassed of my actions, and because I was ashamed. I know now that I should have asked for help instead of hiding. I regret not believing the family loves me unconditionally, and I apologize for being so selfish. My hope is that these letters begin to repair the relationship I've been so careless with. So here we go.

~~I'm sure most of you know by now that I am serving out the sentence~~

I'm sure most of you know by now that I am serving time at the Mitchellville Prison for Women. After being involved in a robbery in 2016, I spent two years in various rehabs and facilities trying to get a deferment. Unfortunately, I was given many chances to accomplish this, but never did. So I am required

to spend 5 years or 10 inside the fence. I arrived here in October and will leave here on parole in June of 2023. But I am not discouraged. I am determined to make the best of my time, to learn more about who I am and prepare myself to live a different life than the one that got me here in the first place.

My best friend Angelia, the first time she visited me here, told me she'd been watching "prison shows" to get an idea of what it's like. That cracked me up. It's nothing like those shows, I promise. Mitchellville focuses a lot on rehabilitation and re-entry, so the facility is nice and I actually have quite a bit of freedom. I live with two roommates in my room on a unit that has flatscreen T.V.'s, computers, exercise equipment and a kitchenette. Outside of my unit there is a dining hall, a DMACC education center, a super nice gym, a salon, and a dog park. I spend most of my time at school and the gym. I have a job - tutoring women to pass the high-school ~~ex~~ equivalency exam, and I love it. I have my own classroom which is nice, and I get to help women accomplish something. Last month one of my students who had dropped out of school in 7th

grade graduated. So she gets to leave here with something that opens up possibilities she's never had before. I was so proud of her.

I work M-F 8am to 3:30, and most of the time I go to the gym after work. I'm in a "wellness" class, so I have to eat right and work out every day. It sucks, but I'm trying to learn the importance of living a healthy lifestyle.

In my free time, I read. A lot. You know you're a Hammes if you love to read. I read a lot of memoirs and biographies - currently one on Jimi Hendrix and one on Malcolm X. I'm studying Astronomy and Accounting, too. I figure I should learn as much as possible, and so far I'm doing a good job of that. My job allows me to work on my own projects, too, which is nice.

I'm so glad to hear what's going on in your lives. I hope this letter finds you all well.

Love,

Rachael