

# ESCAPE FROM THE STREET

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# INTRODUCTION

According to the general overview of the context of this book which is subject for analysis. It is inferreded to be a complex subject with lots of meanings to any individual viewing the title as the name implies. Some people might as well be thinking that before you must be talking about escaping from the street, then you must have acquired a huge sum of money which is not actually the contention of this book--But rather the book will be sharing a deeper view to the context.

The street has different classes, but I will be subjecting my analysis mostly on the lower class street individuals with little insights and reference to the higher class street individuals. The higher class street individuals are the wealthy class, but always indebted to something more powerful than them which cannot be compromised in most cases. The lower



class individuals are mostly the tools used by the higher class ones for different negative perpetrations, hence making their vulnerability status very high.

This book will be emphasizing on disclosing the basic principles and insights with respect to the different chapter subjects for analysis with different flexible ethics, and the depth knowledge of the street and its affairs.

# 1

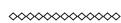
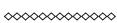
CHAPTER ONE

## MEANING OF STREET IN THIS CONTEXT





**B**ased on the context, Street is an unfavorable geographical zone filled with different sets of people with unstable mindsets, both young and old irrespective of their genders and age with a particularpursuits of trying to survive with the unfavorable conditions around. Everybody on the street has divers motive that is particular to individual entity, in other words, they have different mindsets and orientations that is based on how deep they were on the street, because that word "street" is quite deep with different levels of inclinations. Personally I would classify street to peripheral, middle and high level based on how deep the individual entity had gotten soaked into it.



I personally believed also that no matter the class or level any individual might have falling into, he or she could still be saved, but would depend critically on the measures to adopt for recovery considering the level the individual must have falling into after general scrutiny or assertion.

Street has its own life style or behavioral pattern. The life style of every individual on the street is always subjected to their individual levels on the street. One person can have more than one street attributes e.g smoking, drinking, homeless, rapist, thief, troublesome etc. Via some personal inferences on the street, I have come to some notice, that many folks on the high street level or the deeper street folks have a particular mentality of doing anything for daily survival unremorsefully as they grow older with the street life style.

# 2

CHAPTER TWO

# THE LIFE ON THE STREET





A street life to the peripheral or lower class street folks is a life of carelessness generally with no sense of responsibility of any kind.

A street life for some street folks is a life without a set purpose and goal, but only the day to day doings or activities.

It's a life of no regret sort of, in which anything is allowed to happen anytime and anywhere.

A street life is a life with so much fears of the unforeseen and worry. Talking about street life and taking Africa as a case study. We have different countries in Africa with a lot

of similarities as to the subject in this context, but I will be concentrating on Nigeria in my analysis being my country, where I grew up and schooled.

Nigeria is one place you would have mixed feelings living in, and its street life is one thing you cannot actually forget especially if you live to pass through it.

With my own perception, I will say, if anybody could live and survive in Nigeria, then you can never forget your experiences.

The street life experience in Nigeria is different from that in USA, Canada, UK, Australia, Russia and many other countries like that, but they all have some similarities. if you go by dictionary meaning of street, with street being just a public road in a city, town or village, with houses and buildings on one or both sides.

In Nigeria, street is more than this definition, but it is a home. From Beere in Ibadan to Ajegunle in Lagos, Rumuodara in port-harcourt to the streets of warri, the home of average Nigerians is the street. In contrast to the GRAs, estates and other The street is overpopulated with people who are

trying to get rich with their hustles, while some even dies in the process of the street hustles. In this part of the world as have seen so far, a single room may house six or more members of a family. It got to some extent, where you see some house owners placing a notice to restrict and control the number of their house occupant. A large number of people spend few hours sleeping anywhere they end their daily activities, and this people happen to be ones the so called politicians rely on to get into their desired offices.

Nigeria street is one of the noisiest hoods in the world. You will see cassette or record sellers, religious places like mosque and churches, car hoots, Tradomedical sellers and traders constituting unregulated noises together at the same time. However, most Nigerians revels in this noise as it is a way of life for them.

However, most Nigerians revels in this noise as it is a way of life for them. Street carnivals and other jamborees are peculiar to the street in Nigeria.

Another common thing about Nigerian streets is the use of slangs. Many words are cloned and used in the day to day activities by individuals living together on the street. You

can even get lost if you don't understand the streets lingua franca based on how it's been used on the street.

The words are encoded to suit the people's lifestyle. For you to be able to cope and survive you just have to learn those words if you find yourself on the street. Street urchins, bus conductors, street lords are the originators of the street languages. If you must survive in this part of the world, Nigeria, street is a learning platform.

You have to be smart or else you will be grounded by the forces around you. The street has shaped and modeled many who dared to rise from grass to grace. It is a fuel that fires anyone who sees it as a starting point to tour the world. The way of life of many Nigerians has been influenced by the different street affairs happening around them. The people lives in packed settlements rather than being divided with the same mindset and notions based on individual wants. There is a general saying here in Nigeria, that there is no dullness on the street.

# 3

CHAPTER THREE

## THE TYPES OF PEOPLE YOU FIND ON THE STREET





We have the helpless orphans on the street hustling and struggling for survival:

It is most times hard for individuals in this class to survive through because of the survival stakes. Some even die in the process of their survival quest. Many individuals who fall in this class get their foundation affected negatively alongside with the negative effect on who they grow up to become. Literally an orphan is someone whose parents have died, are unknown, or have permanently abandoned them. It is commonly used to refer to those child, who have lost both parents due to death.

Various groups use different definitions to identify orphans. Orphans are relatively rare in developed countries. Because most children can expect both of their parents to survive their childhood. Much higher numbers of orphans exist in war-torn nations and some under-developed nations.

Orphan characters are extremely common as literary protagonists, especially in children's literature. The lack of parents leaves the lives, by freeing them familial obligations and controls, and depriving them of more prosaic lives. It creates characters that are self-contained and introspective and who strive for affection. Orphans can metaphorically search for self-understanding through attempting to know their roots.

Furthermore, if one parent-child relationship is important, removing the other parent prevents complicating the necessary relationship.

All these characteristics makes up orphan attractive character.

Many religious texts, including the Bible and the Quran, contain the idea that helping and defending orphans is

a very important and God-pleasing matter. The religious leaders Moses and Muhammed were orphaned as children. Several scriptural citations describe how orphans should be treated.

Sometimes many individuals whose parents don't care about their living standards nor anything about them, declares themselves as orphan, simply because they had no helper nor support within the household. This significant situation is common in some households in Africa and Asia, perhaps due to the differences in some of the parent orientations.

Some even have siblings and uncles who weren't well to do in their respective prospects, which conforms them to basically minding their business themselves, with concentrating on their self-survival alone, as some of them would say "Nobody was there for me during my own time, so find a way of survival by yourself".

We have the homeless sets of individuals on the street irrespective of the gender differences, and age, with different vulnerabilities:

Nobody likes or prefers to be homeless, but looking deeply we would see the different reasons that rendered several people homeless. Homelessness with gender inequality is another case on its own, However, Men tended to be homeless for longer periods and were more likely than women to sleep on the streets.

Men were also more likely than women to have a drinking problem and to have been convicted of a crime. The most striking gender differences occurred on service utilization variables; women were much more likely than men to have received social services. Taking homelessness as living in housing that is below the minimum standard or lacks secure tenure. People can be categorized as homeless if they are: living on the streets (primary homelessness); moving between temporary shelters, including houses of friends, family and emergency accommodation (secondary homelessness); living in private boarding houses without a private bathroom or security of tenure (tertiary homelessness).

The legal definition of homeless varies from country to country, or among different jurisdictions in the same country

or region A home in real sense is not only a physical space, but also a place of emotional wellbeing with provisions for roots, identity, security and a sense of belonging. We have the dirty business dealers on the street: For example-- the kidnappers, harlots, thieves, fraudsters and people with all types of immoral dealings sort of. Hence, any business that behaves in a dis-honest or un-ethical way is said to be dirty. Some business deals don't even seem to be dirty, but looking at it deeply you would see they are dirty. We have the forsaken individuals on the street (The people who does not have anybody to cater for their needs but left to surfer):

It quite hard for this sets of people because they get exposed to a very deep street life style which have the tendency to lead them to untimely death or anything dangerous.

We have the individuals with no proper upbringings or home training on the street, which comprises of spoilt rich and middle class parent kids, and the poor parent kids and so on and so forth: This sets of people get conformed to street life when they get over pampered by the parent or guardian which is quite detrimental to their general safety. Most times they get lured-in by their peers socially with

all kinds of seductive social tools. It would take a discipline and well trained individuals morally to resist those social seductive tools. Parents should be held responsible for these because they are in the best position to curtail such.

**Street people** These are people who live a public life on the street of a city. Street people are frequently homeless, sometimes mentally ill, and often have a transient lifestyle. Certain neighborhoods, especially those in neighborhoods close to commercial districts have familiar figures to the entire community.

We have some contemporary street people, some of whom may be beggars who often ask for spare change on the streets; bag ladies who often have all their possessions in a shopping cart which accompanies them. They also may include street performers, and people with chronic mental illness.

The term street people is used somewhat loosely and may be used simply to refer to eccentric people who live in bohemian neighborhoods. However, the defining characteristic is time spent in the street, wandering the streets for a substantial portion of their day or night. This

street presence combined with their distinctive disheveled appearance, result in some individuals becoming familiar to residents of the neighborhood they frequent.

Street people are said to have an unwritten code or set of rules that govern interaction between street people.

Referred to as “code of the Road” it emerged from the Hobo camp of the depression era to encompass urban street people.

Poor economic and social conditions can result in accumulations of the homeless, often called street people, in certain neighborhoods. This may result in revival of vagrancy laws, or similar laws which may prohibit lying or sitting on the street.

Results and attitudes vary, especially as liberal communities attempt to grapple with large numbers of the homeless.

# 4

CHAPTER FOUR

# INSIDE LIFE





Inside-life is like a saying in Nigeria for street folks to transcribe or denote different street scenarios. It can also be seen as a connotative slang used by street folks to describe different street attributes perpetrated by any individual. It's not a must that the perpetrator should be a street person, in as much as the activity carries a negative effect, it will be termed "inside-life". It depends sole on the class of the individual on the street. Below is highlighted overviews of the life inside the street.

## **Street life comprises of risks always, where every individual seem to feel unsafe at every point in time:**

The environment on the street is filled with different activities that poses a threat to human life and comfortability. Life on the street is Unhealthy and projects unstable feeding timings depending on the class the individual falls into. At this stage, individuals just want to while away each day with a particular activity that could help them forget their troubles and live on to the next day and so on, for example, smoking themselves out, long time sex with drugs, vigorous drinking and other excessive activity that would help them get high to while each day away as they live on. The life on the street is always vulnerable to different types of attack. Different types of attacks always pops-up on the street, sometimes it might be the state security intrusions, for example, SARS which is particular in Nigeria or other privacy violating intrusions.

## **Life inside the street is filled with every day tension:**

Individuals tends to have unstable mind dispositions as a result of fear due to environmental threats.

Life inside the street is always careless in most cases with a self-survival-pursuits: In other words, individuals are hard minded and have the tendencies to engage in any bad act irrespective of it detrimental alliances. At this stage, every individual on the street thinks unidirectional, with a mindset of everybody being responsible for themselves.

Life inside the street is always disorder and random. Every individual at this stage is under one duress or the other at a particular point in time when the street tends to get rough with increasing vulnerabilities stakes or tendencies and keeping individuals in a nervous state.

### **Life inside the street is always unpredictable:**

You can never determine what would happen next on the street because everything seems vague always. Sometimes it might go rosy and suddenly changes otherwise.

### **Life inside the street is gender conditioner:**

Most times it is quite hard for unfit female individuals based on the wayward life style exposed to, or might go well for fitful female individuals who could easily get flexible to adopting any life style irrespective of its effect.

It's a life where you live each day according to what the day brings: every individual at this stage has a common mindset of only seeking any opportunity of just to have daily meal or substitute to help through the daily survival and live on. No positive futuristic thought or goal, but only to live and pass through each day as they come.

I will like to site some true life stories of some individuals with few reactions from the society.

An 18 years old boy called Tad, left his home in Lagos, the most populous city in Nigeria, when he was 13 to live on the streets. Tad, who goes by this nickname on the streets, was living with his dad and stepmother, but his dad traveled often for work. He got along with his stepmother at first, but Tad says she soon began to resent him. "My stepmom did not have a child, so she started maltreating me," Tad says. She ridicules him in public and abuses him at home.

"She would hang me up on the fan and flog me," he says. "She would put pepper in my private part, pull my ears. It was punishment upon punishment. She had different styles." To get away, Tad entered an academic competition in Surulere, a suburb of Lagos, which offered a scholarship

for further schooling. When he reached the finals, he was required to bring passport photographs, which he didn't have money to buy. So Tad took some of his stepmother's money that she had left on top of the TV. But when his friend needed photos too, Tad spent more than he had planned – the equivalent of \$1.00. "I knew I was going to suffer for it," Tad says. "She would tell me to count, 'How many 5 [naira] is in 350 [naira]?'

"That's the beating I will take." He reveals a mark on his hand from one of the beatings. "Look at my hand," he says. "This is a natural tattoo." His stepmother stormed his school to confront him about the money. "She came to embarrass me in front of my teachers," he says. While the teachers were arguing, he left. Tad calculated the beating he would take. "I will hang on fan," he says he told himself.

"She will hang me by my hand. She will call her brothers to help. I calculated it: hanging, pepper on my buttocks." He says he also recalled another technique she had used that involved putting him in a large metal container and pouring water on him for about 10 minutes, creating a drowning effect. He opted to flee.

"I took my sandals and ran," he says. Tad was at Kuramo Beach, a popular beach on Lagos Island, when a representative from Street Child Care and Welfare Initiative, a home for former street children, found him. He lives there today. Children live on the streets in Nigeria because of varying problems at home, including poverty, abuse and lack of emotional attachment with family. But they face other hazards on the street ranging from sexual violence to drug exposure.

Rehabilitation centers assist street children with their basic needs, promote education and reconnect them with their families. But workers say the children will return to the streets unless the community changes its mentality about street children and strengthens the institution of family.

There are no official statistics available on how many street children in Lagos state, said Sunday J. Ichedi, head of the public affairs and international relation unit of the National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria, in a phone interview.

Oyeyemi Oyewale, the in-house counselor at the Street Child Care and Welfare Initiative, says that many children

end up on the streets as a result of broken homes and a lack of emotional attachment to their families.

He says that was also his experience as a 10-year-old. "It has to do with when you don't have any emotional fulfillment," he explains. "Nobody knew that I was on the streets. It took the intervention of my mum, who went to school only to find out that I'd been missing classes."

Poverty is another major reason why children end up in the streets, says Rose Swan, program officer at Child Life-line, a nongovernmental organization that rehabilitates street children. "An 8-year-old boy I interviewed said that his father told him that when he was his age, he was already working, so the boy should also start working and fending for himself," Swan says. "Many of the children end up in the streets because their parents cannot cater for them." A 15-year-old boy who goes by the nickname Ondato frequents Child Life-line's drop-in center. He lives on the streets and returns home once in a while.

But Ondato says his father is a polygamist and does not have the time to care for all his children. "When I am on the street, I can hustle and take care of myself," Ondato says.

"I work as a bus conductor. "He says he makes between 1500 naira (\$4.4) and 5,000 naira (\$14.4) a day, depending on how long he works. Comfort Alli, executive director of the Street Child Care and Welfare Initiative, says this is common among street children. "Some children feel that their parents are not taking care of them," she says. "Some feel that they are not going to school so there is no future for them, so let's see if there is any life out there. Some feel that there are too many children, so how are my parents going to cope?" Others have older parents who can't take care of them, Swan says. Peer pressure also plays a role. "They say: 'My friends are like this. Why am I not like this?'" she says.

"My friends have this, why can't I have it?" Many of these children are being lured into the streets by their friends." Some children take jobs on the streets, earn money and return well-dressed to their communities, telling other children that the streets are where the good life is, she says. That was the case for one 18-year-old who goes by the nickname Sunnex."I lost my mum, so my dad married another woman," he says. "I was hawking for her. Before

I go to school, I will hawk fish." If any money was ever missing or lost from a day of selling fish, his stepmother blamed him, and his father beat him, he says. When one of his friends returned from Lagos with tales of opportunity and adventure, Sunnex started saving money to go himself. "I knew that my father will beat me," he says. "I would be beaten with rubber, and my body will tear. So, on Sunday, I left church as if I want to go and use the toilet and went to the main road." Sunnex boarded a bus and has been in Lagos since. Though he has reunited with his family, he still stays at the Street Child Care and Welfare Initiative, where he has access to education. He took the examination to qualify for university education earlier this year. "I like to become an actor, he says, smiling. "I love acting". But Alli of the Street Child Care and Welfare Initiative says that being on the street exposes children to many hazards. "They know more than you can ever imagine," she says. "Some pedophiles, terrible rich guys go into the streets to pick them up, to sodomize them and pay them peanuts. That's the fastest way of spreading HIV. "Iyawo Ibo" means "Ibo's wife" in the Yoruba language. A 14year-old earned this nickname after an older man who had offered her a

job during her early days on the streets attempted to take advantage of her sexually. She has been on the streets for six years now. She says she can't return home yet because she has no skills to show for her time on the street. Ondato and Iyawo Ibo, who both spend time at Child Life-line, talk about hard drugs on the street and their prices as if they are reeling through their mother's grocery list.

"We run errands for the adults on the streets, so we know," Ondato says of their involvement in drug trafficking. Girls are forced to use sex to survive, says Olajide Festus, an outreach officer at Child Lifeline, a local child welfare association. Earning little profit selling local gin, they accept that they must take up boyfriends, many who work as bus conductors, to receive enough money to live. "We give them sexuality training here on how they know and understand their bodies," Festus says of the association's drop-in center.

He draws a chart on a piece of paper to show how he explains sexually transmitted diseases to the children. "If A sleeps with B without a condom, B will end up sleeping with C, maybe also without a condom,"

Festus says. "If C sleeps with either A or B or even D without a condom, then diseases spread faster among them. But once girls are on the streets, it is tougher for them to say no to sex, he says. Sometimes they have to exchange sex for food or protection. "It is even much tougher for the girls to ask the men to use condoms, especially if the men are the older street touts," he says. "In such cases, they do not have choices. "Tee, 16 years old, has been living on the streets of Lagos for three years. She is eight months pregnant. "But the father of the child has denied responsibility," she says. "He says that he is in school and does not want a childSo, I have to keep managing.

"Swan says she tells girls who live on the streets that they must gain an education. "I tell them: 'You cannot just continue to live like this because you are a street child,' she says. "You have to change this mentality. Swan says the community also needs to change its mentality, explaining that the neighbors of the center are afraid of the children. "People have this perspective that they are troublemakers," Swan says. On days when more than 50 children come to the center, Swan must ask the additional children to wait

until the next day. "They stand outside the gate, bang the gate and they will make a lot of noise," she says.. "And when people pass, they will think that it is a terror zone. "This fear has prevented the staff from securing apprenticeship opportunities for several girls staying at the center. "I went out on the streets once and asked a woman who had a salon if she could take some of our girls," Swan says.

When the woman refused, Swan invited her to visit the center so she could see for herself the warm welcome the children would give her. But the woman again refused. Children come to the Child Life-line drop-in center in the mornings to rest, wash their clothes and eat before returning to the streets in the evenings. The center doesn't have the facilities to take the children in from the streets permanently, Festus says. Rather, it aims to assess them during a three-month period and to rehabilitate them. "What matters is the state of their minds," he says.

"There is this stigma that we are trying to correct. The center looks for nongovernmental organizations or homes where the children can stay permanently. But Festus says the ultimate goal is to reunite the children with their families. But many families don't accept their children after

they have been living on the streets. "Many times, parents misunderstand their children because they don't really communicate with their children," Swan says. She gives the example of a boy who keeps returning to the center because his father won't stop calling him a street child even after he returns home. "There is this boy who came to Lagos from Ekiti," she says. "We have reunited him with his family three times." Festus says that this will continue to happen until more people recognize the importance of a child's connection to his or her family.

This section comprises of different happenings inside the street in different continents of the world, with distinctive moral insights based on their differences; First to be disclosed is a story of a 17 years old boy, named Vikas Kumar who has been through more than what other teenagers could imagine according to him while narrating his story.

When he was nine, he ran away from his abusive parents and worked as a rag picker for a couple of years at a local train station, battled drugs addiction and came out clean.

"If an actor's dog gets hurt, it will be breaking news and will be covered by all newspapers and channels. But when a street kid dies on a railway platform or in an accident, no one seems to care" says Vikas Kumar. hmm, what an inside-life.

This is another story of a homeless encampment in Seattle; They call her "mom." Stephen, whose children have grown up, cooks and looks after the denizens of Camp Second Chance as if they were her own.

"I'm not going to let my family go hungry," she said. "We're doing our best to get through life. I don't let people mess with my family." She has known the cycle of dependence herself and been pulled down in it by partners, she said. Six times she's lost a place to live because her third husband got high and got them evicted.

The final time came when things started looking up. Her husband had just landed a job, but spent his first paycheck on meth and got them booted again. She went her own way at that point. "I broke the cardinal rule. I met him at rehab," she said.

"One of the first things he said was, 'Don't fall in love with me. I'm not good.' I should have listened." She didn't get sober until her third try in rehab. She's been homeless more than three years and has been talking with other campers about pooling money to rent a place, but it can cost \$1,200 to \$1,500 for tiny apartments. At one point, she and a daughter were living in someone's storage room for \$700 a month.

It was hard to afford on her monthly \$734 disability payment. "Most homeless people I know aren't homeless because they're addicts," she said. "Maybe they were at one time. Most people are homeless because they can't afford a place to live." Hmm, inside life. This is a story of man in UK, who is a plasterer by trade.

According to him, he said he has never been to jail, but four years ago he went to rehab for heroin addiction. He got through it but afterwards he relapsed and ended up just hurting everybody. That's when he ended up on the streets.

About eight months ago, he was begging, and the police kept coming over to him and asking him to move. According

to him, he said, they didn't tell him anywhere to go and get help. They just moved him. He got moved a couple of times and then they issued him a letter with a court date. He missed the first date because he was still on the streets and not thinking straight. Then he was asleep in a doorway one day, and they came and arrested him at two o'clock in the morning. He was in court the next day. The court fined him £150. The term they used in court was, 'Gathering money for alms.' According to him.

Afterwards he was just sent on my merry way. The courts didn't tell him anywhere to go to try and get support. Nothing like that.

The fine comes out of my benefits. That just makes it even harder. I had about £90 to last me a month. It's not right. It didn't deter me from begging. I was straight back out again. The same place. I was just trying to survive without being a criminal. It's either that (begging) or go out and rob because you're desperate. He nearly died on the streets after that according to how he narrated his story. His legs were rotten. After some months, he went to the hospital and they told him, he nearly had septicemia, but they also released him straight back onto the streets with no fixed

abode. 'Apparently, they weren't allowed to do that' he said. About a week later, he met Chris (outreach worker for local volunteer charity), who helped him get housed. Once he was off the streets, he got on a methadone script and he got cleaned since then with a good progression. Each day we are faced with decisions... what to do with our lives? To whom should we give our trust? As a young person, the road ahead seems so distant. We want what is in front of us, what we can grab right now. Our blindness to the possible future outside our immediate situation perpetuates our lack of vision to the endless possibilities that await us.

Being faced with a life sentence more times than not anchors our arrogance to pause long enough to use our own thoughts. Some of us came from what is called a broken home, abusing parents/family, foster care workers, etc. Abuse in all its forms can destroy our foundation. But along the way have we not asked ourselves, if it's really the life we want as a person. An outcast, an outsider who has lost all form of human reason and decency, someone who acts out of anger, someone who has no control over him/herself, a person who will only keep losing control whether

inside jail or outside, always under the supervision of some guard, police, probation officer, parole officer, correction officer, etc."? So, to whom do we owe our loyalty? Where do we draw the line between what's going to benefit us to create a life with real meaning or a life spent completely without control inside a prison where almost every moment of the day our lives are monitored? This is a question only each of us can answer, because no matter what others may tell us, we alone make a difference in our own lives. We can choose to take our power back to wake up to maturity, and start taking the hard road ahead outside our affiliations, or we can surrender and continue to let others do the thinking for us.

It's our own life, our own story. Who writes it?? That is our decision to make. With much love, and hopes of clarity for all.

This is the story of an 11 years old boy named Aaron Who became a street child. His brother & sister were both killed on the street. Here are their stories as told by Aaron:

life was good when I was young. I lived with my parents in Tanzania my country and our home was relaxed, but then

things changed. My Dad started drinking heavily and his behavior grew aggressive. It seemed like the alcohol had taken my Dad and replaced him with a different person; someone mean and angry. One-day Dad beat Mum so badly that she was left in a critical condition. When Mum recovered, she left us. That was the last time I saw her. Not long after that my sister left too, she was running from our Father's beatings.

Dad didn't like being alone so he ended up re-marrying, but my stepmother wasn't too fond of us. Sometimes she blamed us for things we hadn't done to provoke Dad into beating us.

My brothers didn't put up with it for very long before they decided to run away. I would have left too if I'd known where to go, instead I was the only child left at home.

When I was ten years old, my Dad and stepmum abandoned me and moved to a differed istrict. As Dad was walking out he said that I'd have to fend for myself. The neighbors occasionally fed me but most of the time I was hungry and had to steal to eat.

Eventually I was caught and in keeping with our custom the village forced me to leave. They would have killed me if I'd tried to stay; that's what happens to thieves. The only place I could go was to my maternal land (my Mum's family), but when I arrived my Uncle refused to take me in. He said that he had no wife and was struggling to find food for his own family. Uncle told me to go back where I had come from, to my Dad's land, but I don't think he knew that I'd been expatriated for stealing.

With nowhere to go I followed the roads to a small trading center. I found a coffin workshop which closed overnight and figured out how to sneak inside to sleep in their coffins. I was the only person inside that building at night. I used to wake myself up before dawn so that the owner wouldn't find me, then walk to the main city to find food and water. I got to know many of the street children but they thought I had a home to go to; I didn't tell them that I slept in a coffin. I was eleven years old when I arrived on the street and I lived there for two years. Eventually I started sleeping with my new friends in the city, underneath the market stalls. Most of the other street kids had jobs so they helped me find work in an abattoir.

I used to hold the cows' legs while they were being slaughtered and in exchange the owner gave me small pieces of meat. Sometimes I would roast the meat over a fire and eat it myself, other times I would sell it to buy water. Hunger was part of our daily lives; our jobs didn't pay enough to eat. Often we found ourselves stealing from market stalls, sometimes bread, sometimes cassava. I never did big burglaries though and I never pick pocketed. Those things scared me; the community kills anyone who is caught in a burglary. I used to pray that God would provide food to keep me from having to do that. I'm not a thief by nature, I was stealing to survive.

After a few months in town I found my older brother. He was earning big money doing robberies with his gang and sometimes he shared his profits with me.

He once gave me 1,500 shillings (USD 40¢) to start a business selling plastic bags. I purchased a box of bags then sold them individually to shop owners, which doubled the money I had. The business was successful and finally I didn't have to steal; until one night while I was sleeping someone robbed me and left me with nothing. Once again I couldn't afford food.

I gave my best effort to not return to stealing, but as my hunger grew my resolve faded and eventually I joined in one of my friends' endeavors. We stole from a woman and made 13,000 shillings (USD \$3.60), of which my share was USD \$0.80. I used half of it to buy plastic bags and with the other half I bought myself dinner.

When I was twelve years old I found my sister on the street. She was doing prostitution and had given birth to three children. She was only fifteen years old.

One of the kids was still with her, so I started sleeping beside them and helping with the child. One day the other prostitutes sent us away, but that turned out to be a good thing because my sister ended up with a hotel job washing dishes.

The owner paid her with leftover food which we always gave to the child.

In the cold season we often built fires to keep warm. If anyone had water we would boil it to drink, and occasionally someone would have meat to roast. One evening a stranger approached us while we were talking around the flames.

All of my friends ran away, but for a reason that I can't define, I stayed behind.

That man was Uncle Tom (Hope Street's social worker). He stayed with me for a long time and I ended up telling him everything. Uncle Tom slept on the street with us that night. When he left the next morning we made an appointment to meet up during the day.

Things didn't go so well when I met Tom in daylight. The community thought he was up to no good and they formed a mob to beat him. They thought he was going to traffic us, because he was interested in us street children. Tom showed them his Hope Street ID which calmed the mob, but the whole incident must surely have shaken him somewhat. He kept meeting with me though. A week or so later Tom brought Lillian to see me (another Hope Street social worker).

When we first met, she gave me the same type of big hug that my Mum used to give. Three weeks after I met Tom, when I was thirteen years old, I came to live at Hope Street. From my dormitory at Hope, I worried a lot about my sister and her kid.

Shortly after I moved here I snuck out to visit her in town. When I arrived on the streets I couldn't find my sister anywhere. I wondered if she was back in prostitution or if she had found a home, but when I asked around the news was the worst imaginable: apparently my sister had been killed. I didn't know whether to believe it, no-one was able to give me any details or tell me where she was buried.

The Hope Street staff really wanted to know where my home village was. I didn't tell them because I knew that they would take me there – all the other kids had been home for background checks, and I was scared at the thought of going back to Dad's land. The neighbors had threatened to kill me when they caught me stealing. So for six months I kept my secret, until I trusted Uncle Tom enough to let him take me home. When we arrived at the village all the neighbors ran away! They assumed Uncle Tom had come to collect a debt, that I had stolen something and he was there for retribution. Tom & Lillian waited for three hours but not a single person came out of hiding. Eventually Tom came up with a different strategy; he spoke to the village leaders, who listened to our story and asked the community to come. That's when I received confirmation

of my sister's death. The community told us that the police had brought her body to our village. They didn't give her a proper burial; they just threw her body in the bush. They couldn't tell me why she was killed or if her children are still alive.

Recently, I found out that my older brother also died on the streets. He was fourteen years old. I was told that he was caught stealing a solar-panel and beaten to death. Most people believe it was my Uncles who killed him, because he was causing too much trouble for our family.

My brother's gang used to leave town for a few months at a time to do burglaries in places where they couldn't be recognized.

They had friends in Congo who would scope out places for my brother to rob, and in exchange he would give them information to commit burglaries in our city. My brother stole a lot of things from many people. I heard that he didn't get a proper burial either, that his body was thrown in the river.

I'm the only one of my siblings who survived the streets; one died from sickness and the other two were killed.

Tom & Lillian (Hope Street's social workers) have been working to reconnect me to my father's land. The only relative of mine who still lives there is an uncle but he wouldn't co-operate with Tom, he wouldn't even give out his phone number. My uncle told Tom that if I try to move home he'll kill me for being a thief. Tom has been back to visit him three times; apparently he's warming up and has now given Tom his number, but he still won't visit me at Hope Street.

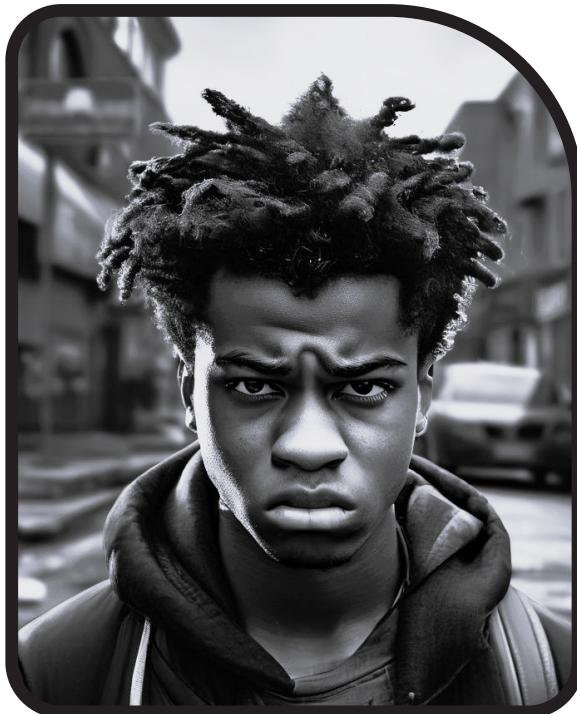
My uncle is correct: I was once a thief, but what he doesn't understand yet is that I've changed. When I first came to Hope I often misbehaved. Sometimes I wagged school to sneak to town, and once I stole a phone which Tom had to pay for. But now I'm enjoying life at Hope and my behavior is good.

I've been here for three years now and the staff say I'm a good role-model form the younger children. Hmm, quite a story to learn from. Inside Life there are many things happening at the same time, so don't sleep too deep to forget yourself.

# 5

CHAPTER FIVE

## SUDDENLY ON THE STREET





It's hard to imagine how someone can go from having a home one day to being out on the street the next. Many homeless people start out with jobs and stable residences, but then social and economic factors intervene, causing a rapid change in their living situation. The two biggest factors driving homelessness are poverty and the lack of affordable housing. Many of these people just live their lives to survive each day as it surfaces with nothing saved in the bank. The loss of a job, an illness, or another catastrophic event can quickly lead to missed rent or mortgage payments and ultimately, to eviction or foreclosure.

Losing a job happens much more readily today than it did a few decades ago, when most people worked for the same company until retirement. The decline in manufacturing jobs, outsourcing of jobs to other countries, and an increase in temporary and part-time employment has nicked away at the foundations of what was once a more stable job market.

Jobs today are not only far less secure than they were in the past, but many also pay less when considering the rate of inflation.

**Paul's Story** Paul Jesse grew up in a middle-class family in Estonia. After graduation from College, he moved to an apartment he rented for himself in another city but same country.

He got a job as a restaurant steward for a year. But then, everything changed. Paul developed schizophrenia, a brain disorder that can cause people to see hallucinations and hear voices. Once he began showing symptoms of his illness, Paul lost his job, and then his home. He began hitchhiking his way across the country, eventually ending up on the street.

For nearly two years, Paul slept on steam grates, park benches—wherever he could avoid getting picked up by the police. He was assaulted five times, mostly by teenagers. They threw rocks at him, beat him with a bat, urinated on him, and even covered him with spray paint—just for living on the street.

Eventually, Paul was caught shoplifting, and his probation officer told him that if he was to avoid jail time, he had to take medication for his schizophrenia and stay in a shelter which he later agreed and continue his life.

### **Charles Story**

In 2016 Charles had a car accident she was driving dangerously and didn't have a license from Lagos to Ibadan road. His girlfriend 'Cynthia' died from the accident. Charles right arm was severed below the elbow, then amputated. He served two years in prison and developed PTSD, depression and anxiety.

This happened three months into a relationship. It lasted six years, but there was an incident when Charles was violent. He stopped drinking to make sure it didn't happen again, but Charles new girlfriend wasn't willing to follow his lead.

So Charles became homeless, after the breakup. Charles didn't have a job at the time.

He spent a few weeks on his sister's couch.

Without help from her. There was no way Charles would have climbed out of that hole. Then a friends suggested he ring round estate agents; at the time, he wasn't really able to think for himself, but he later found an abode from himself.

A lot of people think homelessness can never happen to them, but it can, in the blink of an eye.

The Conservatives came in after the financial crisis and made people believe austerity was the only way forward, and the people at the bottom pay for it. So many are just about managing to put food on the table. They've no savings; if the main breadwinner lost their job, it would all go down the pan. Folake's story Folake was living in a condo apartment with her friend who she thought was very nice, but between Christmas and new year she started having issues with themselves.

One day both friends went into a combat which made folake end up in a hospital with two black eyes, a broken arm and an eyebrow that had to be glued back together. Still black and blue – to the local police station, and after three days they said they couldn't do anything as there wasn't enough evidence. against the friend which made folake flee to the street.

Being on the street wore folake down. She slept in car parks, where boy racers threw rubbish at her. Waking up, with no public toilets open. Folake lost weight and lost all communication with friends. She had a nervous breakdown. When Folake came to the Doorway drop in Centre, she was wearing trainers with the soles falling off.

I have noticed homelessness rate going up, people are losing their flats because of universal credit, domestic violence, not being able to afford the rent; it could be anything.

I talk to them because I've been in that situation. Most days you wake up with nobody to talk to apart from the pigeons. streets. You've got to pick yourself up and do the best you can. Life's too short to sit around being miserable.

Six or seven months ago a friend on social media who lives in USA told me of his story, as he became homeless. He was living in supported accommodation, but his benefits got stopped because he missed an appointment. He didn't even know he had it. He couldn't pay his rent and got evicted.

He was on the streets for three or four months. He stayed with his family for a few nights, because he didn't want to be a burden. So he mostly slept in doorways. It was scary according to him, especially in winter. You can't stay safe as a woman on the streets by yourself. You don't get much sleep; you're always worried about someone robbing you and beating you up.

I wouldn't wish homelessness on my worst enemy. Just under two months ago, a lady friend got into a shared house in supported accommodation. She was on tablets for depression and anxiety, though they don't seem to be working according to her. My dad passed away in early 90's. It was very sudden. Me and my siblings were very young, and I happened to be last born in my family. My mom was just very young, beautiful and innocent, she didn't really know the environment very well because my

father didn't allow her work nor go out as he provides everything because he was rich and well to do. After he died, we couldn't get hold of any of his properties, but only the house he built in his hometown. We were very young and weren't prepared to handle such incident, but it did happen suddenly. Am sure my dad didn't know it was going to be as sudden as that, if not, perhaps he would have prepared us for it.

My mom had no education at all, just innocently pretty. She had to raise 7 children all by herself. Moving from eviction to eviction with lots of stress.

I'm not surprised homelessness has gone up so much, because there isn't enough to help people. The government doesn't fund the support. If I could tell people anything about being homeless, it would be that it doesn't matter what someone looks like: you can be in a suit and still be homeless.

When someone ignores you when you ask for change, it is hurtful.

I can tell the experience of a much older friend. who married a woman who was multi-millionaire since birth,

saying they were rich is an understatement. They only flew first or business class, he got a new Porsche or Mercedes every single year and they always lived in the best areas in Manhattan.

I remember when he and his wife moved to New York they hired an interior designer from Milan to do the decoration. They spent around a million dollars only with the renovation and furniture for the apartment.

They had it all, and not even in my dreams I would imagine that one day they would lose it all.

However, like many other stories, they didn't lose it overnight, but little by little. I never imagined they would lose all their money because apart of being filthy rich, they were really lucky. My friend's wife grew up being a millionaire. Annual trips to Aspen with her family, then summer in Europe and everything we imagine rich people do. I was lucky to enjoy some of these perks when I was invited to one of their vacation homes.

They had a lot of money but they didn't work. After all, they never needed to do it.

She received a monthly allowance from her family that I believe was around 700K to 1M per year so they would probably not bother to work 9 to 6 to make \$100K more. They lived this life for around 10 years. Then, they had some disagreement with their family and they stopped receiving the allowance.

They lived by their savings for around 3 years. During those years they lived a very good life, but not so lavish as before. After 3 years, when they were about to start selling everything so they could have some money, her uncle died. He didn't have any kids so she received a good sum of money that was sufficient for around 3 more years.

When their bank accounts were about to run dry again her mother passed away and she inherited, along with her brothers, around 4M each. For most people, it would be sufficient for a lifetime, but they made very bad investments along with some poor decisions and I don't know how, but they ended up losing everything in around 3 more years.

After losing all their money they started living with the money of a trust her parents left to her, Something around 5K per month. But they are on their 50s, they never worked

and have no professional skills and they have to pay rent (as they don't have a home), pay all their bills and above all, health insurance with that amount.

I saw them around 6 months ago and they were miserable. My friend developed a neurological disease due to the stress he endured in the last years. His wife was making all decisions as he wasn't able to do it anymore. Unfortunately, he is so sick that he couldn't work even if he wanted to.

I was really sad it happened to them because they were really nice people, it's easy to judge them for never bothered to have a job or be wiser with their money, however, she was born in a different universe for most of us. What we see as a lavish lifestyle she sees as a regular day since birth.

Obviously what they need is their old lifestyle back. They moved to a modest apartment in a different state.

She told me that the biggest issue is that they don't know how to live like that. She can't imagine what's like to do their own grocery shopping, and worse than that, go to Walmart with a shopping list. She said that if she spent a little more on things she like she might not have money for the supermarket next week.

I would not dare to say that this experience was humbling to them because they were always nice people, the difference is that they were nice people with lots of money. The only positive thing I believe this experience brought to them is that they are no longer superficial. They used to see everything like poverty, sorrow, and problems from a different perspective, and I used to see them through a mask that looked like they were using all the time. Now, for the first time, I was able to see who they really were. Their emotions, fears, desires, and regret, for the first time in their lives they desire things, they no longer pull their credit card and immediately satisfy their desires and in that sense, they look like real people for me.

Now they are learning to value every small good thing that life gives to them. In 2007, I know of a man Named Michael who was hired by a medium size tech company. The company had around 150 employees and they were growing fast. When he was hired they told him they would be moving to better offices in two months and they really did it. The new office was really impressive. Huge, very modern to the point it made the cover of a magazine.

His boss and her husband were the owners of the company. They were simply amazing. She was sweet, very polite and it was a pleasure to work for them. They were also very rich. In fact, she was so down to earth that it took the man two months to realize that she was one of the owners of the company. It happened one day that the man had a meeting with a client and the boss told him if he was OK to be squeezed on the back seat of her car, as another person was coming with them. Imagined that she had one of those very small cars, but she showed up on a brand new convertible Porsche.

Little by little, Michael became acquainted. They invited him to have dinner one night and he was impressed by how rich they really were, they lived on a mansion, the land was so big that they had a tennis court, swimming pool and a stable with 5 horses on their land.

He also was a motor enthusiast and had 9 cars. They owned a farm and a beach house in another city, even though we lived in one of the most beautiful beach cities in the world.

They made money fast because Michael was hired in 2007 and the company was founded in 2002 and it looked like they had a good lifestyle for some years.

They were amazing people, very humble, very calm and you would never say they had so much money just by talking to them. Michael left the company by the end of 2007 because he received an offer to work in another place. He talked to them before accepting the offer and explained his reasons and they were really supportive and told him that if he changed his mind the doors would be open.

By the end of 2008, Michael's former colleague contacted him asking for a reference as he was leaving the company.

He asked why he was leaving the company and he told Michael that the company had gone into receivership. Basically, they were impacted by the GFC.

They were so rich that I imagined that although the company had bankrupted they probably had a lot of savings.

Michael never heard from them again until 2017.

Michael had a health issue and he needed to see a specialist. When he got to the doctor, he was talking to the receptionist when he saw a sign with her name over her desk. (Let's say Jennifer Parker – as he omitted her real name). So Michael said to her. "Hey Jennifer, what a coincidence, I had a boss with exactly the same name".

Then she replied that she was not Jennifer, that Jennifer was the other receptionist, that she worked Monday and Tuesday and Jennifer Wednesday to Friday. Michael saw the doctor and two weeks later he went back for his return and when he arrived who he saw working as a receptionist there was his former boss.

When she saw Michael she recognized him and told him that the other receptionist told her what happened and when she saw the name she connected the dots.

She told Michael what happened to the company, basically they had a problem with the contracts they made and as they weren't able to get a new loan from the bank they could no longer keep the company and pay their debts.

With that, they lost everything, not only the company but literally everything.

Their kids moved from private to public schools, they had all their cars, properties and assets confiscated and ended moving to a small apartment near the city. Her husband was able to get a new job (at nearly 60 years of age) and she had to go back to work to complement their income.

It was a huge surprise for after hearing this story because you always expect that these things will happen to bad people, but never to nice people like them according to Michael's narration. They were honest, decent, hardworking, family oriented, and everybody in the office liked them. Coincidentally Michael bumped into them again 3 months later in the mall.

What surprised him the most was that they were able to go from a very rich to a very modest lifestyle without changing who they were. Michael sat together with them to have lunch in the food court and they were living like that was the life they always had. They were exactly the same people Michael met 10 years before according to Michael's narration. They were happy, making jokes with

their kids (that were teenagers by then) and even when she told Michael what happened she didn't do it with sadness.

Personally after hearing this story, I just imagined how they managed everything so well. Going through an experience like that could be very damaging, but it looks like they had a way to cope with everything.

It taught me a lesson when I had my own encounter when I came to my home country Nigeria to do some needful and losing everything have worked for just one day after several years of struggle to making something big. It taught me a very big lesson that money can't be trusted, life can be full of unexpected events with many things out of our control.

# 6

CHAPTER SIX

## WHAT TO FACE OR EXPECT FROM THE STREET





**L**ive or Death. Every individual is always ready for anything that comes, even if it is death, these gives such individual morale to be able to do anything irrespective of its consequence.

Problems of different kinds and shortterm peace of mind. sometimes the problems might be family problem, societal problem, neighborhood problems etc. Every individual is always at alert at this stage.

There is always fears of the unforeseen, because anything could happen anytime and anywhere.

There is always one fear in every individual's mind which keeps the state of mind in a random disorder always. There is always struggle to get what you want or need. It is always a survival of the fittest quest. At this stage the weak tends to suffer more because majorly, the street always favors the strong. So for that, everybody on the street tends to develop their strength level to make them survive through every street tussle.

There is always a noisy environment on the street. The life on the street is always noisy and rowdy. The environmental conditions on the street is always unfavorable. It is advisable for every individual to device a way to adapt through, because nothing can be done to evade the noisy disclosures on the street.

There is this feeling of being helpless always. Nobody to help anybody, every individual can only help themselves and perhaps their family if possible, but most times there is less family considerations on the street because every individual is of the mindset of self-survival.

Always in need. You are always in need of one thing or the other on the street, basically all survival needs.

CHAPTER SEVEN

# THE I DON'T CARE SYNDROME





The “I don’t care syndrome” translated is the “I don’t give a \*\*\*\*” attitude young people develop as they drift away from the truth. Once young people develop this attitude, the mind psychologically turns on them, the same way Alzheimer’s turns on the minds of our elders. Our young people become unorganized, revolutionary, radical thugs. The difference between the I don’t care syndrome and Alzheimer’s is that the I don’t give a \*\*\*\* attitude is reversible, and most importantly is preventable. The I don’t care syndrome is a rare but dangerous way of perceiving everyday life. Young people between the ages of 12 and 17 develop this attitude when they are constantly faced with anger, stress and low self-esteem.



The I don't give a \*\*\*\* attitude is the leading cause for our young people committing violent crimes. Their minds completely shut down to any rational way of thinking while believing that this certain attitude represents a sign of superiority.

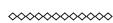
Our young people become temporarily insane. The I don't care syndrome is prevented and reversed by simply talking to our young people, by showing our young people, the people who made a career out of the I don't give a \*\*\*\* attitude; prison yards and graveyards are full of them.

Showing the young folks-- the people on these prison yards and in those graveyards is equivalent to the approach medical doctors take against the seasonal flu. They inject a rare strain of the flu into your body which builds up a tolerance in your body to make you immune to the flu.

I am a rare strain of the I don't care syndrome and I share with you the ingredient to prevent and reverse the I don't give a \*\*\*\* attitude in our young people. Talk to them; they will listen. Love them; they need that love. My name is Gabriel and sharing is caring!!!

There isn't an easy way to explain to a person that he or she has been conditioned to "think" in ways which are unhealthy. This person must be open to hearing a new way of thinking. Otherwise he or she will believe his or her own truth according to his or her conditioning. In this day and time, a lot of our young people are listening to movies and rap songs, while mistaking the movie or rap song to be reality. This is why it is very important that the parents expose their children to positive movies and music. This is step one to conditioning children to think positively. In order for children to become positive thinkers, they must be around positive people. All human beings carry a certain vibe about themselves.

Children are able to detect whether that vibe is negative or positive. This is true even with adults. We can determine within minutes of talking to another person if their thoughts are predominantly negative or positive. Children are attracted to the vibes they receive from the people they're around the most. I know a son who had a father and uncle who would smoke pot in front of him. The father and uncle would even blow smoke into the son's face. As the son grew



older, he started smoking pot by the time he was a teenager. The teenager got in trouble at school when he was caught smoking pot. The father and uncle became very upset with him saying, "Where did you learn to smoke pot?"

The teenager answered, "I don't know." And they never realized that it was them who exposed him to smoking pot when he was just a young child.

In low income neighborhoods there is a virus which attacks the minds of people. This virus is called "A Lie." This virus is so strong and powerful that it has people thinking they're winning when they're losing. It was designed to cause anyone affected with it to self-destruct by way of gangs, drugs, crime, prison, and ultimately death.

This virus enters the human mind through the ears and eyes. Children are at high risk because their minds are open the most while they are young. In these low income areas, the predominant thought process is negative because of the virus referred to as "A Lie." They believe that the only way out is crime of some kind. Nobody is there to remind them that "Positive thoughts attract positive people; positive people attract positive situations; and positive situations

attract positive results.” So the children are left to continue the cycle, and the virus continues to spread.

Nobody has everything, but everybody has something. Nobody can save everybody, but somebody can save someone. This is “The Antidote,” and now you have been exposed.

There is more going on than the words that meet the eye. You will now begin to feel the positive vibe that I have released. This vibe was hidden in the words you just read.

Everybody knows that words have power, and if you don’t believe me, just read “The Antidote” one more time and then ask yourself how you feel.

This is a message to my young folks. Being a young man who grew up in the Lagos Nigeria, I always hear “You work for what you eat, and you eat what you’ve worked for.” I was raised in a setting where you either work and eat, or sleep and don’t eat. (And when I say sleep, I’m not talking comfortably in a nice warm bed, but a long black box six feet underground.) A person who was raised with a silver spoon in their mouth may feel entirely different about the situation.

But look at the princes who gained their royalty by fortune alone. (Machiavelli said that “They do so with little effort but maintain their position only with a great deal.

All their problems arise when they have arrived.”) They got it in the blink of an eye, no work or major effort, but what about once they arrive? Is that when the problems may arise? Isn’t there an opposite to each and every thing in life? For the good, there’s the bad, and your ups must have a down and vice versa. We young ones of the last and present generation tend to have a thing for the “Easy Life,” whether it be fast money, gang banging, or doing that dope. But we fail to realize the “opposites” of life.

Now from the situation at hand, one may think there’s no good coming from its opposite, but hear me now: “What don’t kill you only makes you stronger.” A person can come to the conclusion that, that which is worked for can be more respected than that which is taken, stolen, or given out of pity. Be one who has gained royalty and power through knowledge and hard hardy work, not through foolishness and lazy spoiled upbringing, in which everything is given to you and placed in your lap.

To those who truly care and would like to gain royalty with hard work, begin working for your life instead of accepting hand-outs. It's hard climbing that ladder to success, but easy as heck to fall off.

# 8

CHAPTER EIGHT

# OVERCOMING THE STREET

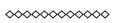




Before you can overcome the street, then you must have studied and understood the street terms coupled with what is applicable and adoptable on the street.

Below are the different ways to overcome the street feasibly. You must be conscious always. individuals on the street need to build a self-alacrity standard via all tendencies and different happenings in your surrounding environment.

You must be vigilant always with checking out everything you see and hear by ensuring a thorough scrutiny before incepting or allowing through. Hence, try to ensure and maintain a clear view of everything around you always.



You must be very careful. Being careful in the sense that, you must talk less, be observant and be fast in thoughts in critical conditions. You don't rush to do things on the street especially when you are not fully sure of your tendencies because it might get out of hand and go dangerous.

You must be psychological in your tendencies, in other words always weigh and consider the negative and positive effect of what you want to do on yourself and your immediate environment before you finally do them to ensure safety in all areas.

You must always keep your thoughts within yourself to ensure a safe life to a very reasonable extent. Don't relate your ideas with just anybody because street is a very strict zone with lots of violations. Your colleagues on the street wouldn't like to see you out and living them behind, which makes them try to cover you from seeing anything that might change your thinking to the extent of living the street.

Majority of people that has gone deep on the street has a mindset of no going out of the street, but to live and die on the street.

You must always be sensitive. Check everything that comes near you and be mindful of your environment and what is going on at every point in time. Try not to get caught-up unaware with anything on the street because of the hazard it might tend to cause.

You must be ready at all times. Every individual on the street is advised to be ready at all times should incase of any emergency popups, because there is never a full assurance of peace on the street based on the different dirty dealings emanating from the street first before anywhere else. You must plan yourself well with a reasonable consideration of your surrounding environment and device a suitable plan for yourself with being wise for way forward.

Know and understand your environment and what is going on in your neighborhood.

Endeavor to know every safe route and path in your neighborhood in case of any emergency anytime or any day. You must trust no one but only yourself until you finally succeed in coming out of the street. You must be calculative always, know and understand where you

belong on the street very well, in other words you must know and understand your limits and keep yourself within your terrane for safety reasons.

You must be steadfastly prayerful in all endeavors, because with prayers everything can be made possible and easy. With reference to the third law of motion which states that, "To every action, there is always an equal proportion of reaction, "in other words, there would always be a repulsive force that would not want a swift progression for your tendencies. It might be a spiritual or physical barrier in whichever way it surfaces.

You must be ready in the areas of prayers to fight every opposing force to your targets.

You must study, know and understand your weaknesses and consistently work on how to overcome those weaknesses with all seriousness and determination. Most times women and money tends to be the weakness of majority and that can be very serious. Every individual need to be very discipline to handle and tackle such weaknesses. I will advise every individual to guide their minds jealously with strict measures to avoid lustng over any seductive physical

disclosures which can hinder individual pursuits from coming true.

Do more of listening, talk less, and always think through before you talk and after. These will help you understand your environment and your relationship with people.it also help you to maintain a safer distance from people, especially when they want to get through you with your talks.

CHAPTER NINE

9

# A TRUE FRIEND ON THE STREET





I found myself in a place where a true friend is that person who doesn't confide in you. Here a true friend is that person who doesn't share his problems and watches your back without having to be asked.

Since what I'm about to write contains some of my feelings, I'm obligated to apologize to the reader for expressing my problems. It's hard for me to express exactly how I feel and why but I'll try to do my best.

My heart is saddened every day and hope dies little by little, not because of my confinement but because of something more important. I have to point out before I go on that I'm determined to keep hope alive. It will never be

completely dead because hope is all a prisoner has. I hope for all the things any other prisoner hopes for, but my hope also extends to all the young people outside these walls. To those that are lured in by the gangs and their promise of popularity, acceptance, partying, sex, and drugs. To these young people, there is no tomorrow, only today... the now. My hope is that they will realize that tomorrow will eventually come and with it come death, prison, diseases, and who knows what else.

My tomorrow suddenly became my today and brought me a long prison term. Life in prison is nothing compared to living with the knowledge of being responsible for bringing suffering upon my family and upon a family that I don't even know and never did nothing to me. That was the inheritance the gang had in store for me and my family and the family I just mentioned. A gang member involves his/her family with the gang. If you are in a gang or plan on joining one, you can be assured that you will end up the same way I did or worse.

I am constantly frustrated because there is little I can do to help a kid! I feel helpless! I get angry at the world for not

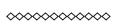
stopping or at least slowing down to notice that a young person gets killed or a young girl is kidnapped and taken advantage of. I hate the world for not stopping to honor and respect or at least to notice that a young person was in the world and is no more. I hate it because life goes on as usual in spite of all the tragedies. But I come to my senses and remind myself that that's just the way life is.

My frustration is increased when I think about all the young people. There is a lot of pressure upon a teen's mind to try and fit in If you are a young person, you know what I'm talking about. It's something that we can't control. Sometimes we don't realize that we have those thoughts in our heads and other times they are so present that it's because of them we do something we don't really want to do.

The street is house of stone Built on misery and stories of pain, dreams turned into nightmares, along with hopes of fame.

Living in glory, lost and gained.

Memories of yesterday, fall like rain.



Though the faces constantly change, the stories somehow remain the same. Hopes and dreams passed without thought from the lips of the insane. Survival skills, cheap thrills, street hustle of muscle, extortions and schemes, jailhouse gangsters who stay lean and mean. Cold, dark hungry and alone, you got to be strong to survive through.

# 10

CHAPTER TEN

## HOW TO AVOID ENDING UP ON THE STREET





**B**e conscious of your progression as you tend to grow older. Understand your family status and the class you belong to, either rich, poor or middle class and determine what you want for yourself and your family, to know where to channel your strength resourcefully with prayers most importantly.

Try to get a job no matter what the job looks like and save up some money for subsequent progressions. Most times you see things happen slowly, whereby your pursuits seems and looks unrealizable because of the condition of your country perhaps.

But you sure need a job or anything resourceful you can engage yourself with to keep you busy and guide your mind against engaging in some odd dealings that comes as a result of being idle.

Try to have a multiple hand-works and have a particular one or two you would know best than others as a major. With a thorough societal Inference or research, it's been noticed that in the country some of us live in, having just one hand-work does not pay well, because several people have the same hand-work as you do, and it would take the person with a more brilliant concept and resources to win the mind of the people, thereby making it hard for you of little resources to fit in which is very common in African countries and some Asian countries too. So it is advisable to have more than one technical know-how dexterities to help you go flexible in your pursuits for survival in swift progressions.

You must be sensitive to every words and disclosures you get from people and your environment, then scrutinize through to get the one that would benefit you. Sensitivity is very important in the journey of life for swift progression,

or things not to get worse suddenly and for you not to get caught-up with anything unexpectedly. In every decision you would be making in the journey of your life, try to be mindful of the future effect and be slow to taking your final decision. Try not to make any important decision concerning your life in a rush, but always take your time until you find a cogent conviction before any final decision.

Endeavor to understand and acknowledge your current status as you may find it to be, either being very poor or fairly poor and positively work your way out for good.

For you to be able to work your way out of your poor position as it may be to avoid finding yourself on the street suddenly perhaps due to any tragedy of life, then you need admit your status to enable you to be able to device a well means of breakthrough successfully.

Make sure you understand and know anybody you tend to associate with in the journey of your life as you grow older each day. Be mindful of the friends, partners or relationships you keep, because of the influence it would have on you. Don't stay long with evil associates for you not to share

from the negativity or get it confer on you unconsciously as you would not know perhaps you might get lured into it and making you see it as fun. But it has a lot of tendencies to mar your good pursuits. Always make sure you keep and maintain associates or friends with good moral values to help through as you progress the journey of your life.

Endeavor to choose and have a good reliable religious organization to believe in and be faithful to it. Understand yourself and stay true with what works for you as you find it out unrelentingly, because the world only favors the strong and not those that gives up easily.

So every individual need to keep a strong fate to what works for them and be positive via all endeavors.

# 11

CHAPTER ELEVEN

# HISTORY OF STREET LIFE AND CITY SPACE EMANATION





The topic of street life and city space is burgeoning at the forefront of social history. Its vast scope embraces the gestures and actions of people, vendors pitching their wares, patrons conversing in taverns or elegant cafes, children playing on back streets, dandies promenading on fashionable boulevards, beggars cowering from the gaze of affluent shoppers. Streets may be host to the explorations of tourists; the daily routines of people walking, driving, or taking mass transit; the carnivals that echo medieval sites of sociability and festivity.

The study of city space has recently led historians to ask about the functions and meanings of buildings, from

majestic cathedrals, imposing city halls, and banks, to factories, residences, hospitals, and asylums. Streets and other open spaces also reflect the history of transportation (from walking to the use of horses, carriages, cars, and in-line skates) and communication (from the gossip of neighbors to television and other electronic media).

For most of history, streets and their places of commerce, their squares, and their parks have comprised a large part of any city, often one-third of a city's area. Why has it taken social historians so long to focus on these central urban spaces? The anthropologist Gloria Nkoli offers one of the best explanations, quoting the French philosopher.

Auguste Comte (1798–1857): "We reserve till last research into subjects closest to our social selves." Another probable cause is that face-to-face interaction on streets or in cafes and bars, once a given in all societies, has become rare, fascinating, and exotic in the contemporary developed world and endangered in developing countries. Telephones, cars, and televisions and now various computer technologies have rendered much face-to-face interaction optional rather than mandatory in daily life.

Those coming of age after the year 2000 may not realize that streets are not simply traffic routes, that home and work are not always separated, and that the street can be a center of sociability as well as mobility.

Streets and the spaces intimately dependent on them, such as bars, taverns, and cafés, are in essence the interstitial spaces of a city, at the intersections of public and private life, home and work places.

### **The Multifunctional Olden Days Street**

The origin and foundation of modern African street life and city space emerged during the Middle Ages. In general, cities developed without the elaborate planning characteristic of urban growth during and after the Renaissance. Weak and undeveloped national and local governments did not have the power to design, decree, or enforce specific street layouts, much less to regulate the activities that went on within them. Instead, urban communities built their houses around the principal buildings of the powerful, the holy, and the wealthy: the castles of the warrior nobility, the monasteries and churches of the Catholic clergy, and the

markets and fairs of the merchants and traders. Those who built medieval towns had in mind shelter, commercial activity, and military or religious protection rather than a rational street plan.

Across Africa, the typical Ancient house had a ground floor shop or workshop (production and retail usually shared the same space), with living quarters on the second floor.

Houses lacked halls or corridors, so rooms simply opened one upon another, and windows tended to be small and primitive.

The best facades, often with porticos and balconies, usually faced the street, and the best and biggest rooms opened onto the public realm. As one scholar has noted, the medieval house “forced the members of an extroverted society into the street.

Apart from churches, however, few truly “public” buildings existed. In the olden days, taverns and inns were virtually the only enclosed spaces where the public gathered.

Untamed countryside reigned outside the city walls, and often inside as well, for wolves often ravaged cities during

the winter. Parks were nonexistent; the only green or open spaces were small gardens or the cemeteries next to the churches.

Streets, an afterthought in olden day's construction, became the center of urban expression then. Aside from a few main thoroughfares devoted to horse-and-cart traffic, most ancient streets were more like footpaths, residential and haphazard. With living and working quarters in the same building, people met on the street, and a dense fabric of sociability developed. Bakers, butchers, carpenters, apothecaries, and craftsmen often sold their products at their own doorsteps. In addition, the streets swarmed with a wide variety of vendors hawking products and services: old clothes, food and wine, haircuts and shaves, medical and dental services. Letter writers and knife grinders mingled with magicians, cardsharps, mimes, and minstrels.

Each crier tried to create a distinctive call.

As a result, thanks streets reverberated with sounds and songs, and scholars down through the ages have found much musical, artistic, and theatrical merit in these street trades. Indeed, the mid-nineteenth-century we believed

that the polyphonic quality of medieval music was inspired, in part, by these street vendors. Modern research has shown that traveling vendors played a vital role in linking long-distance trade networks and allowing the poor of the countryside or mountainous regions of Africa to make a living.

The romantic image of conviviality and song wafting through narrow streets would be quickly dashed, however, if one looked downward. Cobblestones or bricks were reserved for main streets, and lesser routes were not only unpaved but lacked any efficient means of waste and water disposal. Streets thus had a horrifically pungent smell in summer and became swamps or ice rinks (depending on latitude) in winter. At best, a gutter running down the middle of the street served as a sewage system, and in some cities pigs ran loose as all-purpose garbage eaters.

City space in cities showed little of the segregation by class that became prevalent later. In South Africa and Nigeria cities, powerful families often staked out a section of the city and would be surrounded by their own retainers and servants rather than by other wealthy families. Any segregation in

these densely packed cities was based upon trade rather than economic status. Artisans, such as jewelers or carpenters, often organized into associations called guilds, which protected the skills and economic status of their members by fixing prices and standards of quality, and setting the terms of apprenticeship. During this period, guildhalls became vital centers of economic and social life for these artisans, and some guilds remained influential.

Gender differentiation in the use of space was clearly defined. Paintings and illustrations reveal women at home; in a favored scene, a woman is portrayed at the window.

Other female spaces included churches, markets, ovens, water wells, and flour mills, as well as courtyards and alleys around the home.

When venturing out into the street, women often traveled in groups. Historians have found that during the course of the Renaissance, upper-class women lost much of the access to street life they had had. Women from the lower classes continued to be a vital part of the street trades and the markets throughout early modern African history.

The distinction between public and private life was blurred in the olden day's cities, and interactions within the family blended into a broader sociability encompassing the neighborhood. Street and tavern life was subject to a detailed series of customs enforced by designated groups. Social drinking, for example, was often governed by rituals surrounding the passing of a common cup.

Groups of young unmarried males in their late teens and early twenties known as youth abbeys often organized festivities and monitored morality in their neighborhoods.

These associations of young men led the celebrations at the end of Lent, for example, and censured husbands who were too submissive to their wives or couples who could not produce children. In addition, guilds and groups of lay Catholics joined together in confraternities and also sponsored street processions and entertainments.

All told, the olden day's urban society, accustomed to vendors hawking their wares in markets and streets, did not make rigid distinctions between work and leisure, freedom and constraint, or individual and group. The notion of a lone, detached observer walking the streets, reflecting on the

crowd and the urban spectacle was inconceivable in this age of customary, constraining, and obligatory sociability.

Instead of the artistic individuality that would prevail in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the olden day's world spawned a convivial community, especially in the marketplace.

### **The beginning of separation**

Growing segregation by neighborhoods led to increasingly differentiated street life. The upper classes, in their luxurious townhouses on broad avenues, used the street to display their elaborate sartorial fashions and their carriages and fine horses. Esplanades were developed on both sides of city walls, which had their original military importance, and became fashionable places for upper-class promenades and also, unfortunately, for depredations by the city's youth. The lower classes, out of necessity rather than pleasure, continued to use city streets as they had in the olden days —as extensions of their cramped living quarters and as work and leisure spaces.

The growing reach of central governments and the decreasing pull of local communities led to the emergence of modern politics in urban space.

The growing reach of central governments and the decreasing pull of local communities led to the emergence of modern politics in urban space. The expanding literate stratum of urban society, which included the middle classes as well as the nobility, became concerned with governmental actions and demanded that their own views be considered in what is today called public policy. Private individuals gathered in the drinking houses that were spreading across African towns. They discuss public matters, with reason rather than status as the main criterion for the validity of their arguments. During some period in the olden days, a distinctive working-class subculture evolved. Although still possessing minimal purchasing power compared to their social and economic superiors, workers nevertheless developed a unique pattern of social life.

For instance, they were increasingly able to own several sets of clothes, after work, they often changed into clothes that diminished the sartorial distance between the classes.

Hats, however, continued to signal class difference: the bourgeois wore the formal top hat while the proletarian stayed with the cap.

The laboring population also adopted the bourgeois ritual of promenading, usually not on the fashionable central boulevards and parks but rather on the outer boulevards and fortifications of their own parts of town. This summary of the social history of street life and city space challenges any simple notion of “progress” in social and cultural history. On the one hand, innovations that removed sewage, dirt, and dust from the streets and sidewalks that separated pedestrians and terrace café and restaurant customers from carriage and then car traffic on the street were significant improvements in terms of sanitation, safety, and sociability.

On the other hand, especially since some war periods, changes that have turned streets over to cars and to an unprecedented degree separated the spaces of work, family, and leisure, have spawned as much alienation as efficiency. An opening and welcoming urban environment

will be crucial during the twenty-first century, as African cities will undoubtedly accept millions of new immigrants—now, however, not from the hinterlands of their own nations but from the rest of the world. It is on the streets and in the public places that the process of cultural assimilation, expression, and creation will continue.

# 12

CHAPTER TWELVE

## THE CODE OF ALL STREETS





Of all the problems besetting the poor inner-city in almost all black communities, none is more pressing than that of interpersonal violence and aggression. It wreaks havoc daily with the lives of community residents and increasingly spills over into downtown and residential middle-class areas.

Muggings, burglaries, car-jacks, and drug-related shootings, all of which may leave their victims or innocent bystanders dead, are now common enough to concern all urban and many suburban residents.

The inclination to violence springs from the circumstances of life among the ghetto poor and the lack of jobs that pay

a living wage, the stigma of race, the fallout from rampant drug use and drug trafficking, and the resulting alienation and lack of hope for the future.

Simply living in such an environment places young people at special risk of falling victim to aggressive behavior. Although there are often forces in the community which can counteract the negative influences, by far the most powerful being a strong, loving, "decent" (as inner-city residents put it) family committed to middle-class values, the despair is pervasive enough to have spawned an oppositional culture, that of "the streets," whose norms are often consciously opposed to those of mainstream society. These two orientations; decent and street, socially organize the community, and their coexistence has important consequences for residents, particularly children growing up in the inner city.

Above all, this environment means that even youngsters whose home lives reflect mainstream values and the majority of homes in the community must be able to handle themselves in a street-oriented environment.

This is because the street culture has evolved what may be called a code of the streets, which amounts to a set of informal rules governing interpersonal public behavior, including violence. The rules prescribe both a proper comportment and a proper way to respond if challenged. They regulate the use of violence and so allow those who are inclined to aggression to precipitate violent encounters in an approved way. The rules have been established and are enforced mainly by the street-oriented, but on the streets the distinction between street and decent is often irrelevant; everybody knows that if the rules are violated, there are penalties. Knowledge of the code is thus largely defensive; it is literally necessary for operating in public.

Therefore, even though families with a decency orientation are usually opposed to the values of the code, they often reluctantly encourage their children's familiarity with it to enable them to negotiate the inner-city environment. At the heart of the code is the issue of respect, loosely defined as being treated "right," or granted the deference one deserves. However, in the troublesome public environment of the inner city, as people increasingly feel buffeted by

forces beyond their control, what one deserves in the way of respect becomes more and more problematic and uncertain. This in turn further opens the issue of respect to sometimes intense interpersonal negotiation.

In the street culture, especially among young people, respect is viewed as almost an external entity that is hard-won but easily lost, and so must constantly be guarded. The rules of the code in fact provide a framework for negotiating respect. The person whose very appearance, including his clothing, demeanor, and way of moving, deters transgressions feels that he possesses, and may be considered by others to possess, a measure of respect.

With the right amount of respect, for instance, he can avoid “being bothered” in public. If he is bothered, not only may he be in physical danger but he has been disgraced or “dissed” (disrespected). Many of the forms that dissing can take might seem petty to middle-class people (maintaining eye contact for too long, for example), but to those invested in the street code, these actions become serious indications of the other person’s intentions. Consequently, such people become very sensitive to advances and slights, which could well serve as warnings of imminent physical confrontation.

This hard reality can be traced to the profound sense of alienation from mainstream society and its institutions felt by many poor inner-city black people, particularly the young. The code of the streets is actually a cultural adaptation to a profound lack of faith in the police and the judicial system. The police are most often seen as representing the dominant white society and not caring to protect inner-city residents. When called, they may not respond, which is one reason many residents feel they must be prepared to take extraordinary measures to defend themselves and their loved ones against those who are inclined to aggression. Lack of police accountability has in fact been incorporated into the status system: the person who is believed capable of "taking care of himself" is accorded a certain deference, which translates into a sense of physical and psychological control. Thus the street code emerges where the influence of the police ends and personal responsibility for one's safety is felt to begin. Exacerbated by the proliferation of drugs and easy access to guns, this volatile situation results in the ability of the street oriented minority (or those who effectively "go for bad") to dominate the public spaces.

Almost everyone in poor inner-city neighborhoods is struggling financially and therefore feels a certain distance from the rest, the decent and the street family in a real sense represent two poles of value orientation, two Contrasting conceptual categories. The labels "decent" and "street," which the residents themselves use, amount to evaluative judgments that confer status on local residents. The labeling is often the result of a social contest among individuals and families of the neighborhood. Individuals of the two orientations often coexist in the same extended family. Decent residents judge themselves to be so while judging others to be of the street, and street individuals often present themselves as decent, drawing distinctions between themselves and other people. In addition, there is quite a bit of circumstantial behavior--that is, one person may at different times exhibit both decent and street orientations, depending on the circumstances. Although these designations result from so much social jockeying, there do exist concrete features that define each conceptual category.

Generally, so-called decent families tend to accept mainstream values more fully and attempt to instill them in their children.

Whether married couples with children or single-parent (usually female) households, they are generally “working poor” and so tend to be better off financially than their street-oriented neighbors. . They value hard work and self-reliance and are willing to sacrifice for their children. Because they have a certain amount of faith in mainstream society, they harbor hopes for a better future for their children, if not for themselves. Many of them go to church and take a strong interest in their children’s schooling. Rather than dwelling on the real hardships and inequities facing them, many such decent people, particularly the increasing number of grandmothers raising grandchildren, see their difficult situation as a test from God and derive great support from their faith and from the church community.

Extremely aware of the problematic and often dangerous environment in which they reside, decent parents tend to be strict in their child-rearing practices, encouraging children to respect authority and walk a straight moral line. They have an almost obsessive concern about trouble of

any kind and remind their children to be on the lookout for people and situations that might lead to it.

At the same time, they are themselves polite and considerate of others, and teach their children to be the same way. At home, at work, and in church, they strive hard to maintain a positive mental attitude and a spirit of cooperation.

So-called street parents, in contrast, often show a lack of consideration for other people and have a rather superficial sense of family and community. Though they may love their children, many of them are unable to cope with the physical and emotional demands of parenthood, and find it difficult to reconcile their needs with those of their children. These families, who are more fully invested in the code of the streets than the decent people are, may aggressively socialize their children into it in a normative way. They believe in the code and judge themselves and others according to its values.

In-fact the overwhelming majority of families in the inner-city community try to approximate the decent-family model, but there are many others who clearly represent the worst fears of the decent family. Not only are their

financial resources extremely limited, but what little they have may easily be misused. The lives of the street-oriented are often marked by disorganization. In the most desperate circumstances people frequently have a limited understanding of priorities and consequences, and so frustrations mount over bills, food, and, at times, drink, cigarettes, and drugs. Some tend toward self-destructive behavior; many street-oriented women are crack-addicted ("on the pipe"), alcoholic, or involved in complicated relationships with men who abuse them. In addition, the seeming intractability of their situation, caused in large part by the lack of well-paying jobs and the persistence of racial discrimination, has engendered deep-seated bitterness and anger in many of the most desperate and poorest blacks, especially young people. The need both to exercise a measure of control and to lash out at somebody is often reflected in the adults' relations with their children. At the least, the frustrations of persistent poverty shorten the fuse in such people-- contributing to a lack of patience with anyone, child or adult, who irritates them. In these circumstances a woman--or a man, although men are less consistently present in children's lives--can be quite

aggressive with children, yelling at and striking them for the least little infraction of the rules she has set down. Often little if any serious explanation follows the verbal and physical punishment. This response teaches children a particular lesson.

They learn that to solve any kind of interpersonal problem one must quickly resort to hitting or other violent behavior.

Actual peace and quiet, and also the appearance of calm, respectful children conveyed to her neighbors and friends, are often what the young mother most desires, but at times she will be very aggressive in trying to get them. Thus she may be quick to beat her children, especially if they defy her law, not because she hates them but because this is the way she knows to control them. In fact, many street-oriented women love their children dearly. Many mothers in the community subscribe to the notion that there is a "devil in the boy" that must be beaten out of him or that socially "fast girls need to be whupped." Thus much of what borders on child abuse in the view of social authorities is acceptable parental punishment in the view of these mothers.

Many street-oriented women are sporadic mothers whose children learn to fend for themselves when necessary, foraging for food and money any way they can get it. The children are sometimes employed by drug dealers or become addicted themselves. These children of the street, growing up with little supervision, are said to "come up hard." They often learn to fight at an early age, sometimes using short-tempered adults around them as role models. The street-oriented home may be fraught with anger, verbal disputes, physical aggression, and even mayhem. The children observe these goings-on, learning the lesson that might makes right. They quickly learn to hit those who cross them, and the dog-eat-dog mentality prevails. In order to survive, to protect oneself, it is necessary to marshal inner resources and be ready to deal with adversity in a hands-on way. In these circumstances physical prowess takes on great significance.

In some of the most desperate cases, a street-oriented mother may simply leave her young children alone and unattended while she goes out. The most irresponsible women can be found at local bars and crack houses,

getting high and socializing with other adults. Sometimes a troubled woman will leave very young children alone for days at a time. Reports of crack addicts abandoning their children have become common in drug infested inner-city communities. Neighbors or relatives discover the abandoned children, often hungry and distraught over the absence of their mother. After repeated absences, a friend or relative, particularly a grandmother, will often step in to care for the young children, sometimes petitioning the authorities to send her, as guardian of the children, the mother's welfare-check, if the mother gets one. By this time , however, the children may well have learned the first lesson of the streets: survival itself, let alone respect, cannot be taken for granted; You have to fight for your place in the world.

Realities of inner-city life are largely absorbed on the streets. At an early age, often even before they start school, children from street oriented homes gravitate to the streets, where they "hang", socialize with their peers. Children from these generally permissive homes have a great deal of latitude and are allowed to "rip and run" up and down the street. They often come home from school,

put their books down, and go right back out the door. On school nights eight- and nineyear-olds remain out until nine or ten o'clock (and teenagers typically come in whenever they want to). On the streets they play in groups that often become the source of their primary social bonds.

Children from decent homes tend to be more carefully supervised and are thus likely to have curfews and to be taught how to stay out of trouble.

When decent and street kids come together, a kind of social shuffle occurs in which children have a chance to go either way. Tension builds as a child comes to realize that he must choose an orientation.

The kind of home he comes from influences but does not determine the way he will ultimately turn out--although it is unlikely that a child from a thoroughly street oriented family will easily absorb decent values on the streets. Youths who emerge from street-oriented families but develop a decency orientation almost always learn those values in another setting in school, in a youth group, in church. Often it is the result of their involvement with a caring "old head" (adult role model).

In the street, through their play, children pour their individual life experiences into a common knowledge pool, affirming, confirming, and elaborating on what they have observed in the home and matching their skills against those of others. And they learn to fight. Even small children test one another, pushing and shoving, and are ready to hit other children over circumstances not to their liking. In turn, they are readily hit by other children, and the child who is toughest prevails. Thus the violent resolution of disputes, the hitting and cursing, gains social reinforcement.

The child in effect is initiated into a system that is really a way of campaigning for respect.

In addition, younger children witness the disputes of older children, which are often resolved through cursing and abusive talk, if not aggression or outright violence.

They see that one child succumbs to the greater physical and mental abilities of the other. They are also alert and attentive witnesses to the verbal and physical fights of adults, after which they compare notes and share their interpretations of the event. In almost every case the victor is the person who physically won the altercation, and this

person often enjoys the esteem and respect of onlookers. These experiences reinforce the lessons the children have learned at home: might makes right, and toughness is a virtue, while humility is not. In effect they learn the social meaning of fighting. When it is left virtually unchallenged, this understanding becomes an ever more important part of the child's working conception of the world. Over time the code of the streets becomes refined.

Those street-oriented adults with whom children come in contact with, including mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, boyfriends, cousins, neighbors, and friends--help them along in forming this understanding by verbalizing the messages they are getting through experience: "Watch your back." "Protect yourself." "Don't punk out." "If somebody messes with you, you got to pay them back." "If someone disses you, you got to straighten them out." Many parents actually impose sanctions if a child is not sufficiently aggressive. For example, if a child loses a fight and comes home upset, the parent might respond, "Don't you come in here crying that somebody beat you up; you better get back out there and whup his ass. I didn't raise no punks! Get back out there and whup his ass. If you don't

whup his ass, I'll whup your ass when you come home." Thus the child obtains reinforcement for being tough and showing nerve.

While fighting, some children cry as though they are doing something they are ambivalent about.

The fight may be against their wishes, yet they may feel constrained to fight or face the consequences--not just from peers but also from caretakers or parents, who may administer another beating if they back down. Some adults recall receiving such lessons from their own parents and justify repeating them to their children as a way to toughen them up. Looking capable of taking care of oneself as a form of self-defense is a dominant theme among both street-oriented and decent adults who worry about the safety of their children.

There is thus at times a convergence in their child-rearing practices, although the rationales behind them may differ. Most youths have either internalized the code of the streets or at least learned the need to comport themselves in accordance with its rules, which chiefly have to do with interpersonal communication.

The code revolves around the presentation of self. Its basic requirement is the display of a certain predisposition to violence.

Accordingly, one's bearing must send the unmistakable if sometimes subtle message to "the next person" in public that one is capable of violence and mayhem when the situation requires it, that one can take care of oneself. The nature of this communication is largely determined by the demands of the circumstances but can include facial expressions, gait, and verbal expressions--all of which are geared mainly to deterring aggression. Physical appearance, including clothes, jewelry, and grooming, also plays an important part in how a person is viewed; to be respected, it is important to have the right look.

Even so, there are no guarantees against challenges, because there are always people around looking for a fight to increase their share of respect--or "juice," as it is sometimes called on the street. Moreover, if a person is assaulted, it is important, not only in the eyes of his opponent but also in the eyes of his "running buddies," for him to avenge himself. Otherwise he risks being "tried"

(challenged) or “moved on” by any number of others. To maintain his honor, he must show he is not someone to be “messed with” or “dissed.” In general, the person must “keep himself straight” by managing his position of respect among others; this involves in part his self-image, which is shaped by what he thinks others are thinking of him in relation to his peers.

Objects play an important and complicated role in establishing self-image. Jackets, sneakers, gold jewelry, reflect not just a person’s taste, which tends to be tightly regulated among adolescents of all social classes, but also a willingness to possess things that may require defending. A boy wearing a fashionable, expensive jacket, for example, is vulnerable to attack by another who covets the jacket and either cannot afford to buy one or wants the added satisfaction of depriving someone else of his. However, if the boy forgoes the desirable jacket and wears one that isn’t “hip,” he runs the risk of being teased and possibly even assaulted as an unworthy person. To be allowed to hang with certain prestigious crowds, a boy must wear a different set of expensive clothes -- sneakers and athletic suit--every day. Not to be able to do so might make him

appear socially deficient. The youth comes to covet such items-- especially when he sees easy prey wearing them.

In acquiring valued things, therefore, a person shores up his identity, but since it is an identity based on having things, it is highly precarious. This very precariousness gives a heightened sense of urgency to staying even with peers, with whom the person is actually competing. Young men and women who are able to command respect through their presentation of self-by allowing their possessions and their body language to speak for them--may not have to campaign for regard but may, rather, gain it by the force of their manner.

Those who are unable to command respect in this way must actively campaign for it-and are thus particularly alive to slights.

One way of campaigning for status is by taking the possessions of others. In this context, seemingly ordinary objects can become trophies imbued with symbolic value that far exceeds their monetary worth.

Possession of the trophy can symbolize the ability to violate somebody--to "get in his face," to take something of value from him, to "dis" him, and thus to enhance one's own worth by stealing someone else's. The trophy does not have to be something material. It can be another person's sense of honor, snatched away with a derogatory remark. It can be the outcome of a fight. It can be the imposition of a certain standard, such as a girl's getting herself recognized as the most beautiful. Material things, however, fit easily into the pattern. Sneakers, a pistol, even somebody else's girlfriend, can become a trophy. When a person can take something from another and then flaunt it, he gains a certain regard by being the owner, or the controller, of that thing. But this display of ownership can then provoke other people to challenge him. This game of who controls what is thus constantly being played out on inner-city streets, and the trophy-- extrinsic or intrinsic, tangible or intangible-- identifies the current winner.

An important aspect of this often violent give-and-take is its zero-sum quality. That is, the extent to which one person can raise himself up depends on his ability to put another person down. This underscores the alienation that permeates the

inner-city ghetto community. There is a generalized sense that very little respect is to be had, and therefore everyone competes to get what affirmation he can of the little that is available. The craving for respect that results gives people thin skins. Shows of deference by others can be highly soothing, contributing to a sense of security, comfort, self-confidence, and selfrespect. Transgressions by others which go unanswered diminish these feelings and are believed to encourage further transgressions. Hence one must be ever vigilant against the transgressions of others or even appearing as if transgressions will be tolerated. Among young people, whose sense of self-esteem is particularly vulnerable, there is an especially heightened concern with being disrespected.

Many inner-city young men in particular crave respect to such a degree that they will risk their lives to attain and maintain it.

The issue of respect is thus closely tied to whether a person has an inclination to be violent, even as a victim. In the wider society people may not feel required to retaliate physically after an attack, even though they are aware that they have been degraded or taken advantage of. They

may feel a great need to defend themselves during an attack, or to behave in such a way as to deter aggression (middle-class people certainly can and do become victims of street-oriented youths), but they are much more likely than street-oriented people to feel that they can walk away from a possible altercation with their self-esteem intact. Some people may even have the strength of character to flee, without any thought that their self-respect or esteem will be diminished.

In impoverished inner-city black communities, however, particularly among young males and perhaps increasingly among females, such flight would be extremely difficult. To run away would likely leave one's self esteem in tatters.

Hence people often feel constrained not only to stand up and at least attempt to resist during an assault but also to "pay back"--to seek revenge--after a successful assault on their person. This may include going to get a weapon or even getting relatives involved. Their very identity and self-respect, their honor, is often intricately tied up with the way they perform on the streets during and after such encounters.

This outlook reflects the circumscribed opportunities of the inner-city poor.

Generally, people outside the ghetto have other ways of gaining status and regard, and thus do not feel so dependent on such physical displays.

On the street, among males these concerns about things and identity have come to be expressed in the concept of "manhood."

Manhood in the inner city means taking the prerogatives of men with respect to strangers, other men, and women-being distinguished as a man. It implies physicality and a certain ruthlessness. Respect and regard are associated with this concept in large part because of its practical application: if others have little or no regard for a person's manhood, his very life and those of his loved ones could be in jeopardy. But there is a chicken-and egg aspect to this situation: one's physical safety is more likely to be jeopardized in public because manhood is associated with respect. In other words, an existential link has been created between the idea of manhood and one's selfesteem, so that it has become hard to say which is primary. For many

inner-city youths, manhood and respect are flip sides of the same coin; physical and psychological wellbeing are inseparable, and both require a sense of control, of being in charge.

The operating assumption is that a man, especially a real man, knows what other men know--the code of the streets. And if one is not a real man, one is somehow diminished as a person, and there are certain valued things one simply does not deserve. There is thus believed to be a certain justice to the code, since it is considered that everyone has the opportunity to know it. Implicit in this is that everybody is held responsible for being familiar with the code. If the victim of a mugging, for example, does not know the code and so responds "wrong," the perpetrator may feel justified even in killing him and may feel no remorse. He may think, "Too bad, but it's his fault. He should have known better."

So when a person ventures outside, he must adopt the code, a kind of shield, to prevent others from "messing with" him.

In these circumstances it is easy for people to think they are being tried or tested by others even when this is not

the case. For it is sensed that something extremely valuable is at stake in every interaction, and people are encouraged to rise to the occasion, particularly with strangers. For people who are unfamiliar with the code-- generally people who live outside the inner city--the concern with respect in the most ordinary interactions can be frightening and incomprehensible. But for those who are invested in the code, the clear object of their demeanor is to discourage strangers from even thinking about testing their manhood. And the sense of power that attends the ability to deter others can be alluring even to those who know the code without being heavily invested in it-the decent inner-city youths. Thus a boywho has been leading a basically decent life can, in trying circumstances, suddenly resort to deadly force.

Central to the issue of manhood is the widespread belief that one of the most effective ways of gaining respect is to manifest "nerve." Nerve is shown when one takes another person's possessions (the more valuable the better), "messes with" someone's woman, throws the first punch, "gets in someone's face," or pulls a trigger. Its proper display helps on the spot to check others who would violate one's

person and also helps to build a reputation that works to prevent future challenges. But since such a show of nerve is a forceful expression of disrespect toward the person on the receiving end, the victim may be greatly offended and seek to retaliate with equal or greater force. A display of nerve, therefore, can easily provoke a life-threatening response, and the background knowledge of that possibility has often been incorporated into the concept of nerve.

True nerve exposes a lack of fear of dying.

Many feel that it is acceptable to risk dying over the principle of respect. In fact, among the hard-core street-oriented, the clear risk of violent death may be preferable to being “dissed” by another. The youths who have internalized this attitude and convincingly display it in their public bearing are among the most threatening people of all, for it is commonly assumed that they fear no man.

As the people of the community say, “They are the bad dudes on the street.” They often lead an existential life that may acquire meaning only when they are faced with the possibility of imminent death. Not to be afraid to die is by implication to have few compunctions about taking

another's life. Not to be afraid to die is the quid pro quo of being able to take somebody else's life, for the right reasons, if the situation demands it. When others believe this is one's position, it gives one a real sense of power on the streets.

Such credibility is what many inner-city youths strive to achieve, whether they are decent or street-oriented, both because of its practical defensive value and because of the positive way it makes them feel about themselves. The difference between the decent and the street-oriented youth is often that the decent youth makes a conscious decision to appear tough and manly; in another setting--with teachers, say, or at his part-time job--he can be polite and deferential. The street-oriented youth, on the other hand, has made the concept of manhood a part of his very identity; he has difficulty manipulating it which often controls him.

INCREASINGLY, teenage girls are mimicking the boys and trying to have their own version of "manhood." Their goal is the same as to get respect, to be recognized as capable of setting or maintaining a certain standard.

They try to achieve this end in the ways that have been established by the boys, including posturing, abusive language, and the use of violence to resolve disputes, but the issues for the girls are different. Although conflicts over turf and status exist among the girls, the majority of disputes seem rooted in assessments of beauty (which girl in a group is “the cutest”), competition over boyfriends, and attempts to regulate other people’s knowledge of and opinions about a girl’s behavior or that of someone close to her, especially her mother.

A major cause of conflicts among girls is “he says, she says”. This practice begins in the early school years and continues through high school. It occurs when “people,” particularly girls, talk about others, thus putting their “business in the streets.” Usually one girl will say something negative about another in the group, most often behind the person’s back.

The remark will then get back to the person talked about. She may retaliate or her friends may feel required to “take up for” her. In essence this is a form of group gossiping in which individuals are negatively assessed and evaluated. As with much gossip, the things said may or may not be true,

but the point is that such imputations can cast aspersions on a person's good name. The accused is required to defend herself against the slander, which can result in arguments and fights, often over little of real substance.

Here again is the problem of low selfesteem, which encourages youngsters to be highly sensitive to slights and to be vulnerable to feeling easily "dissed." To avenge the dissing, a fight is usually necessary.

Because boys are believed to control violence, girls tend to defer to them in situations of conflict. Often if a girl is attacked or feels slighted, she will get a brother, uncle, or cousin to do her fighting for her. Increasingly, however, girls are doing their own fighting and are even asking their male relatives to teach them how to fight. Some girls form groups that attack other girls or take things from them.

A hard-core segment of inner-city girls inclined toward violence seems to be developing. As one thirteen years old girl in a detention center for youths who have committed violent acts told me, "To get people to leave you alone, you need to fight. Talking don't always get you out of stuff." One

major difference between girls and boys: girls rarely use guns. Their fights are therefore not life-or-death struggles.

Girls are not often willing to put their lives on the line for "manhood." The ultimate form of respect on the male-dominated inner-city street is thus reserved for men.

## **GOING FOR BAD**

In the most fearsome youths such a cavalier attitude toward death grows out of a very limited view of life. Many are uncertain about how long they are going to live and believe they could die violently at any time. They accept this fate; they live on the edge. Their manner conveys the message that nothing intimidates them; whatever turn the encounter takes, they maintain their attack--rather like a pit bull, whose spirit many such boys admire. The demonstration of such tenacity "shows heart" and earns their respect.

This fearlessness has implications for law enforcement. Many street oriented boys are much more concerned about the threat of "justice" at the hands of a peer than at the hands of the police. Moreover, many feel not only that they have little to lose by going to prison but that they have something to gain.

The toughening-up one experiences in prison can actually enhance one's reputation on the streets. Hence the system loses influence over the hard core who are without jobs, with little perceptible stake in the system. If mainstream society has done nothing for them, they counter by making sure it can do nothing to them.

At the same time, however, a competing view maintains that true nerve consists in backing down, walking away from a fight, and going on with one's business. One fights only in self-defense. This view emerges from the decent philosophy that life is precious, and it is an important part of the socialization process common in decent homes. It discourages violence as the primary means of resolving disputes and encourages youngsters to accept nonviolence and talk as confrontational strategies. But "if the deal goes down," self-defense is greatly encouraged.

When there is enough positive support for this orientation, either in the home or among one's peers, then nonviolence has a chance to prevail. But it prevails at the cost of relinquishing a claim to being bad and tough, and therefore sets a young person up as at the very least alienated from

street-oriented peers and quite possibly a target of derision or even violence.

Although the nonviolent orientation rarely overcomes the impulse to strike back in an encounter, it does introduce a certain confusion and so can prompt a measure of soul-searching, or even profound ambivalence. Did the person back down with his respect intact or did he back down only to be judged a "punk"--a person lacking manhood? Should he or she have acted? Should he or she have hit the other person in the mouth? These questions beset many young men and women during public confrontations.

What is the "right" thing to do? In the quest for honor, respect, and local status, which few young people are uninterested in common sense, most often prevails, which leads many to opt for the tough approach, enacting their own particular versions of the display of nerve. The presentation of oneself as rough and tough is very often quite acceptable until one is tested. And then that presentation may help the person pass the test, because it will cause fewer questions to be asked about what he did and why. It is hard for a person

to explain why he lost the fight or why he backed down. Hence many will strive to appear to "go for bad," while hoping they will never be tested. But when they are tested, the outcome of the situation may quickly be out of their hands, as they become wrapped up in the circumstances of the moment.

# 13

CHAPTER  
THIRTEEN

## THE WALL OF ALL STREETS (“THE GAME”)





Street has different interwoven compartments with different complexities, in other words, I will say the street is quite complex just like the world we live in. We have different offices in the street as we call it because of the activities being carried out there being synonymous with that of the usual every day office we know.

Talking about office subjectively based on the name given to it by the individuals on the street. There are different terminologies used by the street dwellers and dealers which is subjected to the types of activity such individuals do on the street.

It is being asserted that the terms used by different individuals on the street, were formulated individually and flexibly to relate with themselves uniquely in a way and pattern they themselves would only understand, making it difficult for anybody outside their cartel or group to relate nor comprehend the vocal diversities in their conversations or perhaps lexically. The word office is brought about by some lords of the street in order to esteem and uphold their privacy and enact a standard by creating jurisdictions and policies to guide through their activities. Different policies for different offices, like the usual office we know, the street office also has lines of authority or lines of command in whichever way we would prefer to use it, which goes from the office owner to the head person in the office and so on and so forth according to the laydown policy by the owner of the office.

There are different organization or groups as it may be named, based on individual's concepts. The street has made it easy for the settlement and formulation of secret groups or organization with a general name called 'cult', based on the street activities with respect to the settlement and diversities of the street offices. We have different cult

individuals in the so called street who operates under the leadership of the office with the supervision of the office head person for easy operations of it dealings. The office owner might be a cultist or might not. which is never a barrier to the office settlements and its activities, what is actually paramount is the administrative capacity of the person in charge, the monetary capabilities and reputations in the street affairs. There can be different cult individuals in one office depending on the leadership in the particular office, but there would be laws to guide through their operations which is supervised in most cases by the head person in the office.

The activities of the street individuals, made it vulnerable for diabolic infiltrations and intrusions dynamically, hence causing negative effect on the society at large and the religious believes.

The so called office on the street can also be broken down to, small office and big office or main office. The main office is the place where all individuals reside to do or plan their daily activities, and it is actually not flexible but rigid unless there is security case and perhaps get moved to another

area or rather habitation. Most times the main office is where all activities and plans are being carried out for privacy and safety reasons most importantly.

The small office is quite flexible and can be anywhere depending on how emergency it meets the subjected activity due for analysis.

The security consciousness in small offices is quite of a high side because of the open space or environment which might be easily intruded by any external body. Different activities are being carried out in different street offices depending on what the particular office is based on. The common name given to different activities being carried out in street offices is called 'Game'.

Mind you, it is not the usual game we are talking about here like the one individuals partake in, by physical appearance nor on phone, but rather, they are different activities that leads to transaction and ends up with something in exchange for the particular transaction. The exchange is always something valuable. Life on the street is very tasking and can be very dangerous based on the hazards being exposed to. To live, relate and deal on the street, you must

be extra careful, smart, and be strong most importantly. Some people find themselves on the street living the street life at the long run not because they wanted to, but something they could not comprehend led them through it. Generally, I will advise every individual to be conscious and pay attention to their everyday progression as they grow older, especially from the teenage and youthful age to avoid ending up on the street, because all the evil things and activities you can think of in this world happens on the street.

There is almost no correct way to start off what needs to be said other than to jump right into it. This is aimed at the minds of people who feel like they never had a chance because of where they grew up and who they grew up around - the ones who live in the hood and whose minds feel,

“The hood is all I know,” the ones who feel that because of your race or gender you are being held back. This is aimed at the people whose minds believe that if they pray things will change - magically. This is for you.

We live in a world where actions mean everything. I don't care what country you live in actions are the solution to success or to failure. This is true no matter what you believe or been lead to believe, and I'll tell you why. The cycle has already been built for people who live in countries like the United States. I'll explain: although you may not see this, but the overall mind state of the country is "positive." What I mean by that is that in this country people will help you when you need help... people will help you when you don't need help. This may not happen as much on the hood (neighborhood), but it happens. Your job is to put yourself in the position to receive the help, so that one day you can continue the cycle that has been built. The way you position yourself is simple: you go to school. The cycle is in full effect there. Not only do you just show up for the sake of showing up, you put forth some action. Your actions should show that you are willing to be taught what is needed to survive in this world.

I am fully aware that these day's schools have become a fashion show and people in general (mainly young people) care about how they look, which becomes a major distraction when in the process of positioning yourself to

be a part of the cycle. This is where young people become attracted to drugs. Drugs in the neighborhood is a way to make fast money. Once money becomes involved, it's almost impossible to tell the young person anything. They begin to practice the "law of actions" in a different way. This way is by force, with guns. These actions are no good in some countries. It is impossible to be able to buy the amount of guns one would need to continue living a life of force by guns. My point is that sooner or later you will lose by way of prison or death, and that is the truth. And if you go to prison, you will have passed up the years of being young without collecting the full education which is the true key to success in life.

Right now, if you are between the ages of 13 years old and 17 years of age, you have the chance. If you have children or brothers/sisters between these ages, you have the chance. This is bigger than being tuff, because I was tuff. This is bigger than being down for the hood, because I was down for the hood. This is bigger than worrying about what to wear to school. This is as big as life itself!

I encourage you to take action. Go to school and learn. Finish school and go to college. Walk away from what you might believe is right in these neighborhoods. I encourage you to do this now, while you have the chance to. If you feel that staying true or down for the hood is considered “keeping it real,” well it’s not! It’s actually real stupid.

I grew up in Nigeria, Ebute metta Lagos area. With good educational background from Iponri Grammar School Anwar Islam movement Lagos and University of Benin, Benin City. There is nothing about the hood life I don’t know. This is why I have dedicated my time to warn as many people as I can about the so-called lifestyle referred to as “The Game.” I understand how hard it may be to trust me, because I can remember when I was in my teenage years, I heard an exgang member speak similar to how I am speaking now. I didn’t trust him. I didn’t want to hear him, but to this day, I can’t get past the fact that he was right.

People are already in positions to ensure your success in this country. You just have to be there. We live in a world where good things happen to us no matter what at one time or another. Even if nothing good has

happened to you yet, keep living - something will. This is because of the overall cycle which is in motion.

There's a cycle in motion within the hood, but its outcome is death or poison and, at the very least, sprang out of drugs. This is no way to live when we have the opportunity to become anything we want to. I encourage young people, don't get caught up in worrying about what to wear to school, if it looks nice or not. Don't get caught up in not having the latest shoes, because I promise you this, it will be plenty of time for that once you have finished school and have the career you wanted. I encourage you to join the majority and be part of the solution and not the problem.

This is a world where actions speak louder than words.

There is no house on the hills. There is no pot of gold on the other side of the rainbow. It's all a lie. This lifestyle is designed to bring you all down; either you will turn on a so-called “Homie” or a socalled Homie or Homies will turn on you.

This is the truth. I write you from the mainline of one of the cities in Lagos state Nigeria, not from some protective area of the. It is hard for me to be seriously considered as

resigned from The Game. But this is not an act. This is the truth because I honestly care about you all.

I was your ages once before, so I am not just guessing. The solution to this area of your lives is: learn how to read, write, spell and do math real-good, because in this lifestyle called The Game, you will need it.

You will need to know how to read so you will be able to read the charges you're soon to be charged with. You will need to know how to write so you can write to your family or otherwise the homies who won't write back, but family will (some). You will need to know how to spell so when you write your family so they will be able to understand why you need money on your books to buy soap and food while in jail.

(These things are not free once you're 18 or older.)

And of course, you will need math because you will need to be able to add up all the money you're making or going to make in The Game, plus you'll need math to add up all the time you will have to do off of 20 years with 85% if not more, maybe less the first time, but more the second time.

However, if you look around at all the young people your age who already know how to read, write, spell and do math, you will probably notice that they are the ones who's been smart enough to read through The Game and know it's a road headed to nowhere fast! I speak the truth to you all. There is nothing for me to gain in this speech. I speak from my heart. The Game is no place for none.

First and fore-most I've been in the same situation many years ago trying to find my place in life! But I must tell you that there's nothing good that comes from being a gang member!

True, you have some good times but in the end you wind up going to a lot of funerals or visiting a lot of prisons! Now if that's your idea of a life then the gang scene is for you, drugs, murder, mayhem, prison, and death!

Oh yeah, while you're hanging out with your homies and home girls drinking, getting high, fighting rival members, or just committing any kind of crime, it's all cool!

But when it turns into a life or death situation then you want to take time to reflect and question your present position in life!

What I want to do is make you question that life style now! Ask yourself, do you really want to spend your life in prison under the control of some else 24-7? Or how about dodging bullets every time you walk to the store? Maybe you would like to bury someone every other week?

It's up to you! But the gang life is for people who don't care about life. Open your eyes and reflect before it's too late.

Also remember that squares don't go to prison so it's hip to be square!

Life is our teacher, teaching us with good experiences and with painful ones. The painful days are difficult to understand like the death of my brother Jude Mafiana who couldn't escape from the street but died after different hustle for survival from the street. He was sure a good hearted man as I know him very well as my brother. Though at a point in life he got stuck with the street affairs that he went really deep conforming to all kinds of street attributes due to what life offers according to him, although I contrasted his point of view, but it is from these troubled times that we learn to be strong. We learn to hold on and face each day, even though we hurt and feel frustrated.

We learn that the simple pleasures are often the most rewarding. And we learn that losing is often only another step towards winning. And when life turns its smiling side to use again, as it always does, we find ourselves stronger, with a greater knowledge of ourselves, and able to feel the welcomed comfort of good times even more deeply than before.

I will like to use medium to advice everybody reading this book that, nothing is unchangeable in life, you can be on the street today, and still come out for good at the long run, but you need to be very strong in all areas of life and develop a positive notion on everything around. Also you must note that nothing good comes easy without hard-work. It might come easy for other people and mightn’t for you, but I sure know you can achieve anything in life with strong focus and steadfast work and prayers to God.

Nobody likes nor wants to end up on the street, but different life upbringing and pop-ups conforms us therein.

# CONCLUSION





The street has exposed children to a variety of experiences, both positive and negative. A striving after autonomy is clearly depicted by these children, who are able to tap into a range of responses, both on- and off—street.

These ambiguous experiences lead to feelings of confusion, despair. Helplessness and suicide ideation in children living on the streets. The children living on the street in my research and experience so far strives to lead a morally good life which involves the ability to distinguish between good and bad actions. There is clearly the ability to appreciate cause and effect linked to criminal behavior

and negative outcomes. Children living on the streets make a choice to engage in processes of mobility, which impacts on their actual identity. This mobility affords them a number of opportunities that enhances their survival strategies and resilience on the street.

They are able to tap into a range of resources on the street and off-street locations at different times, enabled by their fluid identities.

My advice for us all is, try not to get stuck on the street nor compromise your good pursuit with the fear that makes it seem unrealizable, but know that with God and seriousness in all important areas of life, you can escape from the street. It might not be easy for you and might, but I strongly believe you can and you will.