



The Drug War Continuum; Chronicles of Meschach

BY HASANUZZAMAN PAVEL

Contents

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM 1

THE STORM..... 4

THE RUBBLE..... 8

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

Meschach Abraham. That is my name. I'm a 22-year-old African American man. My release date was January 25, 1993. In my tenth month at Fox River Prison, I joined Save Our Soul Foundation (SOSF), a program that helps drug users with issues involving their mental health, rehabilitation, and physical care. They also taught us how to make society better.

My parents, Mrs. Cynthia Abraham, a cleaner, and Mr. Thomas Abraham, a fruit carrier for Finch Logistics Express, raised me along with my three siblings, Michelle Abraham, 17, Sophie Abraham, 14, and Maxwell Abraham, 10.

Growing up in a low-welfare community in the United States, where a high proportion of men were felons or were serving time for non-violent drug-related crimes, there were also an increasing number of instances of criminal and narcotics activity as well as cartel wars, all of which have had an impact on the peace, unity, and development of our community to this day. In contrast to other white neighborhoods, our community has stagnated for more than 20 years as a result of the drug war that has consumed our life.

A little back story:

President Reagan made sure that things changed and got worse for our community in 1985. He was more interested in drug offenders' punishment and incarceration than in therapy. As a result, police were given the authority to use force to seize the assets—such as cash and cars—of people of color. The majority of this affected Mexicans and African-Americans, mostly because they were labeled "suspects".

Survival became challenging for the majority of households in our community at this time. Hardship, family conflicts, juvenile drug usage, a rise in the number of adolescents entering cartel gangs, and a

strong desire to leave the community owing to greater competition for resources were just a few of the traits shared by other African American homes.

For a variety of circumstances, many young people in the community, including myself, were hooked up on hard drugs like marijuana and crack cocaine. We looked for jobs in the drug and criminal industries.

Due to the absence of government provision of needs like energy, security, healthcare, and education. The leaders of major cartels gang in the community mainly; Diablo gang, Guererra gang and Vyk6 gang were forced to fulfill these needs, making them gods in our eyes.

In order to get to work before 7 a.m. and pick us up at 4 p.m., Papa had the same schedule for more than ten years. He would drop us off at school at 6:30 a.m. Every day was the same. Papa had always been a hard worker, and he kept working at Finch Logistics Express merely to make sure we had food at least once a day. A firm that gave little thought to the African Americans, Mexicans, and Asians that made up the majority of their transport staff. He applied for different jobs for openings or company developments on numerous occasions.

My closest friend in high school was an American white boy named Frank Gibson. Because of our common interest in family, money, education, and lifestyle, we became close and good friends. Frank was no stranger to heavy narcotics and made me like him more. We eventually started using hard drugs together, sometimes after school and sometimes during recess.

Frank invited me to a party that his older brother had organized one day after school. I lied to my parents and said we had a scientific project to do and turn in by the next morning because I had no idea what to say to my parents. Due to the facts that my parents knew Frank's parents from the fruit market, and we didn't have access to a reliable power source, they had to agree.

It's D-Day, and I'm eagerly awaiting for papa while he watches a soccer match. Sophie, who was dressed in her pajamas, could see my eagerness, but she had no idea that I was eager to try some of the hard

drugs we would explore in Frank's place. Mama exited her room, gave me a forehead kiss good-bye, and wished me success with my science project. When I arrived at Frank's house, Papa greeted me and said, "I'll come get you tomorrow after school; take care of yourself, I love you. I love you too, papa" I retorted, and he zoomed off.

Five minutes later, as I was preparing to join the party guests on Frank's favorite couch, I heard

Frank shouting upstairs: "Meshach! Meshach!!, your papa is arriving!". I went downstairs to meet Papa so he wouldn't hear the loud music coming from the Panasonic sound system, and he was looking frantic.

I inquired, "What happened," to which he replied, "We need to check on your mother". He said she had passed out while cleaning and was being taken emergency room at St. Luke's Hospital". When we arrived at the hospital. Michelle, Sophie, and Maxwell were crying, and the doctor told us right away that he would need to perform some blood. We were patiently awaiting for the result. A little while later, Sophie abruptly jumped up and said, "Papa, the doctor is coming back." In his hands is a folder.

THE STORM

Mama has stage four ovarian cancer, the doctor informed us while holding a folder and reading the writing on a piece of paper. Sophie starts to cry and collapses on the ground. "What have we done to deserve this?" Papa just stands there, speechless, as she continues to babble gibberish in between sobs. I catch a fleeting look of terror in his eyes, but it could simply be my imagination playing games. Papa has never experienced any kind of fear. At this time, I come to the realization and tell myself, "I have to be a man; I have to take care of mommy and my siblings, whatever I must".

Since I can remember, Papa has been distributing fruits to various shops and residences from various farms. My high school education was funded by the money he earned from that. Sadly, now that Mama's illness has put this shadow over the family, every dime earned must be completely directed toward improving her health. We all realized we had to hunt for additional funding sources the week after learning the heartbreaking news to pay for Mama's medical care. This prompted Papa to ask his supervisor Don Jose Jesse, a corrupt government official at the time, for a loan. It became increasingly obvious over time that there was no practical way to repay the loan. This is what ultimately led to the business deal that, in my opinion, would say, forever shattered my family.

Don Jose seeing Papa's situation connected Papa to Diablo himself. Few days later, Papa agreed to transport an extra set of goods for the famous Diablo drug cartel operating in our community. Every day, he would load up fruits alongside hidden boxes of hard drugs to be delivered to the cartel. He would then pray that the highway cops take no interest in him and his "deliverables." Unbeknownst to him, the corruption had eaten so deeply into the system that the checkpoints knew not to check his truck.

As fate would have it, a rival cartel attempted to seize one of the deliveries, and a bullet that was fired in the confusion struck my father square in the chest. Come quickly, Meschach; your father is in the hospital. The son of our neighbor, Tom, has a voice that I can well recall. I'd never experienced such fear. I ran as far as my body could go and as fast as my feet could go. One glance was all it took when I arrived at the hospital's entryway to realize the worst had occurred. I recall observing the nurses' pitiful expressions. The words "poor boy, how will he take care of his mother and sisters now" were also said in a voice.

When I went up to the first Doctor I encountered, he said, "We lost him, I'm sorry". I felt numb. I could see the flashing lights and hear the ringing noises in my mind. I seemed to have forgotten how to breathe for a split second. I last recall seeing a group of nurses advancing on me. My mother and my sisters were seated in various seats across from me when I finally woke up the following morning in one of the clinic beds. I only needed to look at their puffy faces to realize that it wasn't a dream.

Papa was really gone. "Meschach, you're not a dull boy; you must hustle your mother's medical bills, and your sisters must get an education." Those were the words I kept repeating to myself until I got to the front yard of cartel. I approached one of the guards there and said: "My father was a driver working for Diablo and he was killed some days ago; I want to take his position; I need to take his position. Please tell the boss."

Needless to say, the guard told me off. I went back the next day and the day after that. On the fourth day, the head guard came to meet me at the gate and took me to the boss's right-hand man.

They all referred to him as Senior Carlo. He offered me the job after a few minutes of small talk. He knew I wouldn't back down. I worked every day and transported all I needed to. No questions were asked. I did

this for eleven months, and I was able to buy all of Mama's hard drugs. I paid my sisters' tuition, and I bought them new clothes on two occasions.

Fate struck yet again in my household. I woke up to get ready to go to work, but something felt different. Mama wasn't singing her usual morning songs. I froze as soon as I realized. I remember praying to God, if he existed: "Please don't take her away from me yet". I got to her room to see that she had passed away sometime during the night. I couldn't cry. I wouldn't let my sisters see me this way. I needed to stay strong for them and for my parents, whom I believed were now watching over us. I told Sophia what had happened and told Michelle, who was still too young to understand: "Mama is now an angel, watching over us".

It was a challenging time for me after the funeral. I lacked a conversation partner, a means of self-expression, and a positive outlook on life. I began consuming some of the hard drugs I was delivering which brought joy coupled with fleeting feelings, but I was temporarily happy.

Once became twice, and then twice became three. It never stopped. All I know is that it felt good, and I wanted to feel good. It quickly became clear that I was unable to give my sisters a safe environment in which to develop. I had a Ghanaian aunt, who Mama talked about so fondly. I reached out to her, and she agreed to help take care of my sisters. They had to fly back to our home country of Ghana. "I will come for you, I promise, even if it's the last thing I do." I hugged them both tightly and watched them go into the airport.

A few weeks later, during one of the infamous raids in our community, there had been raids in the past, but they were not serious. For whatever reason, the current government's tolerance for drug use ranged from very low to nonexistent. It began to seem like there were specific targets. Automatically, if you were a person of color, you knew not to ever get caught up in that mix.

The likelihood of you escaping was close to none. I was taking a leisurely stroll home when a police officer urged me to empty my pockets. I took the chance knowing i had a tiny bit of leftover crack cocaine in my pockets and I didn't want to risk losing it during a quick search. I ended myself in jail as a result of what began as a normal search.

I was taken into custody for possession, and it was the start of my time behind prison.

THE RUBBLE

It was a period of sober reflection and immense introspection in my life. I was able to see how I had veered off, from trying to provide for my family to ending up alone within the walls of a prison as a recovering drug addict.

Every time it got tough at Fox River, I remember always saying to myself, "I'll do this every day for both of you, papa and mama," I had to purposefully devote all of my strength to getting better and graduating from Save Our Soul Foundation (SOSF), which gave me a better perspective on life.

After about eighteen months in detention, walking back home through the same streets I got picked up on, I remember the flood of memories that rushed through my mind. Papa, Mama, Sophie, and Michelle. The life we had was everything to me. For the first time since Papa passed away, i broke down in tears by the corner of the street. Life had indeed changed. I went home and cleaned out the house that was a complete mess.

Occasionally, I still hear the loud gunshots during raids. I saw a couple of adolescents trailing the path of drug addiction, drug pushing, and a tremendous affinity for violence.