



## No one intends to end up in a place like this

By Jay, 42 years old, 7 years on death row

I grew up in a very rural part of the U.S. called Alabama. As a young child we lived on an unpaved road in a small house of our own best described as a shack. In retrospect, I can see that we were poor people even amongst poor people, but I had fields and the forest to play in and it seemed a good life to me.

Then around the age of five came the first great defining moment in my young life in the form of a tragedy... my oldest brother got sick and after months in a hospital passed away. We had to leave the tranquil country life for the heaving ramshackle existence of a government assisted living complex in town.

It took quite a few years for my family to get back on their feet both emotionally and financially. But that is the good thing of being a family of five living in a two bedroom house no one can fall ... the most you can hope for is to lean on the people beside you.

Time passed on and I grew into a man, owned my own business and had a son of my own. I will always cherish my time in the red brick projects of my youth. We were crowded together, we didn't have new shoes but we always had a hot meal and a dry bed... most importantly we had each other.

Life is such an extraordinary series of ups and downs that we must have help from those around us. The best way we can hope to help other people is to understand them. That is what I hope to bring about by sharing letters, a little understanding.

My plans never included prison but plans do not always work out and I am here now. As for the connectdeathrow project, I think it is important to have outreach to youth. Not only to let them see that there are men behind the supposed monster who sit in these cells. But also so they can see that no one intends to end up in a place like this.

I have traded the red bricks of yesterday for today's concrete. I still have family (in photos), a warm meal and dry bed....

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Jay can be contacted through [connectdeathrow](http://connectdeathrow.org)