



Life is a journey of discovery and rediscovery

By Oak, 57 years old, 30 years on death row

I'm not in here waiting to die. No matter what the circumstance are, I plan to live the fullest I can. I don't let this place rule me or dictate the welfare of my being. There are people who are in wonderful places and yet they are miserable, not happy and quite depressed. Places are just a place. It's up to us if we are going to live a life of happiness or sadness, not the place. I feel much joy often.

I really enjoy writing. I like the possibility of getting to experience life from other people's eyes. To see things from angles that I normally wouldn't think about. I've learned that for most things there are many ways to view issues and I most definitely don't have all the answers. Seeing things from other perspectives can be amusing, fun and quite interesting. It really pays to have a sense of wonder and curiosity, which is something that most adults have let go of and are quite set in thinking that everything is only the way they see it. When someone young questions their views or beliefs then they are considered too young, wrong or stupid.

I know at least on the surface it may appear that the young person gets more out of getting the letters than the prisoner who is writing them. But if we look a little closer, we might find it's really the other way around. One of the causes of many people going down the harsh paths that we do is because when we were young, we never had anyone teach us what it's like to have responsibility for someone else, or anything such as a pet. A project like this gives the prisoner a chance to have responsibility and care for someone outside of ourselves.

I like to encourage young folk to never lose their sense of wonder, to always question others' beliefs as well as our own. To try to understand the whys and the hows, and to see life as a journey of discovery and rediscovery. I also believe we all have a chance to make this world a better place if we want to. Age doesn't matter nor does skin color or gender. Every one of us has a voice to speak with.

This is just as much your planet as it is any adult's.

January 2020

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