**INTRODUCTION**

It has been eight years since I wrote Warrior Within. Inside Report on Texas Death Row; my recount of my life experiences on Texas Death Row. This report went from when I arrived in April 1999 at 29 years old, to May 2006 when I was 36 years of age. At this point in my life I had been incarcerated on Texas Death Row for seven years. Yes, seven long years since I had been found to be less than human and thus not worthy of life. This same jury had also found me guilty of a crime I am innocent of and thus sentenced me to death. Eight years has gone by and I must say that eight years is a long time and a man can change a lot in this time. I know I have and I'm grateful that these changes have been for the better. For some time now I have wanted to have another opportunity to allow the reader of my writings to hear my voice. The reason why I have wanted another say is because my voice has changed. I have changed. I look back at the time in my life when I wrote Warrior Within and I see what I was going through and how many ways I was living instinctively. I say this because I did not understand the "Game of Life", did not know there were rules to this game; in fact I did not know that I was engaged in any game, period! No, I did not see any of this in my life, I was blind to so much and was going through life reacting to what was coming my way not really understanding what was happening to me.

The thing I see and hear most when I pick up "Warrior Within" and start reading it is the anger, fear frustration, stress and anxiety that was boiling up out of me at this time in my life. I see this and I cringe inside because that is not me today. No, that is not me today, in fact it was not me in 2006. That was my lower self, pride/ego running amok having completely hijacked my being at the worst possible time and having its way with me. I see this clear as day now and can only say I am so grateful that I have matured and become a spiritual being who has begun a journey upon the path of spiritual enlightenment. For this reason I needed to have another chance to allow the reader to hear my true voice that I have found hidden within myself.

I have always struggled with anger and can look back upon the past and see that every time I've ever gotten into trouble it was because I allowed anger to take control and before I knew it I was regretting what had happened and in trouble. Since childhood I've had this problem, as a teenager I've had this problem, and when I was sent to Texas death row for a crime I did not commit I had this terrible problem. The amazing thing about this situation was that I had no idea I had a problem. I mean, sure, I'd lose my temper every now and then but that was not so unusual, I knew lots of people just like me; what's the problem?

So after seven years of living on Texas death row I continued to fail to recognize that my problem with anger was one of the biggest obstacles to my becoming a truly better human being and really getting to the business of creating a better future for myself. The thing about anger is that it has a nasty group of associates called greed, lust, attachment and pride. And whether you know it or not, when you entertain one you usually have them all over for a party.

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By this time in my life I was starting to see things clearer and now that I was in my mid- thirties I was also becoming more mature. I still had a lot of my "old" self inside that I had brought with me from the free world and because of these old self desires I allowed myself to associate with people I should not have been around. There is an old saying that goes, when you play with fire you end up getting burned. I ended up getting burned in the form of betrayal. I think about that part of my life and now I can see what happened so clearly. I see that it was my pride/ego that was outraged that "I'' could be betrayed, and this outrage became an endless cycle that I was going through and unable to stop. I would think of the betrayal, became outraged anew and then be consumed with thoughts of revenge visualizing all that I wanted to do to the betrayers. This scenario would play out again and again inside my head until I began to realize that I was starting to go insane. I was totally out of-control of my thoughts and body because pride/ego had hijacked-my being 24 hours a day, 7 days' a week and I was in trouble.

At this point I must point out that God/Universe is always in control, always in charge. He knows what is happening and will continue to put road signs up along your path and it's up to you to see them and make use of the help He gives you. About this time I kept getting messages about meditation-meditation-meditation. I'd read about meditation in magazines and newspapers and would hear about meditation on the radio. Even I was able to pick up on this billboard sign that God had put up for me and I grabbed hold of this subtle message and began to ask God/Universe to send me someone who could help me learn to control myself. I had reached the point in my life that I recognized the need to change myself because I was in very real danger of going crazy if I didn't. This request was also a breakthrough for me because up until now I had a love-hate relationship with God. I was raised in a Christian home by Christian parents and knew about God, had read the Bible and loved the Good Lord when everything was going my way but hated God now that I was on Texas Death Row for a crime I did not commit.

This attitude towards God had been in effect for a while and I was avoiding the subject because dealing with it would mean dealing with who I really was and what I was about. My coming back to God and asking Him to send me someone who could teach me to control myself and teach me about meditation was significant and a turning point for me in life.

As I look back upon my life the pattern in which I came to these realizations is very clear to me. Everything in life happens for a reason and it's up to us to see and understand this reason and learn from the experience...

I continued to ask for someone to come into my life who could help me for a few more months, in the meanwhile looking for an answer to my problem myself, but having little success.

I'm sure you have heard the saying, be careful what you ask for, you just might get it. There is truth in this and I am very happy to say that God/Universe was busy answering my request in the form of sending me two wonderful sets of friends virtually at the same time. The first was a lovely couple named Colin and Yvonne who were from New Zealand, no less, and were into a specific type of meditation and were following "The Path". Both were very caring and loving in how they began to share their experiences and sent me a book called "Spiritual Gems". This book opened a new world to me one that I did not know existed and was very interested in learning about. Spiritual Gems is a book of letters written by a spiritual perfect master from India to his western followers. This book quite simply changed my life. As I began to read Spiritual Gems and Colin and Yvonne started sending me more books that explained what the path of enlightenment was and how it might sound simple and easy to do but is very difficult to achieve. I loved what I was reading and learning and was beginning to understand why I was the way I was. I also began to realize it's not important what you believe, but that you believe that matters, meaning there is more than one path to spiritual enlightenment.

At the same time, God/Universe had another answer cooking for me regarding my request for help in learning about meditation and learning to control myself. This answer come in the form of a friend contacting me from England, and her name was also Yvonne, but her friends called her "Von". This response was much more overt, in Von's first letter she told me about herself and she told me she was into meditation and did not know if I was interested in this kind of thing but if I was she would do all she could to help me learn about spiritual practice! My jaw dropped and I felt dizzy when I read this! It was absolutely amazing how my requests were being filled to the fullest degree by friends and I was very happy and grateful for their presence in my life. From this point on I began to learn about spiritual practice and continue this practice to this day, striving to learn more and more and for the first time understanding the difference between religion and spirituality.

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Today I am a spiritual being, traveling upon the path of enlightenment, and am grateful for this. I have come to realize that the reason I was put on this earth was to become a spiritually enlightened soul and continue to learn the never ending lessons life continues to teach me. I'm delighted to say that the more I travel upon this path the easier it is for me to identify what "truth" is. For me truth has a certain sound and when I hear it, read it, or see it this truth rings pure within me. It is at that moment that I decide whether or not I'll add this newly discovered truth to the truths that I live my life by. I love this process, love coming across truths that I had not known before and learning about them; and through these new truths becoming a fuller, better, more complete soul.'

As soon as I began to learn to meditate and spend time with the saints through their writings I began to learn about myself. I started to understand why I was the way I was. I learned about the five passions which are named anger, greed, lust, attachment and pride. I learned that pride's other name is ego and how ego is lurking just below the surface of my consciousness, set to spring upon me and hijack my being and wreak havoc in my already screwed up life, leaving me in more trouble than I was before. I learned that the only way to shackle these passions down and maintain control of myself was through spiritual practice and living life in gratitude. Because when I live life in gratitude I'm so busy being grateful for my blessings I leave little room for pride/ego to operate. Most important I learned to control myself. I learned why I was unable to control my anger and that losing my temper was just a terrible habit of a lifetime and could be replaced by a good positive habit.

Armed with these newly discovered truths I began to learn and grow and mature, working towards becoming a better human being. Now as I continue to walk upon the path I'm becoming more aware of what's happening to me and because I'm always vigilant it's rare that pride/ego can trick me into losing control. When I do stumble I immediately see how and why and learn from it. I then take a deep breath and get back to being in charge of myself and back towards working for the good. Working for the good is critical because my human nature is drawn to lower self-desires and if I do not put myself to work for the good, evil will consume me. I know this is absolute truth I see it happening all around me and thank God I've been allowed to see this truth.

I've been on Texas Death Row for fifteen year now and these fifteen years have not been easy. Nothing has changed on Texas Death Row; we're still treated the same way and we face the same human rights violations that I described in detail in Warrior Within. In these long years I have seen many close friends go the way of the buffalo, pushed out of existence through execution in the death chamber and that is extremely difficult to deal with. I have watched my parents grow old and now hang on by a thread, needing me at home to care for them more than ever. My parent's situation is without doubt the most difficult thing I have to deal with while locked away on Texas Death Row, and I deal with it on a daily basis.

I don't know why things happen the way they do, nor do I pretend to understand God's mysteries but I am certain we're all going what we're going through to get to where we're going. This situation that I'm in is worse than ever and me and my family are feeling the effects of this continued suffering more than ever because of their advanced age and need for someone to help care for them, this is a fact. What is also a fact is that this situation has taught me life's most important lessons and because of this I'm grateful for the experience. I'm grateful for the loss, betrayal and for the suffering, in the end life is a school of the spirit, learning is our soul's requirement, and suffering our most persuasive teacher. The more the lesson costs us the better we learn it and are much less likely to forget it. The lessons I have been able to learn while on Texas Death Row have come at such a high cost that I shall never forget them. I'm grateful for that. Grateful for the fact that God/Universe did not give up on me, instead got my attention in such a way that I'd be able to learn what I needed to learn and start to become the man I was destined to become.

It is because I was sent to Texas Death Row for a crime I did not commit that I found the path of spiritual enlightenment and travel upon it today, continuing to prepare myself for success in part II of my life. That is my ultimate goal, to be as ready for success as possible when I complete the transition into Part II of my life, forever free and far away from this death house. Complete success is a must, when I'm at last given my chance in part II of my life, because I have so many people counting on me. My parents, my nephew, my friends and supporters all over are counting on me, too, and I know there is no room for failure when I leave this place.

Which brings me back to the reason why I wanted another opportunity to allow you to hear my voice, as it is today. I hope this new release of writings/essays allows you to see the changes in me that have been for the better and I would be grateful if some of my hard learned wisdom and lessons in life can help you in your daily walk/journey as well. If I'm able to help you in this way it means that my life has not been in vain and I've made a difference for the better in another’s life. Thank you for reading this book and for caring about me and all the other men on Death Row's across the world. Our family friends and supporters are who give us the strength to continue this struggle for life and freedom. Be blessed, keep safe and know that I could not continue my fight without you.

Love Peace and Laughter!

Easter Sunday, April 20th, 2014.

Charles Don FLORES.

(Introduction by Charles Don Flores for his latest book of essays, “Je vous ecris du couloir de la mort”, translated into French by Christophe Naud and published by Riveneuve Publishing).