

Laurence Perry, H41599
CSP Lancaster A1-123
PO Box 4430
Lancaster CA. 93539
Words Uncaged submission

THE VICTIM

March eighth, nineteen ninety-five, the twenty-three years young male of African descent sits in the small holding tank at Lynwood Municipal Court waiting to be arraigned on a first degree murder charge. The murder was committed in the course of an attempted carjacking and received its first-degree designation by proxy of the Felony Murder Rule.

The Young man is guilty as sin but resides in a fog of disbelief. His mind tells him that he is innocent because he had not intended to kill Juan Gomez. He had pulled the trigger that had released the bullet that tore through Juan Gomez abdomen, but he had not intended to kill him. He had not even intended to pull the trigger; he simply did it. He had done it in spite of himself. He had not even taken aim.

The arresting officer had initially charged the Young man with attempted robbery. He had even had a bail that he had been poised to post. The officers had not caught the fake name that he had given and as a result were not aware that he was on parole. He had not murdered Juan Gomez because Juan Gomez was not dead.

If Juan Gomez somehow had been murdered no one could know of the young man's guilt. A guilty verdict could mean either death or life without the possibility of parole. This would be a horrible destination for anyone especially a murderer who was not really a murderer.

The deputy, a faceless body draped in tan and green, escorted the Young man into the freshly designed courtroom where the two stood behind a bulletproof partition held up by a thin walled barrier separated from the various court officers. The judge, a cherry-cheeked Caucasian with receding white hair who looked to be in his late sixties sat behind the bench. Two women one Mexican and the other African American sat in front of the judge at paralleled oak tables.

The African American woman, in her maternal familiarity, walked over and speaking in hushed tones said, "The judge will be reading your charges. All I need you to do is enter a plea of not guilty. Do you understand?"

The Young man nodded in agreement. He understood all too well. After all, the court process was not new to him. He had seen many courtrooms at this point in his young life. He watched from his disconnected fog as the attorney pushed the chewed nails of her dry hands through the new growth of her struggling perm while walking away.

The Mexican woman who turned out to be the district attorney stood to respond to the judge's calling of the case. The fog lifted enough for the Young man to notice the skintight skirt clinging to her impressively sculpted curves. He chastised his thoughts for finding her attractive. The woman who had introduced herself as Linda Puentes would spend the next two years trying to take his life.

The Young man pleaded not guilty, as his attorney had advised. He then allowed himself to

return to his fog of disbelief. The words, first-degree murder, and death penalty played on a loop through the busted speaker of his internal intercom. He could not believe that the murder that he had, and had not, committed held the potential to land him on death row.

After keying the door of the tank open, the deputy removed the handcuffs from the Young man's wrists and ordered him inside. "Eh", he called behind him.

"Yea," the Young man looked over his shoulder.

"Ju like killing Mexicans huh," the deputy now had a thick Spanish accent.

"What!" The young man scrunched making himself look older.

"Ju like killing Mexican's, huh," the deputy capped his elevated tone with a sinister smirk. He slammed and locked the door certain that his simple yet not so simple words would lead to the tank erupting in a violent commotion.

The Young man had no time to reflect on how the deputy had reduced Juan Gomez to simply a Mexican. How in propagating his own race-based agenda he had effectively conspired to steal Juan Gomez' individualized humanity.

The implications of what the deputy had done put the Young man on alert. There were thirty to thirty five other inmates in the tank, and more than half were of Mexican heritage. Racial tensions between Black and Mexican inmates in California jails had reached their peak during this time. Violent riots between the two races had become the norm. The conflict waged at the behest of California's burgeoning gang culture had even spilled into society.

Steeped in the criminality of his self-imposed psychosis, the young man instructed himself to offer flying fist to the first person seeking an explanation. He told himself that a person who questioned him about what the deputy had said was a person who took issue with it. Guided by the dictates of gang culture 101 the young man believed that a quick-witted offence offered him the best chance for success. It was not a matter of whether he over or under valued the abilities of either himself or the supposed opposing force. Indeed, the converse was true. He considered offense in this instance a proactive tool of survival.

The Young man stepped outside of his thoughts and took a deep breath resigned to face the music. When he turned to face the tank's occupants, he was surprised to find that aside from the normality of a few curious eyes no one seemed to be paying him any attention. Life in the tank seemed to go on, business as usual. The young man was awestruck.

The anxiety that accompanied the prospects of writing a new chapter in the raging conflict between California's Black and Mexican inmates had numbed the young man's sensibilities towards Juan Gomez. Juan Gomez was no-longer Juan Gomez; he was now the Mexican victim.

The sad truth was that Juan Gomez' murder/non-murder had nothing to do with the conflict between Black and Mexican inmates. The Young man had never even intended to murder Juan Gomez and though he agonized behind having done so, no one, not a single solitary person could know. Suppression would be the Young man's ally of necessity.

Laurence Perry is the author
Of Pivotal Path's, a well-received
Work of Reality fiction, available
Wherever books are sold including
Amazon and Barnes & Nobles

