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### **Irrational Fears v. Rational Fears behind Prison Bars**

Self help books will tell you that fear and excitement are the same biological response in our bodies. These self-help books encourage us to abandon fear. They tell us to have a bucket list, jump off a plane, ask the prettiest girl out, and never be afraid to fail. In reality fear is necessary to warn our bodies of imminent danger: a bear, a parachute that does not work, and being rejected by a woman as beautiful as Venus incarnate. Irrational fear is also a fear of never accomplishing, of being fat, or not having fun in life. These fears are irrational because one can easily overcome them with an ounce of perseverance.

When my parents came to the United States from Nicaragua, I am sure they had fear. They escaped war, famine, drought, murder, and rape inherently possible with the Guerilla wars in Central America. Rational fear I was taught was a war draft or picturing your little siblings die of hunger, or being caught by an oppressive government regime. Irrational fear, I was taught, was voodoo curses, fear of change, and having ugly teeth. When my grandmother legally brought my father to the U.S., his rational fear about war subsided, and he was able to become a successful electrician. When my mother escaped the drug coyotes, triumphed over the near death experiences in crossing frontiers; her fears of death in vain subsided, and she worked as a receptionist in Bellevue. What I learned from my two heroes my parents, was never to fear irrationally. I also learned that one can make ones dreams come true with loyalty, courage and analyzing and keeping my rational fears, while working past irrational fears.

Coming to prison I dealt with both rational fears and irrational fears. I did not have irrational fears of the fights that come with prison. Rather I took my war wounds in stride. I did have the rational fear, covered by the irrational fear that I could never live up to my inner potential, or honor and finish what my parents already began. My parents immigrated successfully to a new country, purchased a house, owned cars, and sent money back to their property and people in Nicaragua. They assimilated gracefully and against all odds. My mother especially is loved by poor Nicaraguan children, who are fed at her yearly arrival. Before I die I vow to feed those little shoeless, disheveled and hungry kids. My dream is for them to call me "El Don Antonio, or El Don Dino," or Sir Dino or Sir Anthony. My dream is also of the archetypical loyal woman whose beauty comes from the virtues she lives by. In my daydreams she births me beautiful children, with great masses of hair, which sways across the room like a hurricane, changing ambiance of the room. Often my imagined children have eyes like a Renaissance painting of angels, and they run to me after I come home from the running my company and say "Papi, Papi, I missed you, Dame un Beso, let's eat, Mama esta esperando", (Father I've missed you, give me a kiss, let's eat, mother is waiting). I have, though, a rational fear that I wasted so much time in prison.

Life was a struggle and then it was a party, and now it is prison. Sometimes my fears throughout my time in prison seesawed between irrational and rational. I desire to reach my utmost potentials. I want the vacation house with a wine garden in California, the international import and export business, and success so great I could work philanthropies across the world. I can't exactly manifest them while sitting in jail watching the Walking Dead, fighting, or even reading about manifesting them. I am no fan of the sob story. I am no fan of nostalgia. I am a fan of courage that humans find in the face of fear. I like the story of

the mother who lifts a car to save her infant, or the father who sacrifices his life in a blizzard by going on out to find help. I am more concerned with triumph than the loss.

I find that being in prison is like being caught in a re-occurring nightmare. Sometimes in nightmares we know we are sleeping but can't wake up. This is how prison feels: like you are a walking a dead man, a spirit in endless paths of ether, a regressed soul fearing to ascend to higher consciousness. Prison is also a nightmare about a clown with a red nose, and curly hair, who taunts you for your mere existence. This clown loves to promote irrational fear of shame, loss of family ties, and loss of love we had in the street. This clown is a part of our selves. This clown is the doubter, the hater, and one who provokes irrational fear. Eventually some of us abandon fear of this irrational clown, and stop running away from him, and begin running towards him.

We must learn to win the war with fear, bringing reconciliation with his enemy, courage. We win the war with fear when we redirect our inner life that is at times filled with doubt and instead flood our conscious with prudence. We are victorious in life, when we learn to fight with our minds and not out hands. We manifest our deepest potentials when we learn to control our thoughts and curb our negative expressions. We change our labels from scoundrel, to human with the power to change. It feels good when we begin to rebuild family ties, and build and more healthy inner relationships with our companions. Rational and irrational fears are both conquered, first in our imaginations, and second in practice. In every step I take, I move to contextualize my fear and swear to manifest a greater life.