

Aftermath

Taken from *Remain Free* by Gautam Narula

September 22nd is like any other Thursday. My political science professor mentions the “interesting case of the guy who was executed last night” shortly before I walk out of class. I'm unable to bear such a cavalier fascination with Troy's execution. To my professor, this was nothing more than an amusing footnote. If he only knew.

Rather than taking the bus as I normally do, I amble across campus toward my dorm. On my way I catch snippets of conversation from students walking out of the nearby law school.

“Did you hear the news about Troy Davis...was executed...argued innocence, but courts turned him down...”

I head to my mailbox before entering the dorm, expecting a textbook I'd ordered. Time moves slow, and every detail crystallizes into focus. I bend down to open box 382A and slide my chrome key into the lock, twisting left then right. The mailbox opens, and my hand gropes the narrow hole, expecting to touch the dull edges of a slip indicating a new package waiting in the package room. But there is only an envelope. Even before I see the sender's name, I know. I've seen that broad, looped cursive script too many times not to recognize the hand that had written it.

A day after he was executed, Troy Davis sent me a letter.

I walk up the three flights of stairs to my room. It's empty. I sit at my desk with the letter in front of me, building up the courage to open it. Ten minutes elapse. Then twenty. Thirty. I finally flip the envelope over and open it with care, knowing this is the last vestige of Troy Davis I will ever hold.

September 18, 2011

Hello, Gautam

How's my nephew holding up these days? I heard you and Pranavi were at the rally Friday evening. I'm glad to know you were able to make it. Give everyone my love for me.

How's Pranavi holding up emotionally at the moment as well as yourself? I prayed that

the Courts would have granted me relief somehow but we'll see what the Board members will do.

This case sure has awakened the world but only God knows exactly how all of this will turn out. Don't forget that "Faith without works is Dead." Also in the Bible Book of James chapter 2 verse 17 and verse 26. In chapter 3 it teaches us just how untamed and powerful our tongues are so always be cautious about what you say. Verse 9+10 explains it all.

You already know I'm proud of you but stay focused on the direction you want your life to go. Every decision today directs your tomorrow. I want you to enjoy your youth but don't forget to consistently tell those you love what they mean to you.

Did De'Jaun tell you he's going to Ga. Tech next year? Pranavi will be in college next which means I'm getting old. =) Already have a face full of gray hair because none will grow on my head. Lol! The only disagreement you and I may have is the fact that I'm a Florida fan through and through. Seminoles then Gators so when we roll through Georgia don't panic. =)

Are you able to enjoy school with everything you have going on? I've heard the first year is the most stressful with all the adjustments you have to make. You've always given your best at everything so I'm looking forward to hearing about your first quarter grades.

Don't be showing off all your new dance moves. Save some for your Jr/Senior years. =P How's your Dad these days? I know he misses you more than you'd even imagine. Say hello to him, mom, Ajit, Pranavi and your oldest sister whose name I never could remember.

I just hung up with De'Jaun who said tell you what's up after I informed him I was writing you. Keep checking on Pranavi because although you see her outer toughness, she's very fragile and really cares about her big brother's opinion of her.

Well my back meds are kicking in and seems to be disrupting my thoughts somewhat so take care and remain prayerful. Remember that in life we don't always get what we want but even when faced with the worst of times, God will open a window of hope and a door to prosperity.

God Bless You!

I stare at the letter and read it over one more time. I sit motionless with my eyes closed, feeling only my heart ceaselessly beating and my slow inhales and exhales. I open my eyes and for the first time in years, tears flow down my cheeks as it finally hits me that they really had killed my friend, my uncle. I had finally experienced death. I had passed the final rite of passage into manhood.

Troy Davis is dead.

It was hard to believe all the sweat and tears I'd given over the past three years meant anything at all. Hard not to lose hope. If a million petitions couldn't convince the three people on the Board of Pardons and Paroles needed to save Troy's life, what difference could I have possibly made? For God's sake, I was just a teenager, another one of those hopelessly idealistic kids who never lived life in the real world, because mommy and daddy protected me from it. Soon enough, when I have bills to pay, I'll be struggling just to survive and become another nobody who sold out—just like everybody else.

It was hard not to feel this way while rereading Troy's letter and imagining him saying the words to me, his irrepressible optimism bursting through as he talked about seeing my grades and about the Board hearing that ultimately sent him to his death. I couldn't get the image out of my head, of being outside death row that night and imagining what was taking place within, imagining the guards shoving him onto a gurney and wheeling him to a room where his destruction was to be watched, members of the MacPhail family looking on with grim determination as they witnessed the extinguishing of the life they believed had taken one of their own, Troy looking back at them, his face proclaiming his innocence as they stared with unwavering contempt. Meanwhile, a doctor, whose sworn duty is to heal and not to harm, stands there to lend an air of legitimacy to a death—no, a murder. I know it's not true, but I can't help but imagine that they kill him by strapping him to the gurney as tight as they can and, while he's held down by two guards, a third guard plunges a syringe into his arm, piercing his ebony skin and sending the poison coursing through his veins. He grimaces because the needle is shoved so forcefully, but he doesn't scream or resist.

When his eyes finally close and the doctor pronounces him dead, the warden smirks and sneers. “And may God have mercy on your soul.”