

**WHAT YOU CAN'T DO....  
SHOULDN'T STOP WHAT YOU CAN DO!**

**(A NON-FICTION E BOOK)**

**BY EUGENE YOUNGBLOOD**

**October 16, 2013**

A great poet once wrote:

I bargained with life for a penny  
And life would pay no more,  
However I begged at evening  
When I counted my scanty store.

For life is a just employer,  
He gives you what you ask,  
But once you have set the wages,  
Why, you must bear the task.

I worked for a menial's hire,  
Only to learn, dismayed,  
That any wage I had asked of life,  
Life would have willingly paid

-Unknown

Eugene Youngblood #703289  
Coyote Ridge Corrections Center  
P.O. Box 769 (HA 05)  
Connell, WA 99326  
Youngblood213@outlook.com

## Acknowledgments

To my daughters Shavona and Tray. You have grown up to be beautiful women and I am tremendously proud of you.

To my mother, Diane Youngblood, who taught me that life is not about discovering who you are. It is about determining who you want to be.

To Michelle Laing, the love of my life and soon to be my wife. I may not be in a position to give you everything you **WANT**, but hopefully I will remain all you will ever **NEED**.

## Introduction

Who is Eugene Youngblood?  
Is he a prisoner or a patriarch?  
Is he a murderer or a mentor?  
Is he merely a convicted felon or is he a committed friend?

Being in prison challenges you, confronts you, and demands from you that you change... be that for better or for worse. Eugene Youngblood is someone who has accepted that challenge, stood up to that confrontation, and answered to that demand.

Everyone can see the beauty and splendor of a flower that begins to grow and then bloom on soil that was once thought to be a wasteland. We all marvel at the miracle of growth and development under conditions that are not conducive to such a transformation. Yet we fail to see that same beauty and splendor when new ideas form, a new attitude is born, and a person goes through this same incredible metamorphosis while in prison.

I am an aspiring public speaker. Although, I prefer the title "Personal investment advisor", that is because after hearing me speak you will leave feeling ENRICHED - like you have much more and more importantly like you are much more!

As a prisoner, what I can't do is go from prison to prison or make my rounds on the public speaking circuit giving speeches. However, what I can do is compile some of my speeches and give them to you in the form of this e-book. This book is my attempt to personify the philosophy that "you should never allow what you can't do, to stop you from what you can do!"

## Turn The Light On....

I once read that: When we do not understand something, we say that we need to bring it to the light. When we are confused and unsure, we say can you shed some light on that subject for me. When an idea pops into your mind or you suddenly become aware of something, you say the light has come on. When a person is fully conscious and very knowledgeable, we say that person is enlightened.

Reading that made me think of this... when you walk into your cell the light does not automatically come on. You have to walk over to the switch and physically turn the light on. You do not have to have a detailed knowledge about electricity and how it works – all you have to do is walk over to the switch and turn the light on.

Too many of us here in prison are simply doing our time, paying our debt to society, and waiting for the Washington State Department of Corrections to begin the process of correcting us. We are waiting for the system to start working for us, waiting for the light to come on all by itself. When all we have to do is walk over to the switch and turn the light on for our own selves.

In the Bible, in the book of James, it says “faith without works is dead”. Belief alone is not good enough. We must take actions; we must be willing to put some work in.

Many of us here today have backgrounds in gangs – what I like to refer to as “street organizations”. Therefore, we know firsthand, coming out of that culture you can’t just claim the set. You can’t just show up in the neighborhood one day and tell the other guys that you believe in the hood. It does not work like that, you will have to put some work in. you have to take action; you have to demonstrate what you believe. You have to actually walkover to the switch and turn the light on. You have to show that you are willing to live it. You

have to do this so much, so often, and in such a way, that when someone sees you there is no doubt in their mind what you are about. What you stand for or what you represent.

The same is true when it comes to getting your life right. You can't just believe that doing your time, completing your sentence, is going to somehow equal getting your life right. You can't just have faith that it will all just come together and get better for you. You have to take action. You have to walk over to the switch and turn the light on. You have to put some work in. you have to demonstrate through your actions that you are determined to change your life around. You have to show the world that you have started the process and you are going to get yourself together. You have to do this in such a way that when anyone sees you there is no doubt in their mind what you are about, what you stand for, and what you represent.

I know how much you love your set... but how much do you love yourself?

As you leave here today I hope that I have inspired you to turn the light on... Start taking action in and with your life. Most of all I want to tell you to start putting in work for yourself the same way that you have been putting in work for your set!

A wise man once said:

"You don't have to be great to get started, but you have to get started to be great."

So what are you waiting for?

## Turn the Page

A few weeks ago in a speech I gave, I posed the question:

“What do you think is more important... yesterday, today, or tomorrow?”

That was in reference to what we have done in the past. What we are doing right now. And what we plan to do in the future.

Today I want to ask you "Is life more about position or transition?" Position being where you are right now. Transition being where you are going to.

When I was at the prison on Mcneil Island, I used to participate in this group called interactive transitions. This was actually a program for those prisoners who are getting out real soon. It is designed to help them transition from being in prison to living in society.

I was able to attend a few sessions before my cover was blown, and the sponsor found out that I was not getting out real soon and thus was not going through a transition from being in prison to being in society. The group sponsor (a volunteer from the community) approached me and asked me to stay after a session so that she could speak to me. She asked me bluntly: why are you attending this group if you are not about to transition back into society? My answer to her was simple: while it is true that I am not going through the transition of being in prison and being released back into society. I am going through a similar process of transition in my life – trying to go from where I am to where I want to be.

What I am trying to say here is that we are all going through some form of a transition. Everyone in life is going through a transition – going from one place in life to another and we all need some

assistance on our journey. It is important for everyone, but it is of the utmost importance to those of us here in prison that we are able to go from where we are, to where we want to be.

So the real question must be how we get there. How do we go from where we are to where we want to be?

The first thing we must do is stop living in the past. Stop trying to re-live your so-called "glory days" when you had this, and when you did that. We have to realize that as long as we keep looking back at what was, we will continue to trip and fall before we ever get to where we want to be in life. It has been said, that in order to get to where you want to be in life, you have to allow yourself to become who you want to be.

The main reason why so many of us are stuck in the same position without really getting ahead in life – unable to transition from one place in life to another is simple... we refuse to turn the page. We refuse to let the past be in the past, and really move on with our life. We refuse to start the next chapter in the story of our life.

Last week, I said, those of us who do not change with time, will fall victim to the changes of time. The analogy I used was of the old school cell phones from the early 1990's compared to the apple I phone, and all the other new phones of today those companies that did not keep up with the changes of time (new technology) lost a lot of money to the companies who changed with time. Those companies that were successful all turned the page; they all started a new chapter.

This is exactly what I am saying to you. Turn the page, start the new chapter in your book of life. Selling drugs, robbing people, committing crimes of any kind. All of those activities and behaviors that contributed to your coming to prison, that was in the last



chapter of your life. You have to turn the page on that stuff and start the new chapter in the book of your life.

I am not trying to suggest that you can somehow, some way, wipe the slate clean and come new... as if none of that bad stuff ever happened. Trust me when I say whatever you have done wrong in your life, you have to own that and nothing you will ever do can take that away. All we can do now is try and do so much good from here on out, that our good deeds finally catch up to and surpass all of our bad deeds.

Don't ever forget the old saying: Every saint has a past and every sinner has a future. Whatever it is that you have done that sent you to prison, that does not have to be the end of your story. Your life does not have to end right there. All you have to do is turn the page, and start writing the next chapter in the book of your life.

Prison is not the end of your story, it is just one chapter. Turn the page and show the world, the next chapter in the book of your life.

## Speech Three

Prison can be like a university for us. In the sense that this is a place where we can learn.

The only thing is, in this school there are no morning or afternoon classes to choose from. Classes here are 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. When you are out in the yard, you are in class. When you are in the gym, you are in class. When you are in the dayroom, you are in class. When you are in your cell, you are in class. Even right here, right now, you are in class.

There are no frat parties for us in this school. No girls, and we don't get semesters off. We will not get to travel to Daytona Beach, Florida or Palm Springs, California to participate in spring break either.

A lot of us here would say that what we are experiencing here is not what a learning experience should be about. There are too many rules, too many restrictions, and far too much that is working against us. While it is true that there is a lot working against us here. We have to keep in mind that, sometimes what we think is working against us is really working for us.

In architecture, they have what is called zoning laws. These laws restrict what an architect can and cannot build. How an architect can and cannot build as well. When these laws were first introduced many of the architects complained about how these new rules and regulations would only serve to restrict and limit their creativity. Their chief complaint seemed to be that all the rules and regulations would in effect ruin a lot of their projects because of how it doesn't allow them to be free with their thoughts and ideas.

There was one guy who never complained. Instead, he found a way to use all the new rules, regulations, and restrictions to work for

him. Because there were so many rules, restrictions, and regulations for him to follow it forced him to become more innovative and creative as well.

Therefore, what was actually put in place to restrict him and limit him, ended up doing more to help him than hinder him. Today he is considered to be one of the greatest architects. Not simply because of how innovative and creative his buildings are but because he was able to do this within the scope of the zoning laws. The same laws that so many other architects had sworn would restrict and limit their creativity.

The same is true for us right here in prison...

While so many others around us are complaining about all the rules, regulations, and restrictions that we must face. We have to find a way to use all of that which has been put in place to work against us, to now work for us.

The main thing that I want you to keep in mind is that we cannot continue to allow what we can't do, to stop us from doing what we can do!

## Speech Four

What are you planting with your seeds...?

I am not sure what the future has in store for me or what the future has in store for any one of you. What I am sure about is that the seeds we plant today will produce the fruit we will see tomorrow.

I am not proclaiming that the seeds you plant are guaranteed to produce fruit. In order to produce fruit you still have to tend to the soil, water it, and make sure that it gets the proper sunshine needed. What I am saying is this: If you are planting tomato seeds you won't grow strawberries. That is because tomato seeds cannot produce strawberries

What are you planting with your seeds? What is your crop going to produce?

How many of us have been planting tomato seeds over and over, season after season, still wondering why we are not getting strawberries.

How many of us are telling ourselves and others that we have changed, but in reality we have simply found a new way to do wrong?

Just as you cannot plant tomato seeds and hope for strawberries to grow. We cannot still be doing wrong believing that same behavior is going to somehow, some way, produce good.

This is a really exciting time for some of us as the NBA playoffs are about to start and we can all root for our team to win the championship. So if I were to ask you who is going to win the title this year which team would you say?

If you know me, then you know that I am a diehard Lakers fan so I believe that it will be the Los Angeles Lakers. But if you were to ask my daughter (Shavona), she would say that it is going to be the Boston Celtics. I am sure that if I went around the room I would get a few more teams that you think would win the title.

The truth of the matter is that none of us really know exactly who is going to win it all because the playoffs are just starting. While it is true that we do not know which team will win, we do know which teams will not. None of you will say the Sacramento Kings, or the Charlotte Bobcats will win the title, because those teams are not even in the playoffs.

In order to find out something that is unknown we must first determine what is known. This we learn in math as a basic principle of algebra. For example ( $3+ME=7$ ) ME is the unknown variable here... but if we simply add that which we do know, we will easily come to the realization that ME or what we don't know is actually 4.

No one knows what tomorrow will bring. That is a statement that I hear often in prison, from both those who are full of hope and those who are hopeless as well.

When we really think about it on a deeper level, we really can have a sense of what will happen tomorrow. All we have to do is calculate what we are doing today and that will give us some insight of what tomorrow will bring.

How are you spending your time? Who are you spending your time with? What, if anything, are you doing to prepare yourself to be successful when you re-enter society?

Where we are today (Coyote Ridge Corrections Center) should still be considered to be a new prison. It opened in 2009 and already the state of Washington is preparing to build yet another new prison.

The state has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in your failure. They are building these new prisons believing that you and I are going to fail. Believing that you are I are going to get out and come right back after we are released.

So if the state of Washington is willing to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in your failure. How much are you willing to invest in your success?

Listen to what I am saying very carefully... We cannot continue to allow someone else to be more invested in our failure than we are invested in our own success!

## Speech Five

Life is not about...

We have all heard the old saying: "If you keep doin' what you have been doin', you will only get what you already got..."

So why is it that so many of us continue to keep doin' what we have been doin' but we think it is going to bring us something different than what we already have been getting?

Would anyone of you walk on a tight rope 1,000 feet above the ground? Would you sky dive, cliff jump, or do a death defying stunt? Most likely, no one here would do any of that because it is all too risky. You wouldn't do it because one false move, one mistake, and it could cost you your life.

What we are not taking into considerations is that selling drugs, robbing people, stealing, committing any crime, the whole gang life style... all of that is just like walking a tight rope. It is just like sky diving out of a plane, jumping off a cliff, or doing some death defying stunt. You are always one false move, one mistake away from disaster... losing your life or coming back to prison with 30, 40, or 50 years.

We have to make it a point to stop taking "Good chances", and start making "Good choices".

We have to make real changes in our behavior, and stop making excuses for our behavior.

We must challenge ourselves to try and motivate others, and we must stop trying to manipulate others.

Life is not about how many of us are confined; life is about how many of us are concerned....

Life is not about showing others how much your commissary cost; life is about showing others how much you are worth...

Life is not about how many things you have, life is about how many people you appreciate...

Life is not about looking out of the window and pointing out what is wrong with everyone else, life is about looking in the mirror and pointing out how you can improve yourself...

Life is not about counting down the days until your release date; life is about finding a way to make all of your days count, now and after you are released.

Life is not about what these words mean to me, life is about what these words mean to you...

So tell me what do these words mean to you?



## DO YOU BELIEVE IN POSSIBILITIES?

There is the distinct POSSIBILITY that where I reside (prison), has become more like a warehouse than a so-called "corrections center".

Nevertheless, I continue on with my struggle. My struggle to try and restore the POSSIBILITY of hope. Or maybe, what I am really trying to do is restore the hope of POSSIBILITY. My goal is not to somehow magically transform sinners into saints. It is not my goal to try and find some way to save those few lost souls that given another chance would rob, steal, and even kill, yet again. Nor is it my goal to try and assist those few who have already found their way (myself included). I was sent to prison for destroying lives only to later discover a way to self-salvation now as I am helping to rebuild lives – helping other prisoners discover POSSIBILITY. My objective is to try and reach those prisoners who are on the cusp. Again, not the select few who have not changed and refuse to even attempt to change. Not those select few who are at the other end of the spectrum either... those who have already started to change and have embraced the transformation process that is necessary. My concern is for the many. The many who reside on the proverbial fence. It is actually the vast majority of prisoners who are caught in the matrix – stuck in between those who refuse to change and those who have accepted change. So I ask you honestly, how can it ever be possible for me to help these prisoners who can and should be redeemed? How can I help them help themselves? Maybe a more poignant question is how can you help me, help them, believe in the POSSIBILITY of change?

I cannot even begin to guess how much of your hard earned tax dollars have been spent building this relatively new prison. What I do know, is that not very much time, energy, effort, or resources are being spent on trying to build up those of us who populate this prison. If your tax dollars are being spent on prisons and prisoners I

think that society should view us as an investment. At this rate, it would be fair to say society is getting a poor return on their investment. So the question is what can we do better? What can I do better from in here and what can you do better from out there?

How can any of us ever say that we honestly believe in the POSSIBILITY of virtue, if we do not first believe in the virtue of POSSIBILITY?

## THE RUSSELL WILSON SPEECH

It has been said that any person who has achieved any level of success will tell you that they have learned far more from their failures than their successes.

Great winners in sports like Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, Joe Montana, Derek Jeter, or even Muhammad Ali will quickly tell you that it was not the game winning shots they made, touchdown passes they threw, homeruns they hit, or fights they won. Instead it was the shots they missed, the interceptions they threw, the times they struck out, and the fights they lost, that really propelled them into greatness.

Everyone wants to excel at what they do. But sometimes in our pursuit of greatness something happens to us once we achieve that first taste of success. We get big headed. We become conceited. We become arrogant. We get that "big me, little you" attitude. I am sure that we have all witnessed this. I call this the "STAR QUARTERBACK SYNDROME" ...

The star quarterback is always anointed the leader of the team. He is always out front, always getting all of the accolades and the media attention is all about the star quarterback. Everything is always about the star quarterback. Not the defense, the running back, the receivers, the special teams, or the team as a whole. It is all about the star quarterback.

While it might be true that none of us here have actually met a star quarterback. I am sure that we have all met someone who displays the mind-set of this syndrome. We see it in the streets of the neighborhoods as we are growing up. We have all seen a guy get on his grind and start coming up. As soon as he starts to make a little bit of cash he buys some clothes, some shoes, and eventually he buys

his first car. Poof Pow, like magic, he is all of a sudden the Man! I know about this all too well because I was that guy. In 1988, I was on my grind trying to come up. At the ripe old age of 14 I flipped my first car. A 1977 Buick Regal. It was nothing but a bucket, but I had enough money to put some sounds in it and that was enough to put me over the top. All of a sudden I was the Man! Everything was all about me. I was feelin' it! No one could tell me nothing... I was the star quarterback.

If you have not been witness to this on the streets where you grew up then I am sure you have witnessed this same type of behavior here in prison. A guy comes up on a woman, gets a few dollars on his books, and starts ordering store every single week. Buys a MP3 player and gets 200, 300 songs on it. He gets some new shoes and other little trinkets from the access package we can receive, and all of a sudden he is doing it real big. You all know the guy I am talking about; there is at least one in every unit. He is on, so he does not even go to the chow hall, all he eats is food he buys from the store list. He is the penitentiary Frank Lucas – a real American Gangster. His head has gotten big and he has that big me, little you attitude. He is arrogant and everything is all about him... all of a sudden he has become the star quarterback.

By now some of you are wondering why I was called this the Russell Wilson speech and the whole time I have been up here speaking I have been talking about the “star quarterback syndrome”. I have not mentioned Russell Wilson one time. I found a way to sneak in a shout out for my favorite player Kobe Bryant, but not one word about Russell Wilson or even the Seahawks for that matter. Because I am from Los Angeles, some of you are thinking that I am really hatin' on Russell Wilson and the Seahawks. While some of you give me at least a little bit of credit and you are thinking that what I am really trying to say is that Russell Wilson has fallen victim to this star quarterback syndrome. That he has become arrogant,

conceited, big headed and that he has adopted that big me, little you attitude. Some of you are thinking that I am saying it has all of sudden become all about Russell Wilson and not Marshawn Lynch and the running game, not Richard Sherman and the defense, or the Seattle Seahawks team as a whole.

If that is what you are thinking, then I got you... you fell for the pump fake.

Now some of you hear me say pump fake, and you start trying to figure out where the twist was. Someone is sitting here right now saying I know what this was really all about: "He is not talking about Russell Wilson at all. He just called this speech the Russell Wilson because he knows that we are all Seahawks fans and would show up to hear a speech about one of our players. The real point of this, his speech is to remind us all of the pitfalls of success." Someone else is here saying: "That's not it either, the real point of his speech is that he is trying to tell us not to get big headed, arrogant, or become conceited at the first taste of a little success. Therefore, the real message is: "don't ever think you are so big that you can't get knocked down because even the biggest and the toughest get knocked down."

If that is what any of you were thinking, when I got you too... yes you fell for the pump fake as well. And we all know that in football once the quarterback gets you to bite for the pump fake he is going to go deep on you. So this is my attempt to go deep on you.

My real message today is something like this:

There is a quote by Leonardo Da Vinci that goes something like this....

*"It is not that we set our aims too high and fail to reach our mark. It is that we set our aims too low and hit them right on the mark."*

I believe that the vast majority of us here have gone through life not setting our goals too high and then failing to reach our mark. Instead we have sold ourselves short, set our goals way too low and hit them right on the mark. We have killed off our own hopes and dreams by telling ourselves that we cannot do something we really wanted to do. Therefore, we end up throwing our hands up in submission and saying "this is all I know, the hood, the set, selling drugs, hustling, etc... It even happens to those of us who are getting out of prison. We really want to do good. We want to succeed and most of all we want to stay out of prison. Yet many of us get out and return right back to those same circumstances that brought us to prison in the first place. We go right back to the hood, get right back in the mix, right back to the street life and that leads us right back to prison.

I know that just about all of you here today are Seahawks fans and so you know who Russell Wilson is. You know that he is the starting quarterback for your home team. But how many of you know that people left and right had been telling Russell Wilson that he was too short and that he would never make it to the NFL as a starting quarterback? It seemed like everyone was trying to tell him what he could not do. Unfortunately, he started listening to those naysayers, listening to those haters and he ended up leaving the North Carolina State football team to pursue a career in Major League baseball. He was actually drafted by the Colorado Rockies so he was good, but his heart was really with football. One of his old college coaches knew that Russ could be a great quarterback, but he also knew that he would never be great if he did not believe in his own self. Long story short, he ended up enrolling at the University of Wisconsin to resume his football career. He had a fantastic season and went on to be drafted in the third round by the Seattle Seahawks. At that time,

all the analysts and draft experts laughed and said that Seattle made a horrible selection drafting Russell Wilson to play quarterback because not only was he too short, but the team had just brought in a high priced free agent to assume the starting position. They were all saying that the team was drafting him as a project, a potential backup that they may be able to develop in the future. No one was giving him a chance to become the starter – no one except Russell Wilson himself that is.

SO WHAT DOES RUSSELL WILSON HAVE TO DO WITH YOU?

YOU ARE RUSSELL WILSON!

Everyone in here, myself included, is Russell Wilson.

All of your life people have been telling you what you can't do. People have been saying that you will end up in prison, be nothing but a gangster, a drug dealer, a criminal. And just like Russell Wilson started listening to the haters so have you. You started to believe that you could not achieve and so you gave up even trying. But just like Russell Wilson was able to find his way back so can you and I. I am not saying that you can get out of prison and make it to the NFL. What I am saying is that I believe in you and that if you believe in yourself that is all you need to make it. We have to do everything we can to prove those wrong who are saying that we cannot do it, that we cannot get our lives right. Prison is the time at bat that we struck out. Prison is the last second shot at the buzzer that we missed. Prison is the interception we have thrown. And prison is most of all the fight we have lost. Now we have to allow prison to be the failure that propels us into success.

## What is Time?

By Eugene Youngblood

In a place such as prison it would be fair to assume that everyone here is conscious of the flow of time. In some way, shape, or form. There are those who are counting down the hours, the days, the weeks, even the months. Others who are less fortunate can only count down the years and decades as they pass. There are those who wait around all day for the mail to be delivered, for yard, and gym to be called, or for visitation to be announced. There are others who simply wait around for the next meal to be served. Thus it would appear that everyone here is conscious of the flow of time in one way or another. Yet I find myself unable to clearly distinguish between the seconds, minutes, or the hours; the days, the weeks, the months, or even the years. I go through these phases were it all seems to mesh together; Monday feels like Wednesday, Tuesday like Saturday, this week like last week, and even this year like last year.

So what is time? Is it A.M.'s or P.M.'s? is it days, weeks, months, or is it years? Is it the past, the present, or the future? Is it B.C. or A.D.? is it the iron age, the stone age, or the bronze age? Is it modern time or ancient time? Is it how old I am, or rather how old I will live to be? I know what time is... time has to be the 22 years that I have been in prison, right? Then again, time might very well be, the 36 years I still have left to do.



“The line between success and failure is so fine that we are often on the line and don’t even know it. How many a man has thrown up his hands at a time when just a little more effort, a little more patience, would have achieved success. A little more effort, and what seems hopeless failure may turn into a glorious success.”

- Elbert Hubbard

Eugene Youngblood #703289  
Coyote Ridge Corrections Center  
P.O. Box 769 (HA 05)  
Connell, WA 99326

I have chosen to embrace my role as a mentor to other prisoners in general, and to the younger prisoners specifically. I say that I have chosen to embrace my role as a mentor because there are a lot of men in prison who have gained so-called status and respect here in prison but choose to use that as a tool for manipulation. I have been doing my best to motivate others and to inspire them to embrace the change that is necessary for all of us within prison. These speeches are just one of the ways that I try to help my fellow prisoners. I am now looking for suggestions about other ways that I can help. Is there anything you can help me with? Any suggestions you could give me about what you think is essential to change and growth? Is there anything you can think of that should be done with prisoners, by prisoners, that is not being done already? Remember... these men who are now locked away will soon be returning to society and it serves everyone well if they return as better men and not simply as the same men having served out a sentence in prison.

“If you bring out what’s inside of you, what’s inside of you will save you. If you fail to bring out what is inside of you what is inside of you will destroy you.

- Gnostic Gospel

If you have any questions, comments, or even criticisms please feel free to contact me directly by letter at the prison address or by e-mail at [youngblood213@outlook.com](mailto:youngblood213@outlook.com).