

A BARBER MUSICIAN

MEMOIR:  
HOMELESS WITH A  
RECORD DEAL,

*The Moments Of Luxury*

LOVE.LOYALTY.PASSION AND UNDERSTANDING

*"Greatness is defined more by your attitude than your skill" - Marucs Harvey*

*"Extreme real!!!! One of the livest stories I've heard in a while! Salute" Raekwon the Chef*



KNERO  
LAPAÉ

# **HOMELESS WITH A RECORD DEAL**

The Moments of Luxury

PRAISE FOR  
***HOMELESS WITH A RECORD DEAL***  
***THE MOMENTS OF LUXURY***

*“Greatness is defined more by your attitude than your skill.”*  
– **Marcus Harvey, Celebrity Barber**

*“Life is what we make it.”*  
– **Starway, Head designer of Aglit Italy**

*“Extreme real!!!! One of the livest stories  
I’ve heard in a while! Salute.”*  
– **Raekwon the Chef of Wu-tang**

*“In times of struggle, our faith grows, our creativity flourishes,  
and our love for family nourishes our existence.  
This story is of faith, art and love”*  
– **George Green, Motivational Speaker**



*“Would u watch if this really exist? “ via Intstagram (picture taken 2013)*

A Barber Musician's

# **HOMELESS WITH A RECORD DEAL**

*THE MOMENTS OF LUXURY*

A Memoir

LOVE, LOYALTY, PASSION AND UNDERSTANDING

Knero Lapaé

*To the Universe,*

*Would like to send back the positive energy you gave me and my family through these tough times.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Very special thanks to my oldest little sister for being herself. If you weren't yourself I would have never been able to see you as you are. Seeing your true colors opened my eyes for accepting people for who they are and allowing me to separate myself from them regardless of the relationship at hand. No hard feelings. I still love you.

I'm beyond blessed to have parents who are aware of being imperfect parents and who have the vision of observation. I am blessed that my mother taught me how to teach a woman, through her imperfections and her perfections. And I am also blessed that my father was always there as a father. I appreciate all the tag-team ass-whooping you gave me as an adolescent. And the most important thing you did for me is to say "NO" to opening your door to me and my family while we were homeless.

I have gained a true self-awareness from these experiences and that has been the peak of my success in life at the age of 34. I love all you guys unconditionally for the roles you played.

I have a great abundance of gratitude for my wife, my queen who sits at the side of my throne. For sticking by my side throughout our homelessness, still taking care of me and our children. I feel most females would have picked up with the kids and left their husband but you stood by me and your vows. You deserve everything I'm capable of.

*"To truly laugh, you must be able to take your pain, and play with*

*it!* — **Charlie Chaplin**

# **HOMELESS WITH A RECORD DEAL**

The Moments of Luxury

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# PREFACE

## Homeless with a Record Deal

According to homelessness.org, on a single night in January 2013, more than 600,000 people experienced homelessness. It was assumed that, in today's world, homelessness is caused by an individual's inability to make the "right" choices in his or her life.

There are people we know with minimum wage jobs that have a roof over their heads. There are also many of us that struggle with paying bills on time. This has nothing to do with the inability to make a "right" choice. How do you cope with the frustration of life's obstacles which are sometimes out of our own control *and* keep a positive outlook?

A quote from my Father in such moments comes to mind. He would say, "Situations are never permanent." There are tons of scenarios that can cause homelessness such as abusive families, divorce, drugs, alcoholism, financial crisis, as well as mental and physical illness. These things can prevent-independent support. These things will often leave us unable to work. But there is one common factor that many are aware of, but the results are seemingly overlooked. That common factor is the increased cost of basic living. My point here is that regardless of the numerical statistics and society's opinion not everyone who is homeless chose the route or have even had any form of

addiction.

My wife and I are not lazy people! We do not depend on anyone or expect handouts. We have no addictions, we have not rejected any opportunity of growth. Instead we are hard workers, put effort and dedication to whatever we have to do and enjoy the benefit of seeing the result of what we work for. We understand now more than ever the effort it takes to be able to support and maintain stability. Even so, homelessness can still occur.

Our society places people's backs against the wall, forcing many to seek extra work options and do other things that would help provide for our families because what we make in our work just isn't enough survive.

During our period of homelessness, lack of food was the least of our problems. Caring for our children and little brother was the single most important and challenging mission and that was our main focus. My wife and I comforted and protected our children from the severity of our situation. As parents, we did not feel the need to stress the kids out or bring any form of anxiety over this matter. But, at the same time, we made sure to instill humbling gratitude for whatever we had.

To me, being homeless was one of the most beautiful things I have experienced, next to marrying my wife and witnessing my children entering this planet. The overall experience helped me find hope, courage, love, grace and most importantly self-value. These things laid quietly within me, finally resurfacing during this experience. This moment assured me I could avoid pain and gain pleasure. The need of the Unknown (most might call this GOD), filled all the unique, important and special needs my family and I had. Being homeless brought love and a strong sense of closeness, an expansion of our capacities, an understanding that life experience is the best teacher and the contribution of others shouldn't be taken for granted. It also brought a sense of service and focus on helping, giving and supporting others.

Allow me to share with you my story, my family and our homelessness experience. Let me share how I dealt with the closing doors, being ridiculed by family members, how we sheltered the reality from our children and how my wife and I dealt with our emotions.

*CHAPTER 1*

THE  
CAUSE OF  
BONDING

**I lived a dream** in what most would call a nightmare. Not sure if that makes sense to you but it makes complete sense to me. Why? Because I lived it. I've accomplished many things but at this particular moment in my life, I have dreamt with my eyes open and experienced a nightmare at the same time.

My wife, Ria, and I are both college students with three kids and are also guardians to my wife's little brother. Ria and I dedicate tremendous passion to not only being better for ourselves, but also for the sake of being an example to the children.

This adventure began when I had just landed a record deal to release my single "KING," distributed through Universal Records. I had dedicated most of my time toward my family, school, my barbering business and music careers as well as a 9 to 5 job. I wouldn't change it for the world. Soon after landing the record deal, I was "discharged" from the 9 to 5 job and my wife was only making only so much through her

employment. This obviously led to us falling behind on our bills.

I've been a barber since I was 14 years old. Went to barber school when I was 19 but never took it as serious as most did. I saw it as a hustle, as means to make money to pay my bills. Music is, and has always been, the world I wanted to be a part of. It also would allow me to open doors for my friends and family.

Even though I understand the music industry lacks loyalty, one of the main cores for survival, I still have loved to manage and maneuver my way into the business. People often ask me “Why do you want to be a part of a cut throat, blood sucking business?” My reply is always the same: “Life is cut throat, filled with blood suckers.” What should I do? Stop living life?

I learned street values from the back alleys of Brooklyn, New York. My three siblings and I were parented by both parents. They blessed me with family values. The combination of street values and family values gave me the true meaning of loyalty.

I learned many things from my older brother and my two younger sisters, which I carry with me in my everyday life. Of course, from Mom and Dad, united in marriage and their parenting, molded me into the King I am today for my own family. Not being able to do more for your family can easily make you question your parenting. I don't demand respect as a parent but I definitely demand civility and insist on honesty. Respect is something one must earn, with children as well as with adults. Most parents fail to realize that because they see themselves as “parents,” so there lies the assumption that it must automatically come with respect. I beg to differ. How can one respect you if you don't exhibit respect for yourself?

My mother always had me go everywhere with my older brother. She felt that would keep us closely bonded and I would be able to learn from him along the way. From sport, friends, music and even clothes, we shared a lot. That also led us to sibling rivalry. Seeing our parents go through the trials and tribulations of a 30-plus year marriage, I

Lack of family values and nothing but a street state-of-mind can be a hard thing to overcome.

subconsciously soaked up the pros and cons of what I thought would be beneficial to me in future relationships and eventually marriage. Affection was not something that took place in my household growing up. Pops kissing Moms or vice versa nor any “I love you” affections were ever displayed at home. I felt loved as a son and sibling, but didn’t quite know exactly how to identify and express the love within a marriage. What I thought was marriageable love was what I saw and became accustomed to: Dad “bringing home the bacon” to pay the bills and Moms holding down the home while he was gone.

Morals have definitely structured us as a family and as individuals. The respect for self and one another can take one very far in life. There were times my brother or I would get into an altercation in school and my parents would get a phone call from the school. Pops would always say, “Let me know exactly what happened and don’t leave nothing out!”

He preferred to gather up all the details before he would approach any situation in order to find out if we had lied in order to get him involved to defend us. Pops was always a provider and definitely a protector of his family and we all knew that. My mother was also a protector but she was usually the

calm and collected one. But not always. Disrespect and being lied to were things she absolutely could not tolerate. She has always been very playful and outspoken with us. As my siblings and I would say, “Mommy has no limit to what she would say.”

We could tell her things we wouldn't feel comfortable telling Pops. I remember at the age of 14 I asked my mother about sex. With no hesitation she openly replied, “What do you want to know?” Pops shied away from topics like that. I believe it was an African cultural, masculinity complex he had within himself that held him back from speaking with us about it. But my mother held nothing back. Which made me better understand why she despised being lied too. If she could keep it completely upfront and real with us, why wouldn't we respond the same way?

I witnessed Pops putting himself into situations that could have lead him in federal penitentiary by helping those he thought were his close friends. The way he handled their betrayal confused me and at the time I couldn't understand how he kept accepting those individuals back into our lives. It was the warm heart he had towards them and his protocol of loyalty that enabled him to do so. Through his experiences, I never let my loyalty make me become a slave.

We always welcomed our friends to our home. There were friends we knew that had nowhere to sleep, eat or bathe. My parents would share what we had with them and accept them as family. They also tried to teach them the valuable morals they raised their own children with. For some reason, many simply wouldn't take in the lesson that was being taught.

Lack of family values and nothing but a street state-of-mind can be a hard thing to overcome. As much help we provided for others, we would still feel the wrath of deception by those same individuals we had helped. It's almost like some people can't believe there are genuine, good hearted people in the world. They fall victim to the negative to which they are accustomed and push that negativity towards the ones who attempt to do good.

Compared to other parts of Brooklyn, we were not raised in a very violent area. But it wasn't peaches and cream either. Some of our friends felt like our house was like the Cosby Show. To them it was a perfect home. It was an escape from the demons who swarmed the street or their bedside at home. At that time, I never took heed in what I was blessed with. I didn't see the values my friends saw within my family. To me they were just people I loved and lived with. While my mother would cook, she

would have the elder of my two younger sisters participate. Certain things she believed should be part of motherhood. Washing dishes after being used, handling spices, cutting vegetables when needed and preparing dinner for Pops.

In other people's households, the experiences were very different. In those homes, it was often every man for themselves starting at a very young age. Stories I've learned growing up about my parent's marriage wasn't what the average couple goes through. Papa wasn't a rolling stone but he had a few stones of his own. There were incidents that occurred and seemed suspect to me as a young adult at the time but who was I to question. All I knew was Moms loved Pops deeply. She stood by his side and kept her promise in marriage to strengthen their vows. This formed a sense of loyalty within me, to never be the cheating type. I felt being upfront and honest of my expectations in any relationship would be better off.

My compassion, along with my parents' caring guidance, gave me the gift to connect with others and to understand their situation. I'm blessed to solely give myself to a beautiful young woman that I can call my wife and in return I've been rewarded with three lovely children to care for and raise with twice the compassionate, caring upbringing I had.

*CHAPTER 2*

THE  
UN-X-  
PECTED

**I love the independence** of the barber world but, while my family and I were homeless, it wasn't enough. It wasn't filling the empty hole in my passion for creativity and most importantly, the stability for my family. Earlier years when I was barbering, I was making \$500 to a grand per week, that was perfect, but as I got older, having children and a wife comes with having more desires out of life and greater responsibilities. I've worked for about four companies in my life while being a barber and a recording artist. Most people who know this say, "You're definitely meant to be an entrepreneur!"

My life struggles forced me to fill out job applications to earn more funds in order to support my family. My last 9-5 was at Enterprise Rent-A-Car. Believe it or not I was actually comfortable working there. The hours were cool, the environment was very sociable, making it perfect for me because that's how I am. While being in the barbershop and when I'm attending musical events, I'm a people-person who's great holding conversations and genuine to my work. Obviously the company had seen those values and said it would grant me a promotional opportunity for not only a higher position but also a higher pay. In the

process of that offer becoming a reality, we discovered I had 3 points on my driver's license. My former area manager at the moment asked me, "Do you know you have 3 violations on your license?"

I replied "No, what does that mean?"

She then replied "I hate to say it, but we have to let you go."

I laughed out of confusion. This is one of the reasons my wife and I stress to our kids to find what you love best and make that into something you can make a living with, be your own boss!

She then asked, "Why are you laughing?"

I said, "Because it funny, I was hired with 3 violations, I didn't get them while working here."

She became extremely puzzled and said, "Wait, let me make some calls."

I would be the one who gets hired, gets a background check, goes through the entire hiring process, smoothly, works there for seven months and then, when trying to better myself in the company, realize they made an error when they hired me. This particular company does not allow you to have more than 2 violations on your license.

I waited and waited for her to call me back, thinking to myself, “Now what?” The extra funds I was getting from the job were very helpful. We were trying to save, catch up with old bills, had the kids in programs, and now, one of life’s road blocks hit us with this.

I’m the type of person that doesn’t wear my emotions on my sleeve. When a situation occurs, I handle it as it comes. I taught my wife that there is nothing one can do during certain situations. If you can solve a problem when it happens, simply solve it. If you can’t, my advice to you is not to stress while looking for the solution to the problem. Most people seem to worry and drown themselves in sorrow, which causes more problem to your health and relationships. Try to understand the problem, see what you can do for the matter, and then execute it. I’ll shed light on this topic a little later.

My former area manager then realized I apparently was hired with the 3 points on my license and preceded to say, “I don’t understand, but I’m sorry, we still have to let you go. Would you like to work the rest of the day?”

I then smirked and said, “No, no thanks.”

I couldn’t wait to go home and tell my wife that I was ‘terminated.’ The entire thing was funny to me.

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I got home and Ria said, “Hey babes, you’re home early.”

I then handed her the termination papers my former area manager had given me to sign (which I never did sign) and said, “Yeah, read this.”

She read it and laughed out loud. Oh, I failed to mention, it was our four year anniversary.

“Are you serious?” she asked. I then replied, “Yup! Happy anniversary!” then laughed. One of the super powers in our relationship is our humor, especially when most people would think it’s not appropriate. That attitude gets us far in life and less stressed.

When my wife and I first started going out, I noticed she reads a lot. There was a small pocket size book she had read titled, “*Don’t Stress the Small Stuff*” by Richard Carlson. That gave me a sense that she had interest in learning how she could handle issues she encountered, and I was correct. My mental approach to stressful conflicts are quite simple. Well, they are simple for me.

I’ve witnessed my parents, mainly my mother, stress over things they had no control over at the moment, like bills. My take on that is basic. What can one do if they have no money to pay for a bill? Like I mentioned earlier, most people find themselves weeping and stressing over things they

can't control at the moment, why stress and complain? What you should do is to put that negative energy into a positive strategy on how to resolve the dilemma at hand.

Of course, it may take time to resolve, but until then, keep a level head and live your life accordingly. Stressing out will not help the situation. It will only make things worse. It could lead to starting arguments with your spouse and most importantly, causing health issues.

Through it all, I understood I had to do something to make extra money. We began falling back on bills, rent was the most urgent of all. Being from the streets of Brooklyn, if the 9-5 thing doesn't work, the quickest way to produce money is to get into the activities on the street. There have been dozens of times, when things got tough, I thought of selling drugs, but that path is not for me. Besides, the outcome never seems to have a happily-ever-after plot.

I had reached out to a friend of mine, Nate. I have known him for over 10 years and still counting. I was hoping to get a loan that would help keep us from losing our apartment to an eviction.

[\(NOTE: I hope when you read this and understand my actions in my story, it helps you](#)

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become a better person for yourself and your surroundings.)

As the conversation with Nate continued, he questioned with the 5 Ws, who, what, when, where, why and of course how. I had explained everything. The way the conversation was going, it almost seemed like help was arriving, but **fortunately** it didn't. I explained to him, after deep questioning, that the amount we had and the amount that was needed was slightly off, we attempted making a payment arrangement for the difference of about \$500 and that was unsuccessful. "We started packing for worst case scenario" I said.

"So, \$200 will keep you alive?" Nate asked.

"\$200? No, \$2,000." I replied.

Nate's advice to me was, "Get packing!"

It had taken a lot for me to even reach out and look for a loan. I knew I had to swallow my pride and put all emotions aside in order to try and keep a roof over my family's head. My longtime friend found this response to be appropriate. Not so much for me. It wasn't because he didn't help financially, nor for the knowledge that he was in the state to do so, it was more of the response he gave me, "Get Packing!" You are probably wondering why I said **fortunately** earlier. I said **fortunately** because

when it's all said and done, that's exactly what I am, **fortunate. Fortunate** to have understanding of the different actions of people and not to take it to heart. I'm conditioned to understand matters, so I do not judge anyone for his or her decision.

I had reached out to my parents, my father, I figured they would be able to help, not financially, but with a place to stay while we recoup. They have a house with a finished (and empty) basement. I was surely disappointed by the answer I received from my father. I automatically guessed it was some sort of lesson he was trying to teach me, I felt it wasn't the moment for it. My father blatantly said, "NO!"

I've been puzzled over numerous of things in life, but this one had me more lost than anything. I'm not sure if I was wrong for expecting help from my parents, that lived about 15 minutes away, but I had expectation, not towards Nate, but my parents. Not meaning I would go out and cause a conflict knowing I have a support system that would back me up, but being a hardworking man trying his best to take care of his family while being in college should speak out loudly.

I questioned myself, "What is it I'm doing wrong? Was it something I had done in the past? Whatever I've done, why does my family have to go through it too?" If I was a dead beat couch potato doing

nothing for himself and not supporting his family, I could have more of an understanding of why doors wouldn't open up for us, but I work every day, at times having two jobs and trying to fulfill my dreams at the same time.

Major lesson learned, being homeless gave me a great sense of understanding of life, who I am as a person and who I'm supposed to become.

My parents were actually my last resort. We checked with food banks, churches, local community charity centers and even Social Services, all was a dead end road. So now what? In the words of Nate, "Get packing!" We packed our stuff in storage and proceeded to search for hotels within our budget that were suitable for the family. Despite the fact we were now homeless, my wife Ria was happy enough that the family wasn't separated and we were going through this together. I guess my attitude towards life had rubbed off. I started to feel like I let my family down, as the leader, as a father and a husband. Besides my salat, my wife and children, barbering and music kept me walking in a straight path. The barbershop always had some sort of excitement, a distraction from my reality. Being in the predicament of homelessness was unexpected.

I remember being in an elevator after a video recording session in Diamond District Studio, a music exec was talking about life with a close friend of mine and myself. I was amazed when he said “My fiancée and I always wonder how people pay their bills with the little bit of what a 9-5 provides.” According to various sources on the characteristics and number of homeless people, 3.5 million people experience homelessness in a given year (1% of the entire U.S. population or 10% of its poor), and about 842,000 people in any given week.

My father actually has been an inspirational instrument in my life. He is a very well educated, clean cut type of guy. I’ve witnessed my father always working, pushing to provide for his family, heard stories of him helping to put his siblings in college. It was due to his hard working expertise that landed us in America. He was the youngest Liberian to manage an America company in Liberia, the business later moved my parents, older brother and myself to the states.

This has all been very valuable to me, as much as I can try and follow the positive footsteps that are made in front of me, they are not paved, and I may have taken a different turn along the way, but that does not make me a bad person, nor less of a man. I tried to do what I could and only hoped that it was

noticed by those I reached out for help to, but reality is, my wife sees it. We know what we do for ourselves and our family, that's all that truly matters because worst case scenario, like this unexpected one, we are always the ones there for each other, faithfully.

*CHAPTER 3*

THE END IS  
JUST THE  
BEGINNING

**We were parked at** Extended Stay, the last hotel we planned to stay at, with \$236.00 left until Ria's next check and hope for a busy day at the barbershop. Ria and I stepped out of the truck to chat in private because our oldest Elygah and Daniel, seemed to be observing what was happening and seemed to have some sort of understanding of our situation. We huddled up, in the back of our truck to make an uncomfortable decision that would not only change our lives, but now knowing, would change our relationship!

"\$236 dollars is only going to cover 3 nights in a hotel, then there will be no funds until next week, then what?" Ria said. That was without calculating food, gas nor any sort of necessity.

My response to her was, "Our last resort!"

"Which is . . .?" Questioned Ria.

I sadly replied, "Nush's offer."

Every storm has an ending and every dog has its day. We felt it was God's moment to put closure on our current hardship. In the Quran, narrated by Abu Huraira (may God be pleased with him), it states that God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said:

"If God wants to do good to somebody, He afflicts

him with trials." (Sahih Al-Bukhari Volume 7, Book 70, Number 548)

Everything happens for a reason, from the good to the bad, I always look at the positive side of things. Just by coincidence, my sister, Nush, was preparing to move out of her condo to head back to Brooklyn. This was due to her son, my nephew, receiving an approval from a school they had been waiting for over 2 years. Once again, a bitter sweet taste had appeared because there always seemed to be a conflict with family members helping out in some sort of way, especially when money is involved and in this case – money would definitely have to take place. I was shaky and Ria did not want to take Nush's offer. The main reason I was shaky was because after I had reached out to my father, everyone in the immediate family knew our situation, they all knew we were homeless. I remember mentioning to my sister about renting out her condo when she mentioned the move to Brooklyn. Her reply to me was, "We have people looking at my place to move in already, I wish I'd known sooner."

Understandable – I guess everybody's perspectives are not the same when it comes to family, I respectfully accepted it, no harsh feelings at all.

Later she changed her mind. Could it have been that no one was actually interested? Or maybe she had a change of heart, perhaps one with a different intention? I guess it was up to us to find out, because I accepted her offer. Elygah and I were to stay with Nush at her condo while she moved out within the next couple of months. Then, we would be the new tenants in her condo.

To take you back to the car scene at the last hotel, my wife and I were definitely not comfortable with separating the family, it was one of the toughest choices we had to make, but the only choice we felt would be best. We had to go different directions because my mother-in-law was the only one my wife was willing to take a hand from this deep in our situation. We both tried to wrap our minds around understanding how my family offered no help, up until now, with my sister. Also, even if I could somehow convince her, the condo was very small and my sister had her family living there.

We used our last of funds to rent a car for Ria, the two little ones and Daniel to travel to my in-laws in Kentucky, while Elygah and I stood back. This was the beginning of our 57 days of separation. Leaving behind her full time nursing job she had recently gained after I lost my 9-to-5 and, ironically, after our eviction. We looked at it as perfect timing to

subsidize the hotel bills. Imagine now, seven months later, we could possibly be back in this same situation because as expected, family and business most of the time, do not end up being successful. But, due to desperate measures, thinking about the children, we had to take a try on what was being offered.

Initially, our plan was to stay at Nush's condo for a year, paying her (the landlord) rent while building our credit in the process. Of course, the plan we wished to pursue was not the plan that we would actually be able to follow.

We can never get a break.

After my wife, kids and little brother returned from Kentucky, 57 days later, my wife and I continued to be positive and optimistic. I continued work and Ria was blessed with employment with new clients and part-time hours. That would soon change. Due to Ria's clients passing away, she soon lost her cases which led us back to having only one income in the household, that would eventually lead to us struggling, once again, to pay the bills. As months went by after the job loss, our truck was repossessed.

There were times I would sit back, alone and

question, “Is this karma getting revenge?” As much positive energy we give into the universe I expected to get the same in return, but that was just my frustration that blinded me from reality. We needed transportation to get around for the kids and most importantly for me to get to the barber shop, after all, it was our only source of income.

We now had to rent a car until I had the chance to get our truck out of repo, this would become an added cause to us falling behind on rent. While at the barber shop with a client in my chair I received a text from Nush, stating there was a complaint to the rental office made about us "Making too much noise, the apartment being overcrowded and too many people coming in and out of the condo." My wife and I keep our family life quiet private, what you see is what you get so this was something we found very absurd. The noise could be understandable because we have children, which even so were not that noisy, being overcrowded ... six months into this place, through winter months and hardly being open enough ... someone must have made some time to watch us closely and visitors, that was the funniest one because we never had visitors, not once, and if some of us already in the condo seemed like “visitors,” then that would not make it “overcrowded” seeing as though visitors

come and go. Besides our picture posts or the 15 seconds of inspirational videos on Instagram, my wife and I keep our family life quite private. So this allegation was way off. Before we had officially moved in, Nush told me she spoke with the lady in the rental office about the number of people that would be staying in her condo. She assured me the lady was okay with our two little ones, Elygah because he would go every other weekend to his mother's house and we had to keep Daniel incognito. Well turned out, that was partially the truth. After being frustrated, I decided it be best if I went to ask some questions to the rental lady. She told me Nush only told her about the two little ones, nothing about Elygah nor Daniel. She found out about Daniel, I'm guessing he was seen by the "neighborhood watchers" when they played outside with other kids.

I have my reasons to think Nush was up to something. My family and I have seen firsthand how she would assist if she could, but the outcome would not end well. I am a firm believer that if you do something, because you want to, from the heart, no one else needs to know about it and there especially needs to be no constant reminder of it.

During our text conversation about the alleged complaint, tension evolved. Mainly because I spoke

out on what I felt, which was that she had a different intention of having us in her condo, so I told her I would pay what was owed, a month and less than half, and find means to leave. She was very okay with that, a little too okay and a little too quick to let me know she was okay with that.

She started saying things through messages and even said she was done with me because I was “completely oblivious to the damage you have done that I now have to repair. Instead of humbling yourself and not thinking people are planning a conspiracy against you, you should own up to your responsibility! When everyone said no don’t do this, I said YES! Why? Because you are my brother! You have until Feb 20th. Don’t worry about February’s rent just pay the rent you owe, I’ll take care of the court and legal fees.”

Court and legal fees huh? Well okay then. I was slightly lost, but started to put certain pieces together. This went from 0 to 100 real quick. How did this conversation go from the neighbors allegedly complaining to getting kicked out?

There were many things she had told me about her marriage and life that led me to believe she needed her place back. Don’t get me wrong, I was thankful from the beginning, but I was also aware

that it was a benefit to both Nush and myself when we agreed to move into her place. She had to hurry up and move by a specific date because of my nephews' school and I wanted to hurry up and bring my family back from Kentucky. The way the condo was left to me, as her brother, was convenient enough that she didn't have any inspectors, spend money on renovating nor cleaning and she not to mention the convenience of taking her time in removing all of her belongings, days at a time, leaving behind whatever was not wanted for us to dispose of. Once again, my wife and I were desperate enough and optimistic enough that we did not make this into a big deal.

Later that night, lying in bed and knowing we had to leave and once again find a place to stay, with an eviction, from our previous place. This situation was affecting our credit/background check. I felt as though Nush's decision was very emotional. Being business minded and knowing I owed her rent money was completely understandable, but telling me we had to leave her condo within 20 days that was not business! That was more of a brother and sister rivalry, clearly! Legally in the state of New Jersey, from my understanding and experience, an eviction process starts after 3 months of non-payment of rent.

It seems like everything she does for someone always seemed from the heart, but the outcome would not be good. Before my wife and I could even understand completely, Nush had spread the story, of course it would be one that she would partially fabricate including partial truth.

Gaining a new look on life and the titles we place on people and things, I have changed my train of thought to set me free from resentments. We tend to be blinded by love and the title that is attached to it, such as mother, father, sister, brothers, wife, husband, family, boyfriend, girlfriend, judges, priest, police officers, etc. Forgetting to understand the actual situations at hand and understanding they are only human. The seat of greatness comes with a sense of selfishness. Not the state of selfishness as in one must look down upon another, but instead to utilize it to reach the level of self-awareness, it allows you to make decisions for yourself. What is needed is logical understanding and to set the emotions aside, especially when it's time to protect yourself from the ones you love. I came to the realization that not everybody will understand your vision, circumstances nor even care, regardless of who they are, so we should not get offended when the ones we expect to understand don't come to your rescue or see your vision. This is when you

can focus more on you and those who are at your side. I've mentioned before, being homeless was a blessing in disguise. It granted me an abundance of joy with self-validation and lucidity.

I'll be honest, when I would see a homeless person, before my situation, I would rather give them food instead of money, with the assumption that money could be used for something other than helping their homelessness. That can be the case, but food is not going to help a homeless person place a roof over their heads. In a film by Jeremy Seifert called *Dive!* it mentioned every year in America there is 90 billion pounds of food being thrown away, which means the landfill is being fed more than the American people. In the film it shows homeless people find fresh wrapped foods from the super market in the dumpster and grilling it afterwards. Lack of food in the world of homelessness is definitely not the issue. Financial assistance and morals are the best support anyone can give to someone.

I'm working on an issue I have, of asking for help from people, due to my experiences, but a wise man once posted "Utilize Your Resources." Most people's intentions are not what it seems to be, so for me to avoid conflicts, I wouldn't ask at all, but I've learned that can be a downfall.

Blessed by the presence of my children and wife, while going through our trails of ridicule, I took in a new importance for the word “mistake.” There’s no such thing as a mistake. What you think is a mistake, is only your predestined path towards your fate, it has a purpose. It leads me to question, should I tell my children “You can be anything in this world”? That is not reality. Reality is knowing self, knowing your passion, knowing what drives you towards your happiness. I’m not going to sell my children hope, I rather exhibit the veracity through my passion for my dreams to my children. They have witnessed my drive and vigorous ambition to achieve my career. From the lack of sleep, the late night studio sessions, then having to head to the barber shop, the financial issues, the sacrifices that took my quality time away from them and my wife and my wife putting up with it and being supportive, these are all major factors that I pray will resonate in their minds, hearts and souls so they can apply it to their lives.

Staying in the hotel was much more costly than our regular rent. Thankfully, my wife had picked up a few more hours and that enabled us to pay the hotel fees weekly. We were paying about \$520 a week for a single room with two beds and small kitchen with a stove and fridge. That came up to a little more

than \$2,000 per month. That was nearly double what we were paying for rent in our previous apartment. It was not easy but my wife and I managed to keep this up for over a month. We were literally paycheck to paycheck, one sick day or an hour of work lost would jeopardize having enough money to afford our hotel room. We attempted, and for the most part succeeded, in keeping our routine. My wife would be up super early and head off to work. At times she would have to leave to come back to the hotel to take the boys to school and then return to work. After she would come home, she'd get the boys from school and then I would go off to work.

My daughter and I celebrated our birthdays while at the hotel. She turned four years old that day. It was nothing like the previous celebrations, but we were blessed to have been able to see the kids smile. It is truly all we really wanted. I remember we spent hours at the park and then picked up grocery store cupcakes for the birthday. Ria rushed upstairs to put candles on and light them so we could surprise my daughter with it when we returned from the park. My wife and I wished we could have done more for her but, we knew this moment was temporary and the smiles we had seen was what mattered most. That was priceless.

After nearly two months of living at this hotel, Ria and I decided we should try and get a cheaper room. All of the money we were making went straight to the hotel, gas to get to and from work, storage fees, food, personal toiletries, and diapers. We just couldn't afford to live there.

I recall my son asking if there was something about their unauthorized purchase a few months back on their Playstation account had anything to do with us having to stay in hotels. That touched me deeply, but I didn't let him see that. I simply told him it had nothing to do with that and that we are just looking for a place to wait until our place was ready for move in. A few weeks prior to that, Little Brother, Daniel had asked Ria if we were considered homeless. She was touched by that but had not displayed it not one bit. She explained to them that we were not homeless because we had somewhere to lay. But she explained that one may use the term homeless because they do not have a stable home. They didn't dig deeper most likely because of the confidence in her voice while telling them that. Children are so innocent and much blinded to certain things. We found it best not to be too open about what was occurring because we did not want them to worry or be stressed out. They don't deserve that, as the parents and care takers it is our

duty to mask the unnecessary.

We came across the Ramada Limited. The Ramada Limited! A few dollars cheaper and truly a down grade. This place was complete filth in my opinion. Our biggest concern was our youngest who was in the crawling, walking, touching anything stage. My wife would not even step into the bathroom. In order to pass our day, I would drive Ria to work, drop the boys at school and stick around her work place parked with our two youngest. We didn't last many days at this particular place, we just couldn't deal. We had to do better for our children's sake, there had to be something else we could do. Our last night at this hotel was the night our son and Ria's little brother had their formal dance for school. They picked out their clothes with excitement, ironed their shirts and my daughter sat and brushed her uncle's hair. These innocent beings were just going with the flow, we did our best to keep any negative emotions about our situation between us two. That night I had the pleasure of joining them for their school event, and was happy to see them socializing with their peers, just being themselves, without a single care. My wife and the two younger children waited in the truck in the parking lot.

Although we were thankful and my wife and I looked to the brighter side of things, this was not

the sort of life we wanted to live. There was a lot of discomfort and we were starting to feel like we needed to pursue a different option. One that would not be based on emotion but solely in the best interest for our children.