



THE
RICH
HOME
LESS

E-BOOK

DIFFERENT

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A Quote

*If your choices are
beautiful, so too will you
be.*

-Epictus

CHAPTER I

Milwaukee

My name is Yazan Zaro, some of you may know me as “Different.” Different is actually my preferred name. I am a Palestinian American that is 26 years old currently living in Doha Qatar. I attended 4 high schools throughout my life, 3 of which expelled me for various different reasons. I lived in Kuwait, Westwood Massachusetts, Qatar, Amman just while attending high school circa 2012-15.

After graduating high school from Westwood High in 2015, I attended the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.

I was doing well the first couple semesters, had decent grades and life was going fine. One evening with my friends in our dormitories cafeteria, after a long night of partying we approached two girls sitting by a table. One of those girls would go on to be my first real girlfriend. I was in love and she was the main focus of my life. After a while my grades started slipping up. I would spend all my time with her and slowly but surely started letting go of my goals and ambitions, rookie mistake. Eventually we broke up and I would take a break from university and thereafter the dormitory evicted me, so, I had to sleep on my friend Wensis couch for a couple months while I worked. Before becoming homeless I thought the only way to make money in this world was from employment, boy was I wrong.

In the fall of 2017 I was back in university with the help of my mother. She paid a lump sum of cash to get me one of the best apartments in the city, I was on top of the world. Since I needed some pocket money I started working at a liquor store on Brady street.

One day a man walked in and asked for a can of steel reserve beer. I remember everything about him to this day. He was caucasian, short, with long luscious hair and Brad Pitt like facial definition. I didn't think I would ever see him again.

Later that evening I wanted to smoke some weed but I had none so I went on the hunt around Brady street trying to score a gram of pot. Lo and behold, I met the man I saw at the liquor store a few hours earlier. He explained to me that his name was Chris and that he worked at a restaurant called "The Crab Shack" a few blocks down the road.

I told him I needed some weed and he said he could help me. We started talking about all sorts of topics; religion primarily and how I was brought up muslim. Eventually Chris would tell me he was homeless and had no place to live. Stupidly, I told him he could stay with me.

A few hours later after failed attempts to score some weed. Me and him headed to the Milwaukee institute of art and design. Chris said he had some friends there that had weed. We met up with them in their dorm and went outside. We were getting high. We smoked some weed out of a pipe on of the MIAD students brought. Out of no where we heard police sirens and we started running. Chris disappeared and me and some of the kids were arrested for running from the police. They told us if they had just bought us smoking weed it would have been no big deal, but the fact that we ran, was a warrant for an arrest.

I will never forget sitting in the back of the police van with one girl whose name I forgot. She was hysterical and crying. I was cool and composed and tried to make her feel better, but the whole time I was thinking of my new friend Chris and what had happened to him.

After a few hours the cops let me go and I went back to my apartment. I reunited with Chris. He appeared almost out of thin air, with a bag of weed in hand. He explained he had scaled the building near by the arrest location and evaded the police. I couldn't believe it. After spending some time with Chris I started to notice his patterns. Firstly, he was addicted to crack cocaine and he would smoke a lot of it. There was tons of it in Milwaukee at the time. I had never even seen crack before then but I was strangely comfortable around it. I never smoked it, but I was interested in the effect it had on people and how addictive it was.

Soon we were hanging out with it many other homeless people in the area and the meeting place was my apartment on water street.

While hanging out with Chris, I was exposed to the harsh realities of life in the United States and how drugs have such a strong hold on the poorer people. I saw everything with Chris. I saw a woman Chris was dating overdose on heroine before my very eyes. I saw a trap house. Not like in all the rap songs, no, I saw a house thats main goal was to supply the area with crack cocaine. It was a dark and awful place. One thing I noticed was that homeless people were especially good at making money when they desperately needed it to buy their drugs. I started following what they were doing and I actually started making some money. I was so surprised at just how easy getting money actually was.

I even more surprised that no professor in an institution ever taught me this, but it was my homeless friends. Lots of things happened in the span of 3-4 weeks in October of 2017, but I think you get the gist of things. Eventually Chris would be caught stealing Televisions in my apartment lobby. When being interrogated by the police I remember telling the officer that he would never catch Chris. Unfortunately i was wrong. The last time I ever saw my friend Chris, he was being placed in handcuffs and taken away. That memory is one of many from my past that are seared in my brain.

The apartment complex kicked me out and for the first time ever in my life I was briefly homeless. I was terrified. mean, I had been around homeless people and I had a good idea of what it would be like to actually be homers, but as a 20 year who was brought up in a middle class

family, I was really scared. I survived a week or two in Milwaukee before taking a bus to Chicago. I was going to fly to LA. The weed was better, the weather was better, and I knew some people there, where in Milwaukee, all my old friends didn't want anything to do with me, understandably. Using the skills I learned from my homeless buddies, I was able to raise 150 dollars in a few hours and book a flight.

I reached LA, and I was surprised by the sheer size of it. I thought when I landed in LAX that I could get around the city and everything would be a piece of cake. This was far from the truth, so what I did was, at the time I had a Facebook account and I borrowed some guys' phone and messaged my friends who lived in LA. They picked me up and let me stay at their house for a couple of days before reaching out to my mom, who was in Qatar at the time, and telling her everything that was

going on with me. While hustling in the city one day, making money, a car pulled up right besides me and a woman was in the driver seat, crying her eyes out. It was my mom, I must've looked awful and thinking back it must have been very hard for her to see her son looking like that, but at the time I was speechless. I hopped in the car and didn't say a word.

We stayed at a hotel for a week or two. I had my mom go into the dispensaries there and buy me some weed, I went to an Amine (Caroline) show, and I left early. All in all LA was a pretty boring experience. Eventually me and my mom would hop on a plane to Amman Jordan, and this is where the next part of the story begins.

CHAPTER II

Amman

I stayed with my grandma in Amman Jordan and my mom went back to Qatar. I met up with a rapper by the name of RJ Rebel and we discussed starting up a record label in the region. This was 2017 and I remember it vividly because Lil Peep, one of my favorite rappers at the time, died from a drug overdose. Lil Pump also released his hit video Gucci Gang and it was a new generation of rap so we wanted to shape it. I wanted to smoke weed badly in Amman. For those of you who don't know, drug use in the middle east, but specifically Jordan is highly illegal.

I would buy sticks of hashish from dealers and smoke it with strangers in the street in a neighborhood called Deir-Ghbar. Looking back its ridiculous what I was doing and it brings me to the arrest.

It was 4 am in November or October of 2017 and I heard a knock on the black “abajor”, its like a curtain made out of steel that houses in Amman have on the outside to stop people looking in. “Yazan!” I heard someone shout, I was terrified. “Open the door” the voice said. At the time I had no idea who it was and I was confused. They started ringing the doorbell and woke up my grandma and my uncle who lives on the floor above. I opened the door and low and behold it was the Drug enforcement agency in Amman. They searched the whole house and though they didn’t find anything they arrested me.

I stayed in Jordanian jail for about 3 days, it was one of the most painful and difficult experiences of my life.

they moved us around a lot and at one point there was around 20 people in a room the size of a large bedroom, sleeping on the floor, with a hole in the ground for a bathroom and no toilet paper! It was degrading. Luckily my father pulled some strings and managed to get me released.

Even after being released from Jordanian Jails, I continued to smoke and drink. This is something I wouldn't even consider today, but at the time, I was 20 years old and dumb. I had my mom wire me 2000 dollars and I bought some music equipment to start recording raps in my paternal grandparents basement. I knew nothing about music production and to be fair I thought myself so much. At first I would just download beats of YouTube and rap over them, it wasn't sounding good, at least not compared to my music today but I was improving.

I would smoke shisha from midnight till 4 am every night and just record. My grandparents treated me like royalty and supported me when I needed it. I even got a job at a local sandwich shop called Lulu which is now closed. I made 8 JD per day or 40 Qatar Riyals or 10 USD. My grandfather terribly passed away in April of 2024 just a week before my 26th birthday, he was the one who always told me to write my experiences out and share them, so Jido, this is for you.

Eventually I visited my parents in Qatar for a few weeks before convincing them to let me move to LA. Little did I know this would trip to the US would change my life forever.

CHAPTER III

The Last Straw

I arrived in Los Angeles California in the spring of 2018. I came with all my equipment in a suitcase. As soon as I landed I had the taxi driver drive to a dispensary where I bought a little marijuana and smoked it in a blunt on the way to my hotel. The next couple of days were a blur. If you know anything about the marijuana in the US, it is very potent and I couldn't see straight. I would wake up in my hotel and have no idea where I was or what I was doing. I even got lost in the city trying to find my AirbBnB and pushed my suitcase around in an empty shopping cart throughout the streets of LA,

a sign of what was to come.

Eventually I arrived at the AirBnB I would stay at. It was a shared home with about 6-7 other young people. It was a large home in Reseda, California. I was greeted by a woman who was doing yoga in the backyard. She looked at me and I looked at her and it was kind of funny because she was very attractive. I put my things in my room, a small wooden shack with a small AC unit halfway sticking out of the window where I could see the backyard. There was a little bar where the residents would go and drink/smoke.

While I stayed in that place I would go out on the streets and hustle. I would earn 20-30 dollars per day going around and doing all type of things. I would sell things, I would panhandle, and I would cheat my way. Unfortunately I was making such a small amount of money that it was kind of pointless.

Had I gotten a job at McDonalds I probably would have been out of trouble but I didn't and I wasn't. Soon enough things started to get heated at the living space I was staying at.

A guy and his girlfriend started butting heads with me, the owners son and I almost had a fist fight, I would get kicked out and sneak back into the residence. Not to mention the recording studio they had that I snuck into and the 2000 dollar microphone that I broke. They phoned my mother who was paying my rent and they told her and myself I had to move out. My mom flew me out to New Jersey. To be honest I never asked her why she decided to move me there but I think she wanted me out of Los Angeles as soon as possible. I stayed with a guy called Sam in a town called Nutley. f any of you have ever been to New Jersey you'll know what I mean when I say its weird.

Some parts of it are so run down and others are so rich and they are all within 10 minutes of each other. The roads are long and spread from town to town and there is poverty everywhere. It was also harder for me to get weed since there were not many dealers at the time.

I started doing all types of Illegal activity and eventually the person who I was staying with also decided to kick me out.

CHAPTER IV

Homeless

I had to go somewhere right? I had no place to stay and the only thing I could think of was go to JFK airport, terminal 8 and camp out there. I had nothing but a half beaten laptop, I had sold my phone and in a few days I would lose my passport. I would take the air train to Jamaica and buy marijuana from the dealers there. I had no shelter and it drove me crazy. Falling asleep with shoes on the first thing I noticed was the my feet would kill me. I had no place to shower and no change of socks or shoes and so my feet developed athletes foot.

They irritated the fuck out of me and the fact that I had to walk upwards of 5 miles per day hustling to make a couple dollars didn't help. Weeks would go by and I would try to contact my family but to no avail, they wanted nothing to do with me. I basically lived 2 separate lives in NYC, once when younger as a normal member of society going to all the tourist sites and seeing the fun side of Manhattan, another as an invisible person that was viewed as disposable. I had no place to go for weeks and I was beginning to run out of patience. Keep in mind that everyday was a struggle to survive and that I had none of the things we take for granted. I had no change of clothes, I was wearing the same ASAP Yams T-shirt for 40 days in a row. I couldn't shower. I had no fridge to keep food in. I had no door to lock to make me feel safe at night.

For anyone who has been homeless, they will tell you that it is one of the worst experiences you can experience. Don't get me wrong I had my fun. There was drugs to be taken and dreams to be followed. I never smoked crack or injected myself with heroin but I was seriously high. I would smoke 2-4 grams of weed a day, pop whatever pills I could get my hands on; Molly, Xanax and liquor. I was fucked up.

I had no idea what to do. No one would hire me, none of my family members felt like they could talk to me and more importantly I had nothing. Literally nothing. So one day I was at the bus station in downtown Manhattan and I decided to take a bus to Washington D.C. I had never been before and it seemed fun. I was already sleeping outside and living life like a rebel so what difference would it make if I went to D.C.

While waiting in the terminal, all I had was a backpack with my ticket to D.C. My name was misspelled on it. No ID, no change of clothes. I was wearing the same thing for weeks. I started smoking in the station. I had a technique where I would roll my joints and cigarettes into a sort of hybrid concoction that would get me high. First I would roll up a joint and I would sort of connect it to a Newport (a menthol cigarette) and when I would be done with the marijuana, the next part of the smoking experience was the cigarette. I was attracting so much attention that the police stopped me and when they looked at the joint they were almost amused. I had no ID to show them but I pulled out my ticket with my name misspelled and told them I was going to D.C, they let me go. Today marijuana is legal in New York and New Jersey for recreational use, at the time it wasn't.

I arrived at Union Station in D.C. The first thing I noticed was that D.C was like a blast from the past. I arrived at night, but as soon as the morning came I saw the beauty of the architecture and the history behind the city. I decided to take a walk and explore. This was definitely the furthest south I had ever been in the United States. The weather was slightly humid and it was raining. I remember the clouds covering up the sun. Not much changed in D.C. The addiction to marijuana was there, the panhandling and stealing continued and I still couldn't land a job or apartment or anything. I stayed in D.C for a month or two. I would visit china town, I would sleep on the Metro System. I still remember the huge architecture of the Metro. If you have never been take my word for it it is incredible.

For the most part I stayed by union station. Outside the station were a bunch of people who would smoke spice (synthetic marijuana) and just pass out or trip out, outside. It was not safe. At one point I was so high a man pulled a knife out on me and I didn't even react and I forgot about it for a couple of days before remembering again. At Union station, is where I coined the name "Different" for myself. It was a name that just came to me, one of my epiphanies and I stuck with it. I remember seeing a group of kids smoking cigarettes and for some reason I approached them. When they asked my name I decided to tell them that my name was Different, just to test out. They didn't buy it at first, and then something strange happened. A tall, pale, blue eyed man with curly hair approached the group and asked for a cigarette. It was my old friend from Amman, Osama.

I couldn't believe my eyes. The first thing I did was grab him and nudge him saying "Tell them my name is different bro!"

At first Osama did not recognize me, but eventually he did. I don't blame him, my hair and beard were long, I looked homeless, there were streaks of blonde in my hair but eventually he recognized me. We smoked a joint in the park outside union station and Osama even followed me to the homeless shelter I was staying at and he saw the whole ordeal. Me and him then headed to his apartment. We smoked, listened to music and talked. He let me shower at his place and he gave me some clothes to wear. I will never forget his kindness. Osama was my age but sadly a month ago he passed away. I don't know how he died but I know I will never forget him or what he did for me.

I then decided that the next stop for me would be Atlanta. I got together the money to hop on a bus and left D.C. I arrived at the greyhound station in downtown Atlanta. I was really in over my head. If you have never been to Atlanta, just know that it's a dark place. Yes some of Atlanta is great and exiting, but there is a certain darkness to the city. I was chilling at greyhound bus station and I asked someone what to do, I was homeless and had no place to stay. "Gateway! Go to Gateway!" I went to this place called Gateway the next day. There was a program there for homeless people where they would feed and house you and prepare you to get a Job. You had to stay in a dormitory and you couldn't leave (it was an old prison that they housed us in). I decided to try it out but they kicked me out eventually for trying to fight a group of pedestrians while out working, some things never change.

So, there I was, in Atlanta, getting high and sleeping on the MARTAs, getting high and sleeping outside, getting high and trying not to get shot or stabbed or robbed (which did happen). There are so many little experiences that I could describe but I think that you get the point I'm trying to get across, it was hard.

Eventually I called my uncle and he told me my fathers was coming to Boston and he wanted to help me. I knew I would no longer be homeless and I would make things right. I slept outside Five Points bus station in a sleeping bag while it was pouring rain. I woke up, headed to the greyhound bus station to Boston Mass and I saw my father. I could tell he noticed something was different about me, no pun intended. To me however he was still my dad, but there was a kindness about him, a sort of understanding. Just like that I was safe.

CONCLUSION

How to live “Rich”

First and foremost, besides my music and my persona I want you to know that you do not have to become homeless to learn to live your best life today. What happened to me was the result of many imbalances in my mind and life, that being said reading this will help you appreciate what you have now and build on it.

If you have food in your house and access to a shower, a place to store your clothing without worrying about being robbed (like living in Qatar) you are one of the richest people on earth that is the envy of those struggling in the world. If you also have your health

and a family that loves you you are balling.

One thing I learned from not having access to food, clothing and showers is how as humans it is so easy for us to overlook the things we have. Acknowledging and appreciating your blessings is one of the best tactics you can have to be rich.

The next thing I learned from being homeless was how ridiculously easy it is to make money if you really need it. I have never seen anybody with no college education make 40 dollars compared to a drug addict that needs to get high. What this showed me is that if you have a burning desire for something, then you will overcome any humane obstacle set in place. If you do not have what it is you want you are not trying hard enough, or you do not want it bad enough, trust me. We are not taught in school how to make money, but by being in the streets I learned that money is just paper.

It has zero intrinsic value aside from the value we assign it. And just like that the veil was lifted. When I moved to Qatar I started hustling like I did when I was homeless. I would make 50 dollars an hour without even trying, just by using what it is I knew about money.

The last thing I want you to take away from this is you need to question everything. Never bow down to authority because that is how they keep everybody controlled in society. What I want you to do is to question everything, you are your own authority.

Everyone of us has the capacity to live life on our own terms. We are in a very fortunate situation living here in Qatar. Some of you will become fathers and mothers, CEOs and business owners and innovators. Keep going and don't let your demons win, just keep them on a leash.

**I would like to dedicate this
e-book to my grandfather. I
love and miss you.**