

**ANGELO: ITALY**

Age: 39

Gender: Male

Country – City of birth: Italy - Brescia

Crime: Drug trafficking

Number of times in which you went to prison: four

Time from your last time in prison: one year

Time from your last crime committed: six years

***What is biggest problem you have had to face in trying to give up crime?***

Money is the first difficulty I encounter when I try to stay far away from crime. I have always committed crime for money, sometimes because I thought that to have money was the way to be a valid and important person. Of course I was wrong and I didn't give the right weight to values.

***If you have committed more than one crime: it has been for your personal choice? Would you have preferred not to commit them? And now, what does prevent you from committing others?***

Of course I would have preferred not to have committed crimes but yes, they have been my choice, my solution to find money. If I have to think to a way to stay far from crime I imagine a job, any job, that can let me earn a big amount of money.

***If you have given up crime, why you did it? Was it a choice or a personal growth that took time? And what or who helped you to give up crime?***

I think you could give up crime only if you decide to do so. You can't just expect that life conditions or people you know that brought you to crime change on their own. You need to think about what you want for yourself, what kind of person you want to be in your life. Then, you can decide if you are ready to face difficulties and hard times to start changing your life.

Of course, society could do much more than in fact it does to help former prisoners to stay away from crime. First of all it could try not to have prejudice when we are looking for a job,

because without a job there is no chance to give up crime. I think I have given up with crime after a personal growth that has passed through many difficulties, but I can't say "I will never commit a crime again" because I do not know if I will be in the right conditions to change my life once and for all. The outside society with its prejudice doesn't help you to be re-integrated in a social context; you will be forever an ex-prisoner.

***If you have stayed far away from crime for a while and then you started again doing some unlawful acts, it happened for the same reason you faced the first time or something changed?***

I have been sentenced more than one time because I have always faced the same problems and I have always had the same reasons to break the law: I was always looking for money, huge amounts of money that could give me a wonderful life.

***What helped you to stay away from crime or, on the other hand, made it hard to give up crime?***

Normally, people like me are a problem because, like me, they want money, so when we are together we can't be of any help to each other by trying to persuade the one who wants to do something wrong not to break the law. My friends, for example, were with me whenever I committed crimes and they agree with me about the importance of having a lot of money in our hands to live in a better way.

People that live their life with a normal salary, that don't waste their money on everything they decide they want, that are not slaves to appearance or to the wrong values, can help me a lot. They taught me that a man can live with 1000 euro, without committing any crimes, and appear richer than he in fact is. These kinds of people help you to feel foolish when you believe that your happiness is directly proportional to the amount of money you own for yourself.

***What was your experience of giving up crime? Positive or negative? What makes it easy or difficult?***

Incarceration has been completely useless for me in traveling the distance from crime. I have had no chance to work for a long time and no re-educational treatment while in prison so I

can say that I have only accumulated aggression, anger, and frustration linked to the feeling that I need to retrieve the time I have lost.

***What has changed in your life from when you committed crimes? And what has remained the same?***

Nothing tangible has changed from when I committed crimes. The only thing that has changed is that you don't have money to spend to acquire everything you like; your standards of living are lower than before and you have to get used to new perspectives. Moreover, the eyes through which you look at your life are different you must start believing that you are a valid man even if you don't have money. You can't buy friendship with gifts and you can't have the respect of other people. Or, better, you have to learn that there exists a different form of respect that isn't founded on what you own, on how much money you have, and this is not easy for people that have spent almost their whole life thinking that money means everything. I am lucky because nothing has changed in my life after giving up crime: I still have my family, my girlfriend and my daughter, but I don't have money anymore.

***How is your life now? And how was your life before?***

My life before the crime was very rich. I had everything I thought I needed and the same went for my daughters, my ex-wife and my girlfriend. I could offer them a respectable life. Today I have to count on my family because I don't earn enough money for me and my beloved daughters. What I have in my mind is the strong need to find a job that assures me a good salary, more than 1000 euro, at least, because with less than this money you absolutely can't live. I'm not looking for something excessive. I just need a good position. Everything I do today is oriented to the achievement of this outcome.

***How do you see yourself now?***

As I get older I feel better and better. With regard to my crimes, I have no regrets, no remorse. The law on drugs trafficking is like the Prohibition and for me, to push drugs is just a matter of money, as with every other trade.

***How do you feel in regard of your past crimes?***

I feel good with myself, because I know I did them for money, because I needed money. Everything else that you can see in the movies, arms and gunfights, don't apply to me. It was just money and merchandise, nothing more than this for me. I don't feel ashamed at all for what I have done. If I had been a politician I would of course have stolen money in another way. If I had been a lawyer I would have earned money at my clients' expense. The aim is the same, even if the law doesn't allow you to do this.

***How was your prison experience? Did you feel supported by social services? Have they helped you to give up with crime and to re-build a new life?***

For my part, the penitentiary system is not useful at all. The prison itself doesn't teach you anything. Only volunteers have helped me, not the social services and only my conviction is helping me in my resettlement process.