A Place to Stand - Hypertext

Jimmy Baca recaptures his life and his adversities in *A Place to Stand*. Born in Santa Fe, New Mexico, from the time Jimmy was young he witnessed a father in jail, addicted to alcohol, a mother addicted to nationalism, and siblings broken mentally. This memoir explores the idea that no matter what background you come from you can rise above it. Also, the environment in which you live, breathe, and sleep can have a profound effect on your destiny or fate. In Jimmy Baca’s case, his fate turned out to be prison at Florence, where he learned to become a better individual which has been beautifully expressed in his writing. [Jimmy Baca Biography](#).

**Book Summary and Analysis**

Chapter one reflects on Jimmy’s childhood and his first experience witnessing his father in jail. This chapter explores the beginning of a pain that would soon be the cause of a life filled with no boundaries and no trust for other people. “When I was a boy, my father always wore a pained expression and kept his head down, as if he couldn’t shake what was bothering him.” Jimmy felt mistrust because his mother denied her Hispanic culture and ran off with her white boyfriend. Feeling abandoned, Jimmy and his brother Mieyo were sent to an orphanage while their sister stayed with their grandmother.

Chapter two begins with Jimmy in a detention facility at the age of thirteen after running away from the orphanage. Jimmy had to rely on his detention brothers to fill the empty void he felt from being isolated from all of his family. While at the detention center, Jimmy started to attend junior high. He met the football coach, Coach Tracy, who took Jimmy under his wing and put him on the football field. The football field was the only place that Jimmy felt he was powerful because he was strong and good at the game. However it was academic skills that he lacked. Towards the end of the chapter, Mieyo visited Jimmy in the detention center and ended up taking Jimmy with him back to Estancia, where they lived together and got jobs as plumbers.

At this point, Mieyo has joined the army and Jimmy is out on his own. He met a girl by the name of Theresa who he soon fell in love with. This would be his first real relationship with a woman since he has been out of jail. Jimmy became infatuated with Theresa, not realizing that the only reason she was interested in him was due to his “bad boy” mentality and fighting behavior. Already having issues with trust, especially in females, Theresa left and used him only for physical pleasure. After having his heart broken by the only woman he loved, he packed his stuff and drove to San Diego, California to begin a new life. When he arrived in San Diego, he went to a beach to relax. It was here that he met Marcos and Lonnie, two people that would become his closest companions.

Chapter four is really a turning point in his life, where he found himself in jail more often. He was caught selling drugs with some of his buddies, which was why he ended up in jail the first time. At this point
Jimmy and Lonnie’s relationship has escalated into something more serious, although he was still getting over Theresa. They went to visit Lonnie’s parents and after her parent’s approval of their relationship and the fact they were living together; they felt a new level. After getting out of jail the last time, he decided to move back to Albuquerque where he asked Lonnie to join him. While enjoying drinks at a mutual friend’s house, some FBI agents and NARCS busted them for drugs. Doing what he does best, Jimmy fled the scene and he eventually turned himself in.

After being extradited from New Mexico, Jimmy found himself in the Yuma County Jail for a crime he sincerely felt he was innocent of committing. Everyone had turned their back on him, including his sister Martina who he called to ask for bail money. After being rejected by his sister, the only thing that he could do was let time take over his life. There were times that he was intimidated and threatened by the corrections officers. Then there were times that his self-pity turned into apathy and he did not care whether he lived or died.

“I had made up my mind to blend in, attract no attention, do my time, and get out alive.” Jimmy begins chapter six with this very sincere quote. This was the beginning of an internal change that Jimmy will experience throughout his sentence in the Florence Prison. He has no friends, just acquaintances. He really elaborately described what he notices about prison life. He observes that the prison is divided by races—Chicanos, Blacks, and Aryans. It was here that he had his first encounter with a homosexual prisoner who gave him notions that he wanted to try and turn Jimmy out. Using the knowledge he acquired from the streets and advice from one of his acquaintances, Macaron, he was determined to let the homosexual prisoner understand that he was not to be messed with or misconstrued as being accessible or vulnerable.

Chapter seven is about reflection of Baca’s past leading up to his time spent in prison. Lying on his cot, he rethinks what events occurred in his childhood that caused so much turmoil and confusion in his life. He has problems with trusting people. Everyone that he had ever put his trust in left him, for what seemed like the “white” lifestyle. His mother left him when he was young for a white man, denying her traditions and family to become like white women. His sister, Martina, was married to a white man with kids and had no time for Jimmy and his lifestyle. The only positive male role model in his life was his grandfather who had died years ago. Basically his life was meaningless in his eyes.

“I was lost in shifting phantoms of the past, and yet I still struggle to reach a present that seemed beyond my grasp. Time and space were jumbled in my mind.” Baca has spent a month in an isolated block. In this chapter he is finally released and escorted to a regular cell. He experienced something new—a change in him. His mindset was totally different and the small things that used to get to him did not seem as important. He got back into his regular scheduled routine of chow, and exercise. Eventually the memories of his childhood became so overwhelming that one day at supper he began to cry uncontrollably. At this moment Baca experienced the mental breakthrough that he perhaps needed in order to come to peace with the demon he was fighting within himself.
Spending his twenty-third birthday in isolation, he was finally released and taken to the warden. The warden had lost all patience with Jimmy because of his behavior leading up to him being put in isolation. Without a word, the officer, Mad Dog Madril, escorted Jimmy to the cell blocks where the gang members were housed. He was then stripped down and searched. After his humiliating search, he was escorted to his own cell. Being confined in this cell, Jimmy decides that he does not want to be illiterate for the rest of his life. It is in prison that he learns to read and write. He decides to write a letter to Harry, at first. Later on he finds his passion for poetry and that by writing it will make time pass quicker. “Writing for me was my connection to the streets, to someone out there.” After completing his first poem, he read it to one of his cell acquaintances named Bonafide. It was also in prison that he got saved and reconnected spiritually with God. Lastly, during visitation Theresa comes to visit him.

As the book approaches Christmas time, Jimmy has been writing vigorously and has completed his second spiral journal of poetry and short stories. He receives a letter that Lori and Mieyo are no longer together because Mieyo has resorted to drinking and it has taken a toll on their relationship. Spending time in the dungeon, Jimmy found himself in a brawl with Boxer. After resisting the temptation to kills Boxer, although he severely injured him, he was restrained by Mad Dog Madril and removed from the dungeon. Instead of being taken to isolation again he was transferred to Nut Run in DC for convicts with severely medicated cases.

The year was 1977 and Jimmy was twenty-five years old with less than a year left on his sentence. More young prisoners had been admitted for drug possession charges and the prison had become over-crowded. Jimmy now had a roommate by the name of Tom. Jimmy has received and unexpected letter from his Aunt Jesusita. She supplied Jimmy with his parent’s information. Jimmy wrote a letter to his father hoping to rekindle what had been lost years ago. Unfortunately he did not receive a reply, shortly after finding out that his father had been admitted to a detoxification center for alcohol rehabilitation. A few weeks later he finally received a letter from his father saying that he loved him and that he would be leaving the center soon. Soon after receiving the letter we was notified that his father had died, and Jimmy was not allowed to attend the funeral.

There had been a riot in cell block one and Jimmy and some other inmates had been relocated again to a two story cell block. It was here that Jimmy met and befriended Nick, a newspaper editor. At the end of December they were moved back to CB1 where Jimmy would carry out the remainder of his sentence. He was still writing and becoming a better writer and a better poet. Since these were the last couple of months leading up to Jimmy completing his sentence he spent his days in the cell meditating on what his life would be life once he was out and his childhood issues.

Time is drawing nearer and nearer for Jimmy to be released and for the first time he is started to become nervous and think about how he has nothing out in the world and nowhere to go. Although he is worried about this he also realizes that having freedom means he would not be controlled in a six by nine cage being ordered by guards. His release date was April 17, 1978 but the warden was playing mind games with him. He constantly
sent him to the parole board, although his sentence did not include parole and he was supposed to do flat time. After two extra months of this game, June rolled around and Jimmy was finally released.

**Key Terms**

- Cacophony-[cacophony definition | Dictionary.com](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/cacophony)
- Furtively-[furtively definition | Dictionary.com](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/furtively)
- Oxidized-[oxidized definition | Dictionary.com](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/oxidized)
- Begrudgingly-[Begrudgingly definition | Dictionary.com](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Begrudgingly)
- Daguerreotype-[daguerreotype definition | Dictionary.com](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/daguerreotype)
- Defunct-[defunct definition | Dictionary.com](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/defunct)
- Extradited-[extradited definition | Dictionary.com](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/extradited)
- Perpetrated-[perpetrated definition | Dictionary.com](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/perpetrated)

**Research**

1) **What kind of affect does neglect and isolation have on children?**

According to statistics provided from Biomedicine, child neglect can have a negative affect on children. Children that have gone through the system and been in and out of different orphanages, they face more developmental challenges during their first couple of months in the orphanage. In the last ten years, in the United States alone, the number of children adopted by families or in orphanages has increased from 7,000 to 17,000, according to Seth Pollak of the University of Wisconsin. Presently, about 85% of these children have ended up in institutions.
2) **Is there a connection between juvenile delinquency and child abuse?**

There has been conducted research that shows the connection between early child abuse and teenage delinquency. Children that were abused mentally and physically at an early age were more likely to end up obese, pregnant, or in jail. In Iowa a study used in juvenile and criminal court records identified that 908 juveniles had been abused. Between 1988 and 1944, twenty-seven percent of abused children were arrested compared to seventeen percent who were not abused.

Conclusion

Jimmy Baca grew up in an environment that was not only unhealthy, but more so uncondusive to his future. Witnessing his father in jail and addicted to alcohol, his mother left him and betrayed her family and her culture. However, it was in prison that Jimmy really got in touch with himself and learned to read and write. Not only did he write but he developed a passion for poetry and wrote a memoir exposing his life story and how we can all take something away from it. Although we should not let our circumstances determine our destiny, there are inevitable adversities that come and the consequences can be fatal and life changing.