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# From Anger to Forgiveness: Man Befriends Brother's Killer

By **Rose Arce**, CNN

- 1** **New York (CNN)** - The day Anthony Colon heard his older brother had been gunned down in East Harlem, he began struggling with a rage that would last for years.
- 2** The anger wore him down. He missed him desperately.
- 3** He hated the three men who had fired 13 bullets into his brother who was unarmed.
- 4** “Oh, God, it just - it just put so much hate in my life. I hated everybody. I hated everything. It made me to be a person, like a monster,” said Colon, who considered his brother Wilfredo his only stable family.
- 5** “I loved him because he always stood up for me from a little kid. He would not even allow me to fight. He would stand up for me, whatever happened, because he always saw that goodness in me.”
- 6** But as the years passed the fog of anger began to lift.
- 7** He married. Had two children. He welcomed religion into his life.
- 8** And, he was overwhelmed by a desire to find reconciliation with his brother’s killer.
- 9** “I just wanted it to be OK,” he said.
- 10** Then one summer day, a chance encounter while visiting a friend at the Eastern Correctional Facility in Ulster County, New York, changed his life.
- 11** He looked across the room and saw Michael Rowe, one of the men who had murdered his brother.
- 12** Rowe saw him too and tried to duck down.
- 13** “I was expecting that we would be you know, it would be a fight, some type of physical violent altercation,” said Rowe.
- 14** Rowe recalls feeling remorse and shame, unable to forgive himself for murdering another young man – and afraid of retaliation.
- 15** Colon walked straight up to him and said: “Brother, I’ve been praying for you. I forgave you. I’ve been praying I would see you again.”
- 16** The meeting would transform both men’s lives.
- 17** Rowe had married the same girl he was dating when he went to prison. They were able to have three children together during his imprisonment, and he wanted desperately to parent them even as he served a sentence of 20 years to life.
- 18** “I figured I would die in prison. Or at least leave there a very old man with grey hair,” he said.

- 19** “I still don’t think that I’ll ever truly be able to forgive myself because of the things that I’ve done. Because I take full responsibility for what I did. And I completely, and as best as anyone could, understand the pain that I have caused.
- 20** “I think for me, forgiveness will come in doing good works, trying to help others. But as far as forgiving myself I don’t think I will ever get to that place.”
- 21** In prison he was befriended by Julio Medina of Exodus Transitional Community, which prepares inmates for their release.
- 22** Rowe studied and soon he got an associate’s degree, then a bachelor’s. As he was studying for his master’s degree in Professional Studies, Colon began visiting him regularly.
- 23** “To have that kind of support from the man whose brother he killed, that is remarkable,” said Medina. “Not only does it lift that cloud of shame that he walks with, but more importantly it allows him to have a second chance with the blessings of the victim’s brother.”
- 24** The day of his graduation, Colon surprised Rowe by coming to put on his robe. He also came to his parole hearing, where Rowe said this to the board deciding his fate:
- 25** “Anthony is my hero. I have two sons, and if my sons grow up to be half the man that Anthony Colon is, I will be an incredibly proud father. And I don’t know if I can sum it up or explain any better than that how I feel about Anthony Colon. He has changed my life.”
- 26** Colon believes religion has propelled him to forgive Rowe.
- 27** “For some reason I felt that he was dealing with all that he was dealing with. Like condemnation. Self-pity. Just like this hovering darkness that was around. I felt that, when people think that’s strange, but it’s just the part of the nature of a person that’s closely connected to God. There’s a connection with God that can allow you to see past what’s in front of you,” he said.
- 28** Rowe was released from prison this week after 20 years, a man who has not seen the world since he was barely grown up.
- 29** He showed up at one of his children’s elementary schools with cupcakes and gave her the surprise of her life. He saw the home where he will be living with his wife and three children for the first time. And he went to see Anthony Colon, who he will join at Exodus reaching out to young men at risk.
- 30** “God has a purpose for me. God has a purpose for us,” said Rowe, sitting alongside Colon at the offices of Exodus. “Yes, us,” adds Colon smiling.
- 31** Meanwhile, Rowe is adjusting to life on the outside.
- 32** He is mystified by cell phones and the gentrification of the neighborhood where he fell into drugs and killed a man.
- 33** Exodus is helping him cope with routine life skills that seem overwhelming to him like having the power to make daily decisions over what to eat, when to talk, going outside.
- 34** Colon is helping him with that too, so he can see a life beyond prison and they can both put an end to 20 years of pain.