

2024

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### Recommended Citation

Crawford, Michael (2024) "The Doors that Slam Shut," *Mend*. Vol. 2: Iss. 1, Article 15.  
Available at: <https://surface.syr.edu/mend/vol2/iss1/15>

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# Crawford: The Doors that Slam Shut



# THE DOORS THAT SLAM SHUT

Michael Crawford

It has been said that a door is just a door, but perhaps it could be more—depending on its opening or closing and the hands in which the knob is held. Many times the doors in my life have slammed shut, trapping me in, surrounded by stale air, and ushering out a few ever-so-lucky gusts of free air. That is, freely reunited with the atmosphere, never to return again. Joy bells of freedom ringing out into the cool of night.

Early on in my life, doors would slam shut followed by a stern warning. Really, it was a warm scolding:

“Don’t be slamming my doors like you ain’t got no sense.”

“Close that screen door—you letting the cool air out.”

“Close that door—you letting the flies in.”

Moms would yell, holla, scream, and fuss as only an inner-city mother could. It was as if she had an internal door alert warning alarm. She never missed a beat. She truly made our house a home, yet it’s so distant and far gone. A sweet memory.

Now, new voices, different from hers, but with that familiar sound of anger, frus-

tration, and harshness urging, no, demanding and ordering, you to comply.

“Lock in,” “Shut it down,” or “Count time,” different words and voices but the results are all the same. Doors slam shut, trapping me in once again. Movement ceases and life stands still behind a plantation of frozen-in-time blue steel.

“Lights out!” they yell, and darkness prevails when the doors are slammed shut.

“Yard’s closed, line it up,” the guard yells.

We comply, rushing to form a perfect line in an imperfect place. Walking through the yard doors before they too slam shut with a loud thud and an electronic buzz. The all-too-familiar sound of a day ending on the compound.

All my life doors have been slamming shut, but these doors were different—not just their size and weight, but they looked different too. They felt different. These doors didn’t represent peace, safety, and care. Instead, they trapped me in, surrounded by uncertainty and pain so cold that the blue steel even felt unreal. Where there was no peace, but chaos prevailed. Like the ever-so-lucky few gusts of air, I too wanted to escape and be whisked out of there, out into the free, cool night air.