

# SAINTS INSIDE

THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2015

## Leading by Example

"LEADING BY EXAMPLE"

"As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

-- Nelson Mandela

A friend in the free world once said to me a while ago, after losing my final appeal for a fair sentence, "well, maybe your light is just meant to shine a little longer in there." And what she said has stuck with me. It may have been the best feedback I could've gotten. It has helped me since and given me purpose. And it inspires me, when things look bleak.

We can all be shining lights, of course, and it's needed everywhere. Perhaps no more than in prison, where life is at its darkest for most people, especially those new to the System. Most especially, for those who been sentenced to a lot of time and are scared shitless. As I once was.

Everyone is worried and afraid when they first get here -- the ones who put on the "tough guy" act, I think, even more so than the others. Which is why they do it, of course. The fear of violence was my biggest worry for many years. Never been a violent person "despite my "violent" crime). I had to fight a lot, at first, with various predators, who saw me as an easy mark. Fortunately, I'm

### ABOUT ME



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I am a former boat builder, physiotherapist, commercial diver, and chef. Since my incarceration in 2001, I have been a student of history, philosophy, theology, and theoretical physics. I am an avid outdoorsman and animal lover and cannot wait to hug a tree and pet a dog again. Please visit my website at:

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not a little guy or weak minded, so it proved to be not worth the hassle for them. But some aren't so fortunate, and their first months and years in here can even be more of a living hell than for most. These guys need champions to stick up for them, watch their backs -- but, most importantly, to be role models.

Actually, we all need role models. (This is one of my soapbox topics.) I think positive (key word there) role models are what are lacking in many people's lives -- not just kids. I think that those people who have their shit together, so to speak need to actively mentor others, especially the youth, not be shy about it (humble, yes; modest, maybe; but not shy ). Make the time and effort. Seek people out. Just a single day or an afternoon of mentoring to make a big difference in someone else's life. I know this from experience on both ends of the deal.

However, having said that, it's common knowledge that those who most need mentoring are usually the least likely to know it, ask for it, or even want it. That was certainly the case with me, at one time. (I think it's safe to put every single alcoholic and drug addict into this group.)

So sometimes the best, or only way, to "mentor" someone else is to lead by example. Doing the best we know how, being the best person we can be -- day in, day out. Letting others see how it's done; even how easy it can be, once certain self-made obstacles are removed. It's possible to motivate and inspire and calm just by your presence.

In prison there is no such thing as privacy. You're constantly being watched -- both by the guards and your fellow inmates. Everything you do or say scrutinized and judged and recorded into memory. And it establishes your place in the quote "pecking order", so to speak, where "respect" is the ultimate measure.

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The bottom line is: those who have the most respect from others, have the most respect for themselves. Which means, above all, they have no fear. Not only fear of violence (you get over that, eventually, hopefully), but of damage to their ego. They couldn't care less how others perceive them, because they are happy (or at least at peace) with themselves.

This is the fear that causes most problems for people, I think, whether inside or outside the walls and razor wire: they worry too much about what others think of them; and everything they do -- their entire world, it seems -- revolves around this. Your self-worth is based on the opinion of others, rather than on any inner strength or inner peace or inner knowledge.

I think the best thing a mentor can do is to instill those senses of inner strength, peace, knowledge in another person. And the best thing all of us can do, once we obtain these things ourselves, is live from and practice these qualities every day, as well as we can.

I sat down to write this because I had a long walk and talk, today with the guy who does this, who embodies these things. His name is Robert Meek. He's been in prison for over 24 years, and he's without a doubt one of the nicest, most caring people you'd ever hope to meet. It's been his goal, for as long as I've known him to make our hopeless environment in here better, more peaceful, more enlightened. Working with the chaplain's office, he started a weekly Eastern religions service/class for anyone interested. It has really taken off and helped a lot of people. And he's one of those guys who leads by example; whose fearless in the right way.

I've been told by a few fellow prisoners over the years that I've been a role model for them, too, just the way I carry myself -- choosing to be positive despite everything else, despite a ridiculously excessive sentence. I'm the one a lot of guys come to for advice, I guess because I at least I give the appearance of having my act together, which -- which again, above all --

means I have no fear. Of anything. I'm not afraid anymore of having to spend the rest of my life in here. I'm not afraid of anyone, nor their opinion of me. I'm certainly not afraid of dying, knowing what I know now about who and what we truly are as spiritual beings having one of many "brief" physical experiences on Earth.

However, I definitely need to work on my fear of loving my fellow man; of forgiving. As we all probably do.

There a lot of people in prison who have become fearless in this regard, over time. They've had nothing but time to work on themselves, improve themselves, in hope of the second chance at life someday. And, believe me, they are no danger to society no matter how much of their sentences remain. Just the opposite: these are the people who can effectively mentor – troubled youth, alcoholics and drug addicts, and anyone else in danger of coming to prison themselves someday. These are the people *those* people will actually listen to.

So many of us in prison have so much potential to do so much good out there. This is the message I want to impart. Prison can be a transformative experience. And just one of the many things we learn, once we get our hearts and minds right, is how important it is to lead by example and inspire others to do the same.

Thanks for listening. I hope I'm not sounding like a broken record, repeating the same things too often. I hope you enjoy these occasional insights from "inside." A big shout out to my mom, who so diligently and lovingly puts this blog online.

Bye for now,

Eric

POSTED BY ERIC REMEROWSKI AT 4:16 AM