

Elephants are known for their long-term memory. When they are little baby elephants, what are they, cubs, kits, pups, oh yeah, calves, they are chained to a wooden post driven into the ground. They push, pull, and fight. Eventually they learn that they are not strong enough to pull out the post. When they grow to adulthood, they remember that they could not pull the post loose. Even though they are now strong enough to gain their freedom, they fail to test the post, because they remember. They have been programmed to conclude that to strain again the post is futile, so they don't even try anymore.

I heard somewhere, oh yeah, in a rehab environment, that to continue the same actions expecting different results is one definition of insanity. Very well, then, I am insane. I continually strain at my bounds, fully expecting that someday I will break the chains that hold me, whether they were placed there by an external force or entity of which I may or may not be able to name, or they were placed there by me. It is hard-wired into me to fight oppression. I think they now have a fancy name for it: Oppositional Defiant Disorder.

While I fully remember that I am just a thing to be used and thrown away, that I am to be seen and not heard, that I am to lay down and lick my nuts, that the idiot warehouseman knows everything better than the brakepad sitting on the shelf, I still find that I must strain at the chain, my forelegs dangling in the air, my barking somewhat stifled by the pull of the choke collar. I find it hard to rest quietly in the satisfaction that my captors will provide all my means of survival. It is not, nor has it ever been, a part of my psyche to find happiness in slavery. Like a dog kicked once too often, I might stop growling and bite the hand that feeds me.

And yet I *have* found some sense of peace in institutionalization. I keep dreaming of not being able to make my ends meet. I am continually working for businesses that don't bother to send me the paychecks. I am always racing to complete the last of my University classes on time. I need to pay back rent before the landlord auctions off all of my personal belongings. Meanwhile, I have not slept or resided in the rented house or apartment for a *very* long time. When all of my physical overhead is supplied, why do I continue to feel this distress over them in my nocturnal life?

While most people are "living the dream," I "dream the life." When I was free I only slept about every third day. I hear there is now a fancy name for this, as well. It is called "Non-24" and refers to the fact that not everyone is in synch with the Earth's rotational schedule. Here, I like to sleep as much as possible! In my dreams I have an interesting life among interesting people, accomplishing interesting goals. Or, I worry about not meeting those goals. I *prefer* my astral existence to the physical day to day monotony of prison life. While not attached to a radial chain, I do have a small enclosure, approximately three square city blocks, in which to move about and have my being. Has my God become so limited? That is not a conclusion that I can accept.

Elephants are really pachyderms, the literal meaning of which is 'thick skin.' When we apply this term to a human, it is generally understood to infer that the person can take a lot of shit. Nothing really bothers them; names will never hurt them, etc. While *some* of this definition can apply to me, I *do* listen to words. I *have* listened to them, both verbal and non-verbal. *I remember*. Everything. The warehouseman used to call us convicts or inmates. Now, they insist that we are *offenders*. Very well, then, I will offend. I will continue to test the chain, hammer on the wall, march around inside my Jericho. Someday the walls *will* fall.

My obstinacy is a trait that is both honored and rewarded in business, in politics. However, *only* when it is masked by false pretenses, platform promises, plastic smiles and baby kisses. If you were weaned from a silver spoon, people will trip over themselves to donate to your campaign, in exchange for an embassy position. If you are committed to the truth about things, however, then you must *be* committed... *somewhere*, where the truth is obscured from view, locked in the dark, not mentioned in public. It becomes merely the ranting of the disenfranchised, subject to ridicule, censure, and punishment.

A little truth is a dangerous thing. Much truth is a much greater danger. Forget what you remember and learn the truth. *The* truth. There is no spoon. We are strong. Strong enough to break the leash, to pull out the post, to bring down the walls; but we have *got* to keep pushing and pulling, challenging the status quo, asking "Why?" If drips and drops of water can erode the stony ground of Earth, then why not boiling blood tear down the iron curtain separating the classes? Remember the thick skins.