

452 Words on Incarceration

Prison is a poisoned environment. It leaves no one untouched. It seeps into the pores like mustard gas. It fouls the very air we breathe, polluting it with anger and hatred and bitterness. It creates unseen lesions on our souls, damages our being, eats away at our minds until we have no choice but to shut down all emotion or risk self-destruction. One cannot "care" for another in here; it is a weakness pounced upon by those who prey on misery, a liability that brings the danger of attack, physically or otherwise. To be safe is to be callous; to save one's self is to become ruthless and aggressive. Prison rips away our humanity and forces cruelty down our throats and into our words. It fills us with psychic bile, a caustic fluid that splashes uncontrollably on all who come in contact with us. It is unforgiving. We cannot see it as it happens and are shocked when our families and loved ones recoil in fear. It is the nature of this place — eat or be eaten — a reflexive reaction to anything which threatens survival. Learn to use the poison, to digest it and draw strength from it... or die.

It is killing me. It is killing my wife. We were not born to it, rather had it thrust upon us. It has robbed me of all I once cherished as good and honorable = sensitivity, compassion, patience, generosity. I have been bludgeoned into unwanted

submission and cheapened by its coarseness, boot-heeled into the mold of a lesser human being. It is an ocean of failure, a torrent of emotional sewage and I must swim in the putrefaction of greed and corruption and self-obsessiveness. No one thrives here. No one benefits. Can execution be worse? Can suicide? Prison is the State's solution, but not a solution. It is macabre and sick to do this to men and women, to those who love the "prisoner." It is a governmentally-mandated disease, a virus, a plague no less vicious than cancer, no less inexplicable and unfeeling as is genocide. It ruins those it proclaims to cure, to "correct" and restore. Its victims litter our society on both sides of the battlefield, devastates our impoverished and those most in need, and no one in power seems to care. The mass media looks away in shame, our country's leaders label the criminal as defective fifth, and our communities close their doors in rejection and hope it will go away. "It" is "us" - a nation within a nation, used-up ex-citizens. And still prisons remain like a blight on the landscape of humanity that cries out for someone, anyone, to listen. Help us... please!

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