

Prison's Most Contented

While most inmates on a prison compound struggle with low self-esteem, depression and anxiety, it is awe-inspiring how contented openly gay men appear. In an environment presumed to be unembracing and even hazardous, gay inmates quietly, calmly and religiously coalesce and develop circles composed entirely of self-satisfied, even merry men.

While other inmates appear angry, melancholy and lonely, gay inmates -for whatever reason- project unburdened persona completely unbridled by the many losses others constantly lament. Truly, homosexual inmates are gay; cheerful as the word was once defined. But why?

Is it an environment void of women? Certainly not. For a vast majority of other inmates could hardly be considered tolerant. Although rarely physically harmed, these men still endure disparaging insults their hirsute, often-times barbaric inmates and even staff toss about ad nauseum. Astonishingly, these clean-shaven, immaculately-groomed men act oblivious to such ridicule. They ignore and even smirk to themselves at the blatant insecurity of other inmates who desperately attempt to evince invincible masculinity. This ruse is often exposed as nothing more than an attempt by others to disguise their own sexual desires and identities.

Gay men on a prison compound are usually better educated and products of conventional up-bringing, something many of their straight counterparts resent and secretly covet. By sneering at gay men's sexual preference, straight inmates perpetuate a facade, a feint, even an excuse for their own personal, cultural, and educational deficiencies.

Along with others, gay inmates experience open discrimination, as well. Being barred from entering a housing unit television room and prohibited from participating in various recreational activities, generates not even a shrug by these men. The viewing choices of gay men and others are so contrasting to other inmates that their banishment becomes not a hinderance but a blessing from the infantile Jerry Springer-esque programming constantly viewed in the television rooms.

Still, a deeper antecedent is present and most probably the explanation for the serenity present among gay inmates. For gay men, ridicule, insults and discrimination are not new. The overt and closeted alike have long suffered relentless persecution from society. For gay men the appellation "inmate" is a label that for them will generate even less prejudice than the flag they carried prior to their confinement.

Living in prison and away from the covert biases prevalent on the outside, gay inmates are able to assemble with others like themselves in an environment where they are easily identified. In prison, these men create their own cliques that allow them to segregate from the disparagement of the intolerant and those ignorantly fearful of falling prey to their perceived infirmity.

By enduring and even thriving inside their protected microcosms where they live peacefully, they can ignore and even laugh from afar at those others who secretly begrudge how gay inmates can live comfortably and obliviously not just in prison, but inside themselves.