

## *OPEN LETTER TO MY PEERS*

I have been incarcerated for over 18 years and there are others who have been imprisoned for both longer and shorter periods. Some of us are doing the work that needs to be done on ourselves such as, changing our criminal thinking, eliminating our negative behaviors, and replacing bad habits with good habits. We do this first by introspection on ourselves to find out what are the things that need work in order to better ourselves. We spend time with self; no yard, no TV, no in-door recreation, no phone, no walkman **only cell study!**

We use the cell to meditate, reflect, and dig deep into our souls to pull out the demons and traumas that still haunt us. The things that we have done to others and happened to us in our past that contributed to our coming to prison in the first place. For some of us as children our traumas went unaddressed, growing into teenagers and then adults compiling more traumas waiting to explode.

I am forced to be around some people who refuse to change for the better. Because of this I have become the victim of their negative behaviors. They are selfish and refuse to take responsibility for their action, hoping that someone else will. What usually happens is that the good guy gets blamed for the bad guy's actions. Example; I am standing in the hallway on line and someone steps in front of me without saying excuse me; I am walking in line trying to get to program with other people who happen to be talking, when they know the rule say no talking in the hallway, a c.o. can't see who is actually talking, so he tells me to give him my I.D. because he is going to write someone a ticket for talking in the hallway. The guys that were talking say nothing and I get keep locked.

At the hearing I try to explain that I was not talking in the hallway, the hearing officer finds me guilty and telling me that he believes the officer and gives me 30 days keep lock. I lose my trailer, commissary, packages, and Earned Housing. I am in the cell reading and a female officer is doing her go rounds on the gallery and yells "female walking," someone says "prove it," she gets mad and says she is going to pick a cell to write a ticket if someone doesn't step up and admit saying that. No one steps up; she picks my cell, and writes a ticket for harassment. It becomes a tier III and as a result I am recommended to lose Good Time.

One of the most troubling things that I find myself dealing with in this environment is people who say they want you to develop a relationship with them based on honesty and trust. You confide in them sharing personal things about your crime, family, and your history, to find out later that you were the only one being honest and trustworthy. They lied to you about their crime, to deceive you and make you think that they were here for something other than their actual crime. They do this so they can use you. They refuse to accept responsibility for their actions or get the help that they need. Yet they want you to accept them as they say they are. The question I ask is, "How can I help you, when you won't help yourself?" You hide behind positions of authority. You learn just enough about whatever you become a part of, so that no one will question your authority. You think it's ok for you to question others and you expect an honest answer. I see you and I want you to know that you are not deceiving anyone except yourself.

All the while others are not making a sincere effort to change their lives for the better by getting the help they need in order to address their issues, you give advice to everyone, but refuse to follow it yourself. You know the answers to every question, but refuse to find the solution to your issues. You want to teach religious service, but you don't want to practice the message. You are the presidents of many organizations, but you don't know how to lead. You are the people who facilitate many different programs, but refuse to fight to get the program here in the facility which you need in order to go home. You are the chaplain's clerks, but refuse to let the chaplains give you spiritual advice. You are the porters, students, teachers' aids; you are in every area of this facility and it is affecting me. So please, get the help that you need because if you don't, when you do go home, **you will return to prison!**

I also have to deal with **the sickness of some** of my peers who know that they are sick yet think that it is not transparent. You are in deep denial about your past, present, and future. You want others to help you stay in that condition. I refuse to take part in the destructiveness of your fantasies. I did that in my own life before I decided to get the help that I needed and continue to receive daily. It doesn't really matter how many degrees, or how much experience a person has, **no one can help you if you are not willing to help yourself!** You do that first by acknowledging your sickness, then doing something about it or at least making a sincere effort to get the help that you need.

I am really bothered that so many of my peers spend so much time and energy talking about what the administration is doing and not doing. Why not focus on the bad things that we do to each other; such as, the way that we disrespect each other, the way that we lie to each other, how easy it is for us to fight each other, how we undermine each other, cut each other, stab each other, use each other against each other, how we talk bad about each other, how we jump each other, **etc. etc. etc.** each other.

As for **some** of my peers that are older, you simply need to act your age. You are a bad example for the youth. Your mouth is filthy, your pants hang off your butt to indicate that you are still down with today's culture, and you have a serious identity problem. You are old enough to be some of the young men's father, but you act more like their little brother, in-fact **some of these youth act more mature than you!**

As for my younger peers you have absolutely no business being around these old fools. If you are around an old timer and he is not teaching you how to be a man, leave him alone because you are wasting your time. I do however **blame some** of you young men when you find it funny to see an old guy acting other than his age.

**Some** of you young people think that you know everything, but if you live long enough you will realize that you really know very little. When I look at you I see myself at different stages of my life. I remember when I was a teenager growing into my twenties. No one could tell me anything; especially an older person, because I already knew everything. When I got older I realized that **the only thing I really knew was everything about nothing!** When someone older than you is talking, let them finish. You will have your turn to talk; besides you might learn something. Just because you listen does not mean that you agree with everything that they are saying, but more importantly, no matter who is talking, **pay attention to details and do the numbers, so that no one can use you!!!**

When I look at **some** of you young men today all I can see is death. I am afraid for you, but **not of you.** I am afraid for you because you are too blind to be afraid for yourself. I am not afraid of you because I am a part of you and I love you. Too many of you are dying all over the world and that include some of you in prison. Unfortunately, a large percentage of you are dying at the hands of each other. You kill each other over a color, a name, a basketball game, money, a disagreement, territories that don't belong to either of you, **or anything else that you feel like killing for!**

Here is an idea, why don't you kill that hatred of self within you. Turn all of that negative energy into saving each other by working together to build the future because that is what you are. Since the beginning of time every generation has always wanted the best for the next generation. I don't think that your generation is any different because I communicate with your generation when I deal with my children, nieces, nephews, and you. In addition to this, if you refuse to make the necessary changes that need to be made in your life you can believe that someone else will. Those changes will not be in your best interest, nor will you have any input because it will be too late. I am not telling you this because I read it from a book or someone told me. I am telling you this because I have been through this myself and it is one of the contributing factors of why I am in prison.

You might be saying to yourself, why am I talking more about the youth than my older peers. The elders should be more responsible, and you would unfortunately be right. Nevertheless my main concern is to pass on the experiences I have learned from my elders so that you could use what is beneficial, at the same time not repeating the same mistakes the generations before you made.

I close sincerely hoping that this document is beneficial.

*Sincerely*

*Harold Capers #00A1322*

*Basheer*

*(2017)*