

Dear Reader (5)

It's May 31, 2020. It's also 12:44 AM and I'm sitting here on my bunk watching the riots throughout the country for George Floyd, another black man lynched in the middle of the street by the police. To the correctional officer who walks pass my cell door every half hour, I may look calm. Am I? No! Well, what am I, frustrated, angry? No! Just beneath this seemingly calm demeanor is a seething rage. I feel rage from watching Mr. Floyd take his last breath on every news program. Though Mr. Floyd is no longer with us, he has the voice of tens of thousands of people throughout the country, shouting for justice on his behalf. This rage adds to the rage that I've felt for 17 years. Who's voice do I have? Who's voice is shouting for the 2.8 million people living behind steel fences topped with razor wire? Us who are living in these one-hundred thousand dollar torture chambers 23 hours a day. Who's voice is shouting for us living, existing, surviving in a concrete box day by day? I committed a crime, but am I not human? Do I not deserve to be treated humanely? I've been tortured physically, and still am psychologically, but still I have compassion in my heart for others. Yet I'm shown no compassion. I want to be reformed. I want to learn how to live a normal life in society. I want treatment for my serious mental illness (SMI). The more I ask for treatment, the more I'm denied. Who understands what I go through, or who can even begin to relate to my reality. My reality is living in this cell alone, but seeing people in here that I know don't exist. My reality is hearing people talk to me that I know aren't there. My reality is screaming because the years of rage in me feels like an electric shock. My reality is taking hundreds of milligrams of psychiatric medication a day that does not work. These are just some of the reasons that I not only question my sanity but also the sanity of those who "supposedly" are treating

Me. Who do I turn to when there's no one who understands, or can relate? In other words; who do I turn to when there's no one to turn to? I try to look inside myself for an answer, but only end up with more questions that I have no answers to. Meaningful programs are few and offered to a select few. The same with education. How do the courts and state government expect us to stay out of prison - that's if we get out - without these services to aid in our rehabilitation? How can we be expected to find a job without programs to teach work skills, or fill out an application? This is why I am filled with rage. Wouldn't you be if you lived under my circumstances? Wouldn't you feel rage if your every day existence was spent 23 hours a day in a space the size of a parking space? These are just some of the reasons I feel rage. My voice is not loud enough to shout for the 2.8 million people in the U.S. prison system. Do I feel rage? Yes. Do I have a right to feel this rage? Yes... No... Maybe? Another unanswered question...

Tracy L. Skinner  
North Branch