

We are surrounded by traumatic events but seldom feel the power of their loss until personally experienced. You see this all the time when famous people lose a parent, spouse, or child. Their trauma gets broadcast for the world to see along with their new mission to fight said malady. Can one individual make a difference?

I live in the Texas prison system where we are not paid for work. There are three main things prisoners fear: When the chaplain sends for you out of the blue to fulfill his duty as the messenger of death, the wife disappearing, and losing the front teeth. I don't hear much about growing old and dying in prison. Many are ready to die and go to the heaven Jesus promises them.

One morning a few months ago I got up fast like I usually do and became very dizzy. I stayed dizzy even while sitting on the toilet doing part of my morning routine. I had to get up so I could throw up in the toilet like I had just ridden a spinning carnival ride. I stayed dizzy all day and slept it off and was reminded of the time I had binge drunk and my mother was trying to pull the sheets off the bed because I threw up in them. The unit doctor's medical advice? "I haven't jumped out of bed since 1974." Thanks for that. The Merck manual had a chapter on vertigo and I did the Epley method to get the ear crystals back in their proper place. I felt better but not dizzy until the day I hit my shin on a metal bench. Everything is metal and concrete in prison and everyone is always bumping something. A few seconds after hitting my shin I felt very dizzy and leaned onto the sink to wait it out. No big deal. I woke up on the floor with my friend's arms around me calling my name over and over. I was coherent

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but things were a bit spacey. I had also hit my face on the sink on my way down and broke my front tooth at a sharp angle like Jim Carrey in Dumb and Dumber. My friends thought something was very wrong with me but it was my tooth that vied for my attention. The worst had happened to me and I instantly knew all the problems I would have dealing with medical from seeing all the people around me deal with their own issues. Until this moment, I was apart of the rare club of having all of my white, plaque-free teeth.

At the dentist she said it was an easy fix but due to COVID restrictions she couldn't fix it and I would have to wait. I waited while raising hell and trying to get an exception (All the dental Dept. had to do was deem it an emergency). I was COVID-19 negative and had three tests confirming as much. Also we were talking about my broken tooth! If I fell and broke my arm would I still have to wait? So I waited in pain. I argued with dental. My mom argued with whomever would answer the phone. 3 Three weeks went by while the slightest touch to my tooth sent the kind of pain that makes you stop and take some breaths. Yesterday I was able to get past the gate guardian and speak to the dentist. She seemed confused about me being in pain when I eat or brush or when my jaw touches while I sleep until I wiggled my tooth for her. X-rays. The before and after images. Check depth at gum line. Wiggled my tooth for me while I watched in the mirror. Conclusion: Jaw bone receded 8mm, tooth cracked in three pieces, and into root (which causes bone to recede), Unrecoverable. She spent a lot of time with me while letting it emotionally sink in. When we talked I was able to finish her thoughts because they were obvious and more delay would only cause more bone loss.

My implant future would shrink and shrink. "Do you want me to remove your tooth?" No, I don't want you to remove my tooth, but you are going to."

Two days ago I was one of the few with all my teeth and I stood alone in my gum and teeth/health. One time I waited three years to see the hygienist. Before I saw her I had to pass a plaque test. She gave me some pink liquid to swish around and it sticks to plaque. Too much pink and no cleaning. She put me down as a zero and you should have seen her eyes when she saw how pink free I was. When I asked the hygienist, she said I could come in every three years.

Yesterday I lost my front tooth and there is no plan on their part to replace it. The dentist said it had to be a "medical necessity" and vanity didn't count(I asked).

The powers that be consider teeth cosmetic and here I thought they were for chewing food. Do you know what happens when one goes missing? Bone loss in that area from no pressure, the teeth shifting and getting loose in the adjacent area due to the bone loss, occlusion(the opposite teeth begin to raise).

So now this is my fight. If I thought I should look like a girl the state would give me hormones and a bra. Well, I think I should have my smile back and be able to say depth the normal way. Say it with me. Depth. Depth. See how the front teeth are used? Without one air pushes through the hole and makes it lippy. Fucking great.

The worst has happened to me and I will broadcast it to the world what is going on in here. The teeth-missing people have accepted their situation and now that I am a member I will

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be the rare voice speaking out. I am not famous but I am persistent.
Maybe I can do some good. Maybe my trauma will end up helping
all those aorund me get some teeth like the guy who had neck
cancer and they removed all of his teeth because of the treatment.
Three years lkater he is still gumming all his food while on
a liquid diet the kitchen doesn't make. Maybe someone will realize
when their state doesn't care neither do the inmates and decide
to make changes to lower the recidivism rate. Would you rather
want your neighbor to come from a Nordic-style prison where they
are treated as citizens during his incarceration or someone from
a prison where he was locked up like an animal in a box for 10
years?

We are surrounded by traumatic events but seldom feel the
power of their loss. Maybe a Senator's son will come here and
lose his tooth and the Senator will see the power of his cost-
reducation policies in the face of his son.