

January 18, 2012

Hello World!

Sick! No, I'm not referring to the latest X-Games' trick, though I must say they are defying every law of physics I ever studied. Ha Ha Vomit. Diarrhea. Norovirus. A prison 'stank'n' of bodies turned inside out -- that kind of sick. QUARANTINE -- Lockdown.

In the last 25 years of doing time I have watched with fascination the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations response to 'outbreak' change dramatically. It went from no response where a sick inmate lived or died based on the strength of his immune system to triages commandeering classrooms where infected inmates are monitored, hydrated, and their condition followed up on. A huge difference that saves lives. I applaud the change. It is just sad that these changes came as a result of inmate corpses staked like cord wood.

The biggest hurdle to change has not been the lack of funding or doctors who cannot speak English or who have lost their licenses in other states due to ineptitude and have found haven within the prison system. Nope. The biggest hurdle is culture and I'm not talking about the germs growing in a Petri dish. It's the culture of hate. The perception that inmates are subhuman, scum, deserving of the suffering they are afflicted with. Okay, I admit it is hard to care for a robber, rapist, molester, or murderer. The challenge before us is to separate the crime from the criminal, the sin from the sinner and to treat the person in a manner that reflects how we want them to treat others. Does the term 'Role Model' come to mind? Acknowledging that 97% of all incarcerated men and women will eventually be released, what is the lesson society wants prison staff to instill? That prison sucks? Yes. That harming others is wrong? Hmm..? Where is the role model for that? It certainly is not being shown in the way inmates are treated.

It is true that many inmates require a firm hand in their management. I'm 100% for safety and security. My question is: Can prison staff be taught to separate the crime from the criminal? In my heart I know they can as throughout my incarceration I have been blessed to have met more than a few, but they are the minority.

A group can be called a club or a gang. Their purpose can be to uplift and serve or intimidate and destroy. What kind of group does society want the men and women who make up the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to be?

Think of your role models. Did he or she lift you up, expecting much or did he or she abuse you?

The quarantine lasted five days. No one died. I am grateful for the progress in spite of the hurdle.

Thanks for checking in on me. I am alive and well.

Cordially,



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Novel: A Thundering Wind (Amazon.com)