

Things My Mother Taught Me

by Jeremy Pinson

When a child becomes an adult it becomes clear at some point just how their parents influenced who they are. In my case it was my mother who influenced my personality and beliefs because my father was totally absent.

First I must explain my mother. I have been told she was wild, sociable and fun in her youth. This is not the woman I knew. The woman I knew was an introvert, antisocial, cynical and easily defeated. Growing up I never understood why my mother hated the rest of the world so much and to this day I do not understand why she gives up so easily.

When some men come to prison their families battle any and every obstacle to reach their sons. But not my mother. When bureaucrats told my mother she couldn't visit she stopped trying. She didn't call their superiors to complain, she didn't seek the intervention of Senators or Congressmen like so many families do. She simply gave up. And every year she sent a birthday card until one year she tried to send an electronic card which the prison rejected. Did she just buy a regular card the next year? No. She stopped sending cards altogether.

Most inmates receive letters from ~~the~~ family every week. My mother stopped writing me after the first year. Claimed it was too difficult. I could go on forever in this vein but ultimately her behavior has never changed. She has always given up at the first whiff of hardship with no regard whatsoever for the deep pain her laziness, indifference and cowardice would cause others.

In many ways my rebellious nature which brought me to prison stemmed from my desire to never be like her. Where she waffled I would be decisive. Where she surrendered I would resist. Where she cried I would scream. The problem was I became too rebellious and never knew when to give in. Thus prison found me.

I started out in a low security prison where fist fights were a rare and serious event. Where other inmates accepted staff mandates, I questioned and challenged them every directive. I was such a pain in the ass I soon found myself in my state's most secure prison. Eventually the state conferred with the feds and the federal government indicted me, took custody and hit me with multiple statutory maximum sentences to be served consecutively.

But did I buckle under the weight of the federal government? No - I became their problem. When they

did something wrong I said. When they tried to use inmates to bully me I learned martial arts and became the walking personification of death wielding extreme violence at the drop of a hat. The feds soon found themselves hip deep in riots, food strikes and organized rebellion all at my hand.

It wasn't until I turned 25 and was en route to ADX, the infamous "Guantanamo of the Rockies", that I realized I had become an infamous pain in the ass, the consigliere to the most violent prison gang in America the Mexican Mafia, and elected President of the Federal Prisoner Union all because I didn't want to be like my mother. And yet the only person on this earth whom I love and miss the most is her. Freud would be quite amused.

My mother taught me to fight hard, love hard, and to be exceptional though she never intended to. Prison experiences taught me wisdom, patience and to temper myself where necessary. One day when I am free I will fight for peace, an end to poverty, reform of a cruel and unjust criminal justice system. My remaining years will be dedicated to social justice. I will change what I can even as I accept that some like my mother will never change. Though she may never realize or appreciate the fact, she is the influence that molded my tumultuous life. Even as I resent her I also thank her. Like I said, Freud would be amused.