

1/3

The holidays have passed And the New Years begun. Holidays can be the worst time of year in prison if you're unable to process the contrast.

My mind is full of such beautiful memories surrounding the holidays. Memories that here and hopefully always will comfort me.

Even as the reality of this cage hunts me memories embrace me.

The contrast between the two almost crippled me at one time. The holidays began to feel like a nightmare. I started telling my family not to send me cards & greetings. Telling them the reason being was belief. Saying I do not believe in the pagan/christian/capitalist traditions. This went over well & and in all truth that statement about belief is righteous. But

like most people who grow up with traditions they later realize begin for reasons unrelated, I'm able to see deeper than the history book. The holidays matter to me and I believe in them for the same reasons most everybody does.

Family, friends, togetherness, food, joy, love, the magic of children, imagination.

Now thankfully I've learned to deal with the contrast of these two worlds, the world of family, friends & freedom ~~and~~ the other of cages, chains & concrete.

But to say it's not a struggle would be a story - ^(unlike) it's never easy. Before coming here to the ADX Florence I was housed on death row for three years. It was there that the contrast almost crippled me. I was 22 years old half dead after being beaten by the guards with night sticks. They had reason I guess, it's not like they just up and beat me. Nothing like that. I had broken out of my recreation cage and stabbed three other guards, back up arrived and the beating began - anyway that's for another time - in the cell on death row the contrast of memory & reality was overwhelming. The guards told me I would die there. After a few months I believed it. In that time I had already witness'd death, once was when a man was taken to be executed, another was when a man hung himself and was removed from his cell in a body bag. Also the conversations I over heard by the

2/3

guys on death row, where to say the least, sickeningly deadly. The warmth of my memory could not thaw this icy reality.

I would wonder are these memories real? Did I make all of this up?

Religion became a big issue to me. My mind was swimming in horror. I needed a way to stay above water, so religion became my life raft.

Growing up exposed only to Christianity, having always read the bible from time to time feeling everytime confused, scared & angry, I knew I did not believe in it, but I felt I needed to believe in something, so I began to study and read any religious book I could get. A lot of eastern things like the Bhagavad Gita & a lot of books on meditation & yoga practices. Mainly though I needed routine and it seemed at the time that Islam offered it. I read the Quran and any other books I could get concerning Islam. I studied Hadith, Arabic and worked on memorization. I began telling myself I believed. Even as my mind screamed with doubt. I wanted it all to be real, because it was saving my life. I carried myself like a real fanatic.

I was able to make it through the holidays with out so much pain by telling myself they are of the disbelievers. For a while the mind can mask doubt by walling it in, but over time it breaks free. This happened to me, my doubts won out, my questions needed real answers, answers with no doubts. It was around the holidays and I'd been battling with questions, spending a lot of time thinking about the nature of man. Why it is we create all the explanations we do to explain things that don't even need explaining. There are so many religions that claim to have the only truth. To be the true answer. So many versions to every story.

It just all seemed to become clear to me, the answer was within myself the whole time. I'm now able to see past all the religious questions. I just in my heart feel in the end it is a tool people use to feel together, to feel like they belong. I have that already in my heart I don't need to find it in a book. So now

When the holidays come I smile as I'm flooded with the warmth of childhood memories. My family is my belonging, my humanity and yes the traditions of my youth - I feel an age old sense of belonging. The contrast is still painful, but now I am able to deal with it in a more realistic way.

I guess that's about it for now just wanted to post something for the new year. I was waiting to receive confirmation that my blog was up and running before I started posting weekly. Now that it's up I'll be doing that.

My next post I'll give a little more of my story.

Until then ☺

Remaining

Jesse

Comment Reply -

What it do Voil12!? Thanks for the welcome ☺ and the encouragement. Truly means a lot - straight up!