

July 28, 2013

Hello World!

Sad news. Out of 120,000+ inmates within the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Governor Jerry Brown said he could find only 1,200 who he would feel comfortable releasing. This was in response to a 3-Judge Federal Court Order requiring the Governor to reduce the inmate population by 10,000.

It's sad because I am not one of the 1,200, or at least I assume I am not, because staff have not come to my pod door to tell me to pack my bag. I do not believe my 27 years of being disciplinary free was overlooked. Neither overlooked were my successful completion of numerous self-help groups, the obtaining of current marketable job skills, nor my tireless work to bring a measure of peace to the lives of my victim's family. No. I, along with thousands of other inmates are purposely overlooked because of our title: murderer. Now that's frick'n scary.

However, it is also inaccurate. True. I was convicted of the horrendous act, but unlike a carpenter, I do not engage in it every day. By using this noun to label me, it does a disservice to the concept of rehabilitation. It ignores

2

my ability and desire for change. I will never shed the weight of responsibility for my act that caused so much pain, but to label me as such blinds the user from seeing success.

What is the goal of placing a man in prison? If it is only for punishment, then read my book *A Year in a Life Sentence*. Congratulations - you win! If prison is to bring about change, then rejoice when a man's eyes and heart are opened to betterment.

The Governor speaks of releasing only inmates who are least likely to re-offend. I agree and laud his desire. However, it confuses me because the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation uses the California Risk Assessment Score to determine an inmate's risk of recidivism. My score is a 1, the lowest, least likely to re-offend. I am surrounded by hundreds of inmates who are also a 1. Could it be that all 1,200 inmates who the Governor was referring to are housed here in Valley State Prison? Doubtful. The majority are murderers.

Does this discourage me? No. I will continue to contribute when possible. I will always reflect on the choices offered

3

to me so that my decision will do no harm
and I will be grateful for each opportunity
to create a new label for myself - a citizen
of the world.

Thanks for checking in on me.

Cordially,

Gregory Barnes Watson

Gregory Barnes Watson

D-67547 VSP B3-15-20

PO Box 92

Chowchilla CA 93610

gregorybarneswatson@gmail.com

Novel: A Thundering Wind

Journal: A Year in a Life Sentence

(Amazon.com)