

SUICIDE IN SOUTH AFRICAN PRISON

Hello,

This is my first BLOG. I have been locked up for thirty years now so i am not really up on what I am supposed to write or how. Yea, you will have to give me some time to figure things out. I wanted to write today, now for my first time about something, NO, "Someone" I lost to suicide as well as the subject of suicide from the perspective of someone in prison.

You see, i lost the most amazing person i had ever met in my life. some people think that because a person is in prison it is impossible to really get to know them and of course there are all the B.S. stereo types. I can't and wouldn't try to change their minds. it is a lost cause. I can tell you that it is very possible to not only get to know someone through letters but it is easy to love and care for that person. I met this amazing woman who was in a prison in South Africa. Her name was Wendy. her crime does not matter. Wendy was an amazing friend. Wendy was one of the smartest, most amazing people i have ever met. through the years I have written a number of people but none can compare to this woman. My friend.

I call her strong because we as Americans tend to think of strong as doing things with our bodies. I learned from Wendy that these beliefs are wrong. Wendy was a white woman in a South African prison. sadly, ~~the~~ race is a huge deal over there. Sadly, things are very dangerous over there for most women. When Wendy was arrested she was beaten and raped so many times she doesn't really remember much. I thank god for that small blessing.

This is "NOT" about the rapes done in South Africa now days. Sadly, that is just part of every day life for women there. This is about how an amazing woman who over came such brutality only to lose her battle with depression. Wendy also lost her two little girls. such smart, beautiful and amazing little girls. For Wendy each day was a battle to find a reason to live. You see, in prison it is cold and lonely for those in America. I become so lost in my depression and sadness at times that i feel sorry for myself. I find ways to keep going. I find reasons to "Not give up". Then i read about Wendy's life and i feel guilty for crying. I feel guilty for complaining.

You see, Wendy did not "Complain". Wendy just told it like it was. I complained about it being hot in my cell and she told me how she froze in the winter because she wouldn't give the guy who fixes the windows a blow job. I complained about the food and how bad it is and then she told me how most of her meals were soups with chicken "parts" as the meat. Yes, "Parts", such as feet, necks and so forth. All the good parts taken by the officer or guards. When she didn't have someone to bring her food she lived off the bread they gave her. Again, not a complaint, just how it was.

It was not all bad for her. They have a school set up there by Nuns i believe. She had a friend donate a computer and she took courses ON-LINE. She worked so hard and was so proud of herself because she finally finished college and was to get her diploma. The darkness took her the day before she was to be given her Diploma.

She had plans. She had someone who was helping her and paying for her college courses. Someone who was willing to pay for her to get her Masters and then possibly her Doctorate. She was willing and very able to do it all. She was amazing. But each day the darkness was right there, threatening to take her. Now i feel guilty because i told her i understood. I do. I feel guilty for understanding why even now while I cry over the loss of my friend. I feel guilty because i told her how i get up each day and have to find a reason to "Not give up". I "knew" she was a woman who was at risk of ending it all and yet i was honest with her because that was our "Deal". To always be honest, no matter what. I feel guilty because I had started to feel like "I" was reason enough for her to not give up. I thought so much of myself that i forgot how much she missed her little girls. I forgot how fragile this strong and amazing woman really was. Now she is gone and the world is a much darker place without her.

I feel mad because our letters took forever to get back and forth. Her father passed away and before i could respond after finding out it was already too late. Ironically the mail getting to "Her" in a South African prison took less time then it than it takes an american prison to get mail to me! Yea, think about this! I would mail her a letter and it took ten to fourteen days to get to her. When she wrote me because the prison has "Cut back on staff" it takes about a month to get to me! Yea, imagine that!

Sorry, still upset about that! Wendy's Dad passed away and it was just too much for her. She took her own life. Her note said she missed her children and to tell me she loved me very much.

I feel guilty because I couldn't do anything to keep her going. I feel guilty for not being able to give her more reasons to live. I feel guilty because i understand why she did it. I feel guilty for not being mad at her. I feel guilty for telling her i have thought of it more times than i can count over the last thirty years. I feel guilty for not explaining that for "ME" I hate giving up on anything and never want her to. I feel guilty because she was amazing and the world is a much darker place without her. I miss my friend but now she is with her children.

Suicide in prison is a reality that most people don't understand or want to understand. I am "NOT" suicidal. Do I think about it? YES. Almost every day I get up and I have to find a reason to "Not give up". That is "Life in Prison". Anyone who has been in prison for many years has not only thought of it they have seriously considered it. Prison is a cold and lonely place. Prison officials consider us animals, no, below animals and treat us accordingly. That is not just bitterness speaking but a statement of fact. Ask any prison officer who they would save in a fire, an inmate or their dog and their dog will win each time. Dogs are treated better and fed better than inmates in prison and it is considered "Normal". With the drums beating and screaming "They are animals and deserve nothing but time and punishment" it is considered "WEAK" to say anything else. I would love to blame them all for suicide but I can't.

See, it is not their fault. It is the "Time" and the reality of life in prison that drives those thoughts into our minds and very souls. It is the loss of our loved ones. The loss of friends and family as the years tick by. It is the years of going without. So many believe that because we are in prison the system takes care of us. YEA RIGHT!!! We are given the bare minimum. Just enough to survive and get by. Without help from outside our lives are lived in a way you can not truly comprehend or grasp. Prison Officials give us enough to live on and get by but is that life? not really. I have been blessed with a few friends who cared for me and love me which is why i can type this right now. But life is hard for them too so they do what they can.

The reality is all of us that have done long periods of time in prison have felt the "time" pass us by. We have sat or paced in our cells with nothing and nothing to look forward to but more chaos and madness and violence. SO each day, we rise and we try to find a reason to "Keep going". We try to find a reason to "Not give up". It is so easy to think "someone is sitting in a cell with nothing" but to live it, to feel it each and every day for years at a time is to have your heart and soul stolen from you little by little.

I think of Wendy and i cry. I think of Wendy and I understand "WHY" she did it. I think of Wendy and I "KNOW" the world is worse off with her loss. I think of Wendy and I think of "Suicide" and how when an inmate commits suicide it is just another "statistic". One more who we don't have to take care of anymore. I wish I could take care of Wendy. She lived a life full of pain and suffering. She was abused her "Whole life" and now she is gone. I think of Wendy and I know suicide is wrong and yet, I still understand. Good Bye Wendy, may you find happiness with your little girls. You will never be forgotten.