

Blog #8

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"Disrespect"

My cellmate was recently attacked four times within six days. Each time, he was knocked to the ground, once suffering a bloody nose that poured for nearly an hour, and once he was beaten unconscious. He also either broke or sprained his wrist in one assault, but he's not sure what's wrong because he's afraid to ask for medical help. He doesn't want to be labelled a "rat" and suffer a new round of beatings. What he's endured is nothing less than terrorism. After each incident, he's been told "it's over now", and each time, his attackers-cum-reassurers have proven to be either liars or simply incompetent. Almost certainly it's a lot of both.

Forgive me my disgust, but it's been very hard to stand by as this poor guy, a genuinely nice and gentle person, has come back to the cell beaten, bloodied, and psychologically dismantled. I nearly cried the last time, the one with all the blood, when he stepped through the door and said in a pitiable half-whine, "Do you see what they did to me!?" I saw. Blood still dripped from his nose and mouth (the building control officer callously ignored his request to come inside a few minutes early), and his bright-white shoes and shirt were spattered crimson. His glasses sat crookedly on his cut nose. It hurt to look.

Only one of the attacks happened near me, and I was powerless to stop it. I moved toward them the second I heard the shocked yelp from my cellmate (who thought being knocked unconscious two days earlier had been the end of it), but three of the attacker's "homeboys" — i.e. gang-affiliated trash acquaintances — immediately blocked me, saying "What? What do you wanna do?", clearly ready to jump on me, too. The 2-punch attack was over, though, so my terrible choice was easier to make. I backed away. Not a proud moment, but likely the best move for both of us. At least that's what I tell myself when the shame won't leave me alone.

A month has passed since that week of hell, and it does seem to be over now. I do all I can to help him, but I have almost zero social capital in here, myself. Still,

I can't just leave my cellmate to fend for himself. He's needed an advocate, and more, and I've been in his shoes before. I have a moral duty to help as I can. I collected as much of "the story" as I could (not easy, since nearly all prisoners are extreme liars and self-aggrandizing exaggerators), and I spoke ~~with~~ ^{with the people} I thought could end it. I also told the opportunistic vultures to stuff their insincere, exploitative offers of "protection", and made it clear that no one would "run up in the cell" to "take his shit", as some rumormongers claimed was likely, without a fight from me. I'm no big guy or bad-ass, and I'm not well-liked here at all, but in my 3 miserable years here, at least word has gotten around that I do hit back. I pick things up for him now, too, from toilet paper to food, just so he won't be targeted and robbed. All of this adds to my already significant risk, but if I don't help him, who will? I don't mean to pat myself on the back or anything, I just needed to vent a little.

This all began because some typically paranoid, hypersensitive Prisonese asshole got it into his broken brain that my cellmate had somehow "disrespected" him in the visiting room. He never mentioned it to my cellmate, never tried to clear up any possible misunderstandings, because people like him are incapable of believing they could ever misunderstand anything. Instead, he just had his scumbag buddy lure an unsuspecting, naive guy into a corner and knock him out cold with no warning. Somehow that passes for honor among these cretins. Others then took their own cheapshots, realizing he either wouldn't or couldn't fight back, and no one once ~~asked~~ ^{questioned} what justified all this, because no one ever really cared. It was an opportunity to beat up on a "child molester," so they took it. Who would care about piled-on, gratuitous viciousness toward a "weirdo," anyway?

So, what part of these turds' actions even begins to reflect their supposed value of "respect"? Nothing, obviously, but this is the mind of the Homo Correctus animal in the bizarro-world where I wake up each day. It attacks my best ideas about human nature and potential, and my optimism and anarchism, too, yet I know, intellectually, that this Prisonese race, these depraved incarcerated creatures, are just pitiful victims of the sick society and structure that molded them. Still, it's very hard to overcome my revulsion and contempt for these warped products of our toxic, ~~consumerist~~ ^{consumerist}, authoritarian culture. It's not fair of me, and like my cowardice, it's another shameful part of my character I have to acknowledge and try to tame. I guess we all have flaws to keep us humble... and to work on.

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