

Prisonland (Thanks to BTB Readers)

This is to everyone who takes the time to read posts from prisoners. Some might say a blog like this proves prisoners aren't voiceless, but what's a voice that no one hears? A "voice" only has meaning insofar as someone else can or will listen to it, and the bottom line for prisoners is that no one in the real world has to listen to us. In fact, anyone who wants to hear a prisoner has to put in real effort... you have to agree to come visit us, or to take our phone calls (and usually pay for them, too), or log onto an obscure website to see our lifeless, static words to no one in particular. You have to choose to read the letters prisoners send, if you even get them in the first place. And unlike in the real world, there's no social penalty for refusing to give prisoners permission to talk to you. Folks in the real world with once-upon-a-time friends in Prisonland (or once-upon-a-time family) can, and often do, just ignore them, as if they never existed. And if they never accept the calls or reply to the letters... so what? It's not like the ignored prisoner, no matter how close you once were to each other, can even leave a voicemail, let alone swing by the house later, and there's no chance of some awkward run-in at McDonalds either, where you can't just avoid someone entirely and might have to face seeing their frustration, disappointment, or plain disbelief at what an ass you've been to them. Knowing someone in prison is almost like a free pass to treat another human being as meaningless, disregarding their humanity in ways you'd never imagine if they lived outside a cage.

People in the real world often tell themselves and each other that they're just "moving on" when they try to erase an imprisoned friend or loved one from their lives, but the "lost" people in the cages face a very different reality; sitting with a dead phone in their hands and unacknowledged letters in the mail, wondering; why won't sis talk to me? Or Dad? Or my best friends, people who kept my phone ringing at all hours of the day before this happened?

Prisoners feel the rejections completely, even when the people rejecting them are

able to convince themselves that that's not what they're doing. And sure, some people may have what feel like good reasons for rejecting someone in Prisonland... but don't you think people also deserve at least a little explanation of those reasons before they are cut off... and maybe even a chance to respond to them, or at least to say goodbye? This is what makes prisoners effectively voiceless, the inability to communicate with a world that just doesn't have to listen anymore.

So, to everyone who reads these blogs... THANK YOU! Thanks for letting our voices be good for something besides talking to ourselves. Please remember, though, if you don't leave a comment, even just one word like "Hello", most of us still have no way of knowing that anyone ever saw a single word we wrote. This website does send us a paper copy of even the shortest comments, though, and while I can't speak for anyone else, I know that whenever any of you are kind enough to leave a comment, it's a HUGE morale boost and motivator to keep going, with this blog and everything else. A lot of us feel so alone and forgotten, like we've literally disappeared... after all, who could tell the difference? So yeah, thanks for reading, for transcribing, and above all, for commenting even one word, because that's the only way ~~we~~ we can know that YOU know we're still here. Take care, everybody. 😊

* Three quotes below that I thought seemed appropriate. I'd love to hear your thoughts on them, or at least info about who originally said them.

"Moving on isn't just a distraction; it's a rebuke." —??

"What is joy, if it goes unrecorded? And what is love, if it is not shared?" —??

"Imprisonment is like amputation; you typically survive, but there's less of you."

— My paraphrasing of Margaret Atwood, who was originally speaking about divorce.