

IT'S NOT RACISM. IT'S SOMETHING FAR WORSE.

Wednesday
April 26, 2016

What follows is a copy of a letter I recently submitted to one of the newsletters routinely delivered to my facility. After sending it in, I was asked by another blog for permission to use it on their website. However, since it's my opinion that they're out to profit off of inmate's writings, while offering the author nothing for his submission, I chose not to provide my consent to publish it, choosing instead to have it posted here. As always, this is just an opinion piece, but one I thought people should give some serious thought to. That said...

In the March/February 2016 issue, there was a letter on page 3 in which the author constantly referred to America as "Amerikka," by which I assume (s)he meant AmeriKKKa. Regardless as to the spelling, the intent was clear, made even more so by continued references to various racist agendas of a certain billionaire with political aspirations and the BlackLivesMatter hashtag. That said, I normally ignore such jibes, knowing that they're not directed towards me, but are instead meant for a select group of individuals who choose prejudice over honor, discrimination over integrity, and racism over justice. However, I, like everyone else in this world, have a tipping point, and while this letter certainly wasn't the most outrageous, or even accusatory letter I've ever read, this letter, combined with everything else I've seen, read and/or heard, made me finally decide to speak up and clarify a few issues.

First and foremost, contrary to popular opinion, the issue with black men being abused or even killed by police officers has virtually nothing to do with race, as anyone with an open mind can see if they only take a look at their facts. Instead, the problem is with a system rife with corruption and completely lacking in any meaningful system of checks and balances. Or, to put it another way, and as was said in a comic book turned into a movie, "power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely." Those of us in prison know this to be true because, black or white, gay or straight, male or female, we've all been the victim of corruption at the hands of a corrupt penal system. On any given day in any given penal facility, you can find dozens of guards abusing their power over their inmate wards, and when that convict speaks up, the real abuse begins. I'm not saying that issues like race, sexual orientation or even religion haven't ever played a role in our harassment, because, quite honestly, there are indeed officers who have problems with these issues, usually because of their own inadequacies. However, we all know this was an afterthought, a pretext for the real problem, which is an officer with absolutely no self control, corrupt to the bone and free to do what (s)he pleases knowing that their fellow officers are going to back their play, no matter what.

In the outside world, corruption in law enforcement is all but ignored, unless of course, it happens to involve a white officer shooting a black man, in which case mainstream media rushes to put a racist slant on it, regardless as to the circumstances which led to him being shot in the first place. Part of this is that, in their desire to get the scoop on everyone else, they neglect gathering and confirming all of the facts before filing their story, and by the time the rest of the story comes out, it's too late. The public is so inflamed that there's nothing anyone can say or do to change the path they've already embarked upon. The other reason, of course, is all about ratings, which is usually determined by two factors: (s)he who reports the story first, and (s)he who can report it in the most sensational manner.

None of this is to say that racism doesn't exist, because it does, but that doesn't mean that every time a black man's shot by a white cop it was because the white cop was racist. At the end of the day, the simple fact of the matter is that cops, like the rest of us, are human, and as human beings, they're subject to the same type of corruption as the rest of us, particularly when the checks and balances aren't working properly, and nowhere is that more apparent than the judicial system.

So the next time you refer to America, do us all a favor. Don't say AmeriKKKa because doing so isn't fair to our country as a whole, nor the millions of people who live in it who aren't racist. Furthermore, doing so only serves to further divide us as a society, and as prisoners, we all know what this equate to: divide and conquer. So long as the powers that be can keep us at each others' throats, they win. We're so busy fighting amongst ourselves that we can't even see the real monster, let alone put up any real fight, and when someone does unmask that monster for who and what he is, he's quickly silenced by the roar of the crowd bickering over ghost issues.

For those of you who continue arguing that our prison system is nothing but a POW camp for victims of a racial war, while this might have been true at one point-in-time, the truth of the matter is much more sinister. Our country has long since recognized the benefits of slave labor, which is why our constitution did not, as we were told in school, outlaw slavery. Instead, it defined the terms and conditions under which slavery would be allowed to exist within the boundaries of America. Specifically, the 13th Amendment authorizes slavery for any person convicted of a crime. Over time, this race war has transformed into a class war, one in which the ultra rich are going out of their way to incarcerate the poor. As a result, it behooves them to continue to keep the poor isolated from the rest of society. Keep them in the ghettos where they can't cause distractions to the rich, where they can't muddy up the neighborhoods of the rich, and more importantly, where any criminal activity will only bring harm to themselves. Best of all, with all the poor living together, it's so much easier for the cops to round everyone up from time to time on various charges and ship them off to slave camps, or "prisons," if you're trying to be politically correct. And best of all, by isolating the poor from the rich, there's less of a chance that the rich get caught up in today's legalized slave trade.

Still not convinced? Then perhaps you should take a look around and start asking questions. Begin by finding out what products your prison manufactures, where they're shipped off to, how much it costs to manufacture them and what they're being sold for. Then, ask yourself why a company outside of a prison system can do the exact same thing, sometimes for less, and still manage to pay its workers a fair wage. So tell me, why aren't we being paid a fair wage? Is it because this is a part of our punishment? Or is it because this is being done in an attempt to ensure our speedy return after being released into an increasingly expensive society with an ever decreasing amount of money. Guys in California are released with \$200, out of which they're expected to pay for their bus fare and the clothes they're going to wear off the prison grounds, and somehow, they're expected to survive off of what's left until they get their first check. It simply isn't possible, which is probably why so many return to serve as slaves, rather than living as our own masters.

While there's certainly no denying that some law enforcement officers are racist, the truth of the matter is a complete lack of checks and balances, which means that the corrupt only continue to become more corrupt, but when you think about it, why should there be a working system of checks and balances, but let's be realistic. A system of checks and balances which kept law enforcement on the straight and narrow would completely defeat the purpose of having so many laws. If citizens were treated fairly from the start, there would be far fewer prisoners in the system, and therefore, fewer slaves to manufacturer the various products marketed throughout the State and even country. If you really, truly want to change the system, all it takes is one simple change. Ban slavery, in all its forms, and watch as the number of people sent to prison exponentially decrease, as States, unable to profit off of slave labor any longer, finally get serious about alternatives to prison, and more importantly, rehabilitation.

In the meantime, keep in mind that, quite often, a white cop shooting a black man has more to do with power corrupting that individual, accompanied by a mentality of "us versus them," and less to do with racism. When (sadly, not "if"), this happens, go forth and protest, but when you do, try not to exclude people who are willing to be sympathetic to your cause. Whether intended or not, terms like "Black Lives Matter" and "AmeriKKKa" only serve to give the impression that you're lumping all whites into the target of your rage, which in turn serves to alienate the very people who would have been otherwise willing to help you. When Martin Luther King Jr. set out to make a change, he did so as a minority, not because of the color of his skin, but because his opinion wasn't shared by mainstream society. As such, he knew that the only way he could ever hope to truly achieve success was to convert the majority into his way of thinking, which couldn't be done with signs and slogans that alienated the very people whose help he sought.

Just food for thought...

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