

## H A R L A N   R I C H A R D S

January 29, 2017

### Taking Between the Bars For Granted

I have had a blog on BTB since 2011. I have written hundreds of blogs about many different subjects and used my blog to bring many issues to light which I would not have been otherwise able to do. Yesterday, I was asked by another prisoner about BTB and told him about my experience. He is on the waiting list and is hoping to one day be given the same opportunity I have had for the last 6 years.

It was then that I realized I was taking BTB for granted. I started out writing weekly blogs but I eventually got burned out and started to slack off. I resolved to post blogs at least once a month but I realized my last blog posting was over 2 months ago. It seems like I had so much to say when I first started. I wanted to be heard, to make a positive difference in the world.

Now I am reassessing how I feel and what I want to accomplish. It seems that I have become apathetic. I'm worn out and everything seems so futile. Every time I hope for things to improve, I'm disappointed. What's the point of bearing witness to injustice if my words cannot inspire others to step up to speak out against it?

My greatest disappointments are in election results and court decisions. Every time voters have a chance to do the right thing, they go the opposite way. The damage Gov. Walker and his Republican cronies are doing to Wisconsin is horrendous, yet in the last election they won ever greater majorities in the legislature. When we could have elected a Democratic president in November 2016 who would have appointed a fair supreme court justice (and ended the 30-year long conservative bias of the court), we got Trump & Pence. And absolutely nobody in power gives a shit that our Wisconsin court system and parole system is needlessly warehousing prisoners for decades (including keeping wrongfully convicted people in prison).

But as I pondered all this, I realized that success should not be measured in how many people I can mobilize, but rather how well I bear witness to what I see and experience every day. By that standard, I am not failing in striving toward my goal. But I am failing in performing my mission. So even if I think I am repeating myself or I don't think what I have to say is important, I am going to rededicate myself to speaking out on my blog. After all, if I did not have it, I would be complaining about not having an outlet where my voice can be heard.