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Dear Outside World,

July 10, 2018

I've been inside the belly of the beast (prison) now for 38 years, and twenty (20) of those years were spent in solitary confinement on a Secure Housing Unit (SHU) at Wabash Valley Correctional Facility, in Carlisle, IN. Can you imagine being in solitary confinement for 20 years, in a windowless cell 23 hours a day, and where the conditions are dehumanizing, demoralizing, and you are treated like an animal in a cage?

During my years in solitary confinement I spent my time struggling against the abuse and injustices taking place, and it was during that time of struggling that something had been revealed to me about myself. And that was, that I was broken. Being close to the suffering and cruel punishment didn't just illuminate the brokenness of the weak, but in moments of anguish and heartbreak, it also exposed my own brokenness. You can't effectively fight injustice and not be broken by it.

Twenty (20) years of solitary confinement made me realize "that we are all broken by something." We have all hurt someone and been hurt by someone. We all shape the condition of brokenness even if our brokenness is not equivalent.

But our shared brokenness connects us. Being broken is what makes us human.

We all have our reasons for being broken. Sometimes we're fractured by the choices we make, and sometimes we are shattered by things we would never have chosen. But our brokenness is also the source of our common humanity, the basis for our shared search for comfort, meaning, and healing. Our shared vulnerability and imperfection nurtures and sustains our capacity for compassion.

Outside world, we have a choice... you have a choice. We can embrace our humanness, which means embracing our broken natures and the compassion that remains our best hope for healing. Or we can deny our brokenness, forsake compassion, and, as a result, deny our own humanity.

But simply punishing the broken, walking away and hiding us from sight with long prison sentences, only insures that we remain broken and so do you too!!

Can anyone of there tell me why we have become so fearful and vengeful? What is really happening? We've become so fearful and vengeful that we've thrown our babies into prisons

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not because they are a threat to the public safety or beyond rehabilitation, but because we think it makes us seem tough or less broken. But it doesn't, and you'll still be broken!!

"I am not a monster, I am you! I'm strong but human! No matter what I've done, or no matter what you've done to me. I always remind myself, "that each of us is more than the worst thing we have done". I tell myself, "that no matter how ugly something appears, if you look hard enough there is some beauty somewhere to be found."

Strong but human!

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