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===== Reply to ID humb =====

August 3, 2020 @ OSCl

Hi tenzintenzin!

Glad to hear from you and thank you for replying to my post! Took a minute for me to get this out as I accidentally closed my email before hitting send (We don't get to save drafts or anything in the email setup) so I had to retype this.

First off, wow! That was a very insightful question you started out with about my feelings on Independence Day. I'm a bit of a nonconformist with my views about Independence Day but I do share most Natives' loathing for Columbus Day. I'll attempt to let you in on my thinking.

At the time that the then 13 colonies declared their independence from British rule, the invaders were firmly enmeshed on the eastern seaboard of the North American continent. During the Revolutionary War those colonies (aided by their French and even some Indian allies to a lesser extent) fought successfully and gained the right govern themselves. [As you used the term 'Yank' I'm assuming you're from England or one of its 'sister lands' (My initial thought was Aussie as I've had more contact with them in my life but you didn't open with the stereotypical G'day, heh) so please don't take offense to any of this. It's just my opinion after all.]

So, from my view, the colonies won their freedom from their oppressors. Unfortunately, the descendants of those freedom fighters weren't content with what they had already taken and went on to oppress the Native Peoples across the continent (along with other humanitarian disasters like slavery). It was a victory and accomplishment worth celebrating.

So, gaining Independence is real. It happened and Natives are now considered "citizens" of their Tribe or Nation and the USA despite the still huge racial disparities. At least some token recognition is now given by the US Government of us as actual people.

Now, this contrast this with Columbus Day. Why is it celebrated? Well, because Columbus "discovered America" goes the rhetoric. That is a blatant lie. You can't "discover" a place that people already know about and they live there. Doesn't quite work like that. Natives were already here with our own nations, tribes, society, and way of life. Columbus didn't discover anything. He was simply a guy that got lost (the term Indian comes from the mistaken belief that he'd gone 'round the world to India).

So, the one holiday I celebrate as it memorializes casting off oppression and gaining freedom. Something that, being incarcerated for most of my adult life, I'm all for. It's a historical truth.

The holiday I loathe is because it's a lie and denigrates Native Americans. The only way Columbus could have discovered America is if no one was here. That means that the Natives that were here weren't considered people. We were considered savages, almost animals but not people and definitely not "civilized people" because they didn't understand our civilization and didn't speak any of our many languages. The celebration of Columbus Day perpetuates this view and justifies treating Natives as less than what they are...people.

People with their own society, ethics, religion, way of life, and rights among other things. Steeped in heritage and connection with the land as stewards. It was not ours to buy or sell. The land existed and provided while we in turn gave respect and tried to live in harmony with it. A concept alien to other "civilized" societies except for some of the lowest classes such as farmers and even they would chop down forests to plant the land.

So, that's why I celebrate Independence Day but not Columbus Day. Columbus Day memorializes the beginning of the invasion and oppression of the free Native Peoples of North America. It's pretty much the opposite of what Independence Day memorializes.

Quite a tirade. I really didn't think about the juxtaposition of the two holidays until you asked those questions, so thank you. Just please don't get me started on Thanksgiving! Lol!

Anyway, I do appreciate the sympathy. I've come to dislike and distrust the 'system' since my incarceration began some two decades ago. It's hard to shake the convict mindset with the 'snitching' thing but it has become easier based on my recent experiences.

For me it's a matter of when it stops being snitching. Having been locked up, victimized, kept away from family, I hate to see it done to almost anyone (although there are obviously some exceptions) I guess it's the dividing line of when you're standing up for your / someone else's basic rights or are trampling someone else's. Given that so many people in here tell on each other for their own advantage or dislike of someone (which happens a lot more often than people standing up for their rights unfortunately) it takes a major effort to distinguish between the two. I'll probably have to work at it for a while and retrain my brain somewhat as I've been programmed all these years to think that way. Makes me sound old, eh?

As for being gay in prison being an advantage, a lot depends on the way the particular prison is. I was scared to death at 18-19 y/o first coming into the system that I'd end up dead or someone's bitch. And it definitely makes you more vulnerable to being preyed upon (similar to being young, slender, passive, or a sex offender). A lot of nominally straight guys look at gays as just another type of female (or excuse the language, b*tch) after a few years. A lot of the guys that hold this view hold negative views about women also (see previous descriptive epithet) and see themselves as entitled to sex.

The environment in the Wisconsin prison system is fairly mild combined with some systems (New York, California, high security federal prisons, etc) but can still get dangerous;

especially at the max security level. This is also the case where the stress level is increased such as during lock downs or major searches. I've witnessed / heard about rapes in the past. As these are typically from the aggressors side or from witnesses, the accounts usually are justified by the victim 'deserving it' for being a fag, snitch, cho-mo (child molester) or 'disrespecting' the abuser or someone he's affiliated with.

Don't get me wrong...I have found decent guys in here to have relationships with, some of whom I still occasionally keep in touch with on the streets. One of these relationships actually lasted several years and we're still friends. I cherish those times and friends because my life didn't stop when I walked thru the prison gate. It just dramatically changed so I'm grateful for those times when I could just enjoy being close to another person. Sometimes guys who would normally be straight on the streets enjoy not just the physical aspects but the actual companionship. The sense of not being alone and being able to connect, regardless of the other persons physical sex (and sometimes focusing on the mental/emotional aspects of their partner as with preoperative transgenders).

The real danger comes from guys that want to just 'get their rocks off'. One of the main things that turned me off to my attacker once he told me that that's what he was looking for. Basically a sign that they're looking for nothing more than getting laid and they don't care about the person. I'm too old for spur of the moment, carefree hookups anymore, let alone one where only one person gets their needs met.

I guess I'm the stereotypical gay guy in that my mom and aunts raised me to be respectful toward women (The old fashioned way, open the door, stand when they walk in the room, pull out the chair, etc. Seems somewhat outdated although the concepts of respect and courtesy behind them never gets old). So, I definitely see the reversed sexism argument.

I found out later that my ex cellie had treated a woman on the street in the same manner and that's what he's here for. You're right that this shouldn't happen to anyone. If they end up charging him (I haven't heard one thing or another since the investigation was substantiated) he'll probably never leave prison. It's likely he's headed to a max prison and most likely Boscobel, Wisconsin's supermax prison. Inmates there for disciplinary reasons have no physical contact/access to other inmates. So, hopefully some of the other guys will be a little bit safer.

I'm so glad you reached out and for your supportive words. It means a lot to me and put a smile on my face. Thank you.

Gratefully,
Tony