

## Compassion

At times, I simply sit in complete wander and overwhelming angst of my life. I am not sure how else I could feel. I push myself daily in order to not succumb to the past. Daily, I try to identify what my cause of concerns are. I generally write down one or two word statements to define what is on my mind and then validate the concern by recognizing it. Most of the time I am able to move through the emotion and thereby move on with my day. There are certain elements of my life, however that I cannot move through, elements I cannot not make "right".

I am a strong person. I have made many mistakes and I can stand up for them. I do not believe a person is their mistakes, but that their mistakes are simply a part of their growth. My life, now, is safe and stable but it has not always been this way. For the better part of 10 years it has been a whirlwind of turmoil, chaos, highs and lows. Most of these I can deal with. I can live without a title, a big office, a large salary. I can walk without Gucci shoes and weather a storm without an Armani coat. I can even live without many friends or love. You see, it was never about any of that in the first place. To say that it was about these things would be to identify me as "simple" or "shallow" and that would be fallacy. An opinion of another person does not bother me and the idea that my life somehow has no validity because it is not like yours does not bother me, I don't want anyone else's life.

No, it isn't any of that. What it is that sends me into a state of comotose at night, even when perfectly medicated, is what I was subjected to in prison and the fact that even after that was known I was sent right back. I stared, for 7 months at the building in which I was assaulted daily. There was no help for me 8 years ago and there was no help for me to deal with that this time. You see in prison, it is par for the course, much as the legal system that sent me there intended. Sexual assault is a physical act - the physical heals, the emotional rape does not heal and the idea that a system you have believed in condones it and supports it, is a feeling that I cannot quite describe.

I went to prison with a mental illness that was not treated seriously in the courtroom and that ignorance manifested into stigma drench hatred by staff and inmates in a prison. I came out of prison more damaged than anything I could comprehend. As I look back there is no possible way that I would have NOT broke down again and be back in that courtroom. Once again the same cure was prescribed. Fortunately, I was not assualted, only threatened, my second sentence. It is not recommended by any doctor I have ever met to place a traumtized person back in the trauma, however that was the solution even though there were so many other solutions at the fingertips of the court.

I say this now because it is important to realize what we are doing to the mentally ill in this country. What ignorance does. We change lives, but we are not changing them for the betterment of the offender or our society.

I am not a bitter person, but I am well protected by a guard that has been naturally built around me that I will never let down. Far too many do not survive and simply leave this world one way or another. They escape because they are not heard and they come to the current truth that no one cares what happens to them. I was told that just one year ago by a corrections officer and you know what? He was right. Within the prison system and in the courtroom, they don't care and that is a reflection on each and everyone of us. This no longer makes me angry, it makes me passionate. Maybe by giving back, by helping others, I can help fill a very deep part of me that was taken from me. It was stolen from me and it can never be repaid unlike my time or money which can and was repaid. There is a reason the words Rapist and Murderers always coincide and that is because they are one in the same with one exception, with rape - you have to live with it each and every day, with death, I pray one can find peace.

We need to care and it doesn't take much energy to care. Compassion is a powerful tool and breaking stigma and educating ignorance is a necessity that we can no longer afford to ignore.