

Someone asked me recently, “How does all that is happening make you feel about all those that were so against you?”

It was an interesting question and I would not be being honest if at first there was a sense of, “HA!” But that thought pattern changed instantly to, “AH”!

I could use the recent events to say, “See how wrong you were!” But what would that serve, who would that, serve? Me – only me! And that is not what I am about. From Judges, Prosecutor, Corrections Officers, the prison mental health system, and rapists... yes, they were very wrong – but I am not going to change anyone’s frame of mind by bringing that to their attention. In fact, it is my hope that they simply look at the situation and say to themselves, “maybe we should rethink our approach to the mentally ill.”

I don’t believe someone can change someone else – that is a journey they take. So when I answered the question it went something like this.

“It makes me feel as though I now have a voice. It brings me back to the days of imprisonment when I couldn’t get medication. The days of homelessness when I couldn’t get anything. The times when so many that I loved turned their backs and the days where my very person was attacked and raped as though I meant nothing at all. I had lost control of my life to my illness and then handed it over to people that didn’t care if I lived or died. My life now makes me appreciate on a level I never knew: appreciate my life and others. I am a very strong willed person and yes, I can say I have no love for these people – but I also don’t have hate – I have hope, hope that they come to an understanding about mental illness and that people’s lives – with their help, don’t have to take my path.

Nothing is going to change my memories. What I can do, however – is help change the future for others so they do not have my memories. When I look into the face of a young man with mental illness – who is symptomatic and whose behavior is unacceptable – I go to the core, I search for the young man that is lost, scared and unable to communicate how he is feeling. This is where I place my energy. I don’t care how the judge or prosecutor or rapists, “feel”. I really don’t care how those that turned their backs on me “feel”. I care – how those with mental illness “feel” and when I get to that, I can help them. The reality is, any position that I take or get on any level is a position that should have never existed in the first place. The goal is to put the advocate out of job – because there is nothing to advocate!

I don’t serve my ego. Am I proud, maybe – I climbed from the depths of hell to have a voice –but I never did that for me. When I was living for me – I got nowhere. When I sat on that park bench, while homeless and my mind shifted from “I don’t want to feel this way” to “I don’t want anyone to ever feel this way” God simply said, “now we can talk – you get – it is not about YOU!

My ego got me on private jets and into Monte Carlo restaurants – it got me awards and ‘people’ to handle my luggage, clean my house and do my laundry. My ego fed my mania, my illness and got me into prison – it raped me and it left me for dead. I assure nothing goes to my ego! It never helped anyone, including me!

So in that split second when the “HA” switched to “AH” – I said to myself – You have what you wanted, you have voice – now comes the responsibility to it!

Cory