

A Singular Virtue: "Authenticity Within the Crisis of Confidence"

By: Michael Flinner (San Quentin Death Row / August 2020)

Surely, everyone reading this must know at least one person suffering from the intense grip and agony of depression (moderate, severe, or otherwise) resulting from this seemingly perpetual, godawful societal lockdown that was originally slated for saving lives.

It seems that everywhere we turn these days, we are subjected to gross violations of common sense, the likes of which remind us that progress often requires conciliation as well as inevitable conflict. Covid-19 has turned the world as we once knew and loved it, inside-out. Loneliness wasn't simply bad enough on its own, yet while still a sad affair, our law-makers have single-handedly transformed America into a vast oasis of loneliness by decree. With several months of lockdowns behind us and several ahead for sure, this is unyoking our nation's psyche one day at a time.

While mental health experts are finding durable links between loneliness and depression, the adverse effects on our public's health grow increasingly worrisome with every passing week. People we know and love are dying.

Prisoners are not exempt, and as such, are especially negatively-affected. I speak from experience when I suggest that cognitive effects are often long-lasting. Death Row is no picnic. Assorted other negative behavioral and sociological effects stem from the fear that has begun to disrupt our daily dose of healthy human interactions. People everywhere are growing suspicious, and they fear what they might never understand. We need to muster up the courage to be braver. We must find meaningful ways to interact while remembering that solitary confinement in all of its forms is still punishment --- self-quarantine, social distancing. What the part of the program is that? Have American politicians dropped the ball somewhere?

Fortunately, proven solutions might actually exist. We're not talking about terminating systemic racism, defunding law-enforcement, or even ending white privilege as we know it. On the contrary. Much like the prison environment from which I pen this screed, answers to rampant violence, protests, and pandemics, can generally be found within the microcosms of society who're suffering from this new-world crisis.

The human body is oriented toward health while hastening its antibodies and T-Cells to the areas that are in greatest distress. Allow me to apply this concept elsewhere --- to direct it to afflicted communities whom by case and cause are sharing not-so-similar healing agents --- people. The best-known method of healing people is to strengthen their immunities and resolve, right? So perhaps it should go without saying that a meaningful manner in which to sustainably restore the health of our increasingly-devastated societal microcosms, is to identify and support those healing agents whom have shouldered reclamation and revitalization of their communities. We need love, both tender and tough.