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“Monochromes From Over a Prison’s Edge”

-Victor Hassine

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GOOD OLD CHEROKEE

When was the last time you gave any thought to going crazy, living crazy or dying crazy? Chances are, you have never thought of these things at all, insanity being something that happens to other people. That was pretty much how I thought about it, that is, until I landed in prison. Even after I had been in prison for sometime, I never considered my mental health at risk, as I had focused all my attention and efforts on keeping myself physically intact. Only after having overcome the physical level of prison survival did I discover the next more challenging issue, that of maintaining sanity. This part of the American prison experience involves overcoming the effects of a forced and steady march toward insanity.

Most convicts ultimately avoid the final destruction of this involuntary journey, but the journey itself leaves scars on those prisoners fortunate enough to survive the physical dangers, only to be thrust into a continuous struggle to keep all of one's wits. As I reflect upon this harsh reality of contemporary prisons, I find it odd that any nation which, on the one hand, applauds the mental achievements of its people, operates a criminal justice system designed, in the end, to drive every citizen who is confined in prison crazy.

My first encounter with prison induced insanity came when I first met Cherokee, who, at the time, was Graterford's most esteemed prisoner. As I was beginning my life sentence in 1981, Cherokee had already served more than 40 years of his. Sometime during this extraordinarily long period of incarceration, the staff at Graterford had ceased seeing him as a prisoner and had, in their eyes, elevated him to something akin to a mascot. To the other prisoners he was not a convict, but a part of the prison like the bricks and mortar. Mascot or fixture, neither seems a fitting way to treat

another human being who was doing nothing more than what the State demanded of him.

The first time I met Cherokee, he was swinging the upper half of his body up and out of a large stuffed prison trash can. He had been scavenging in the refuse and was now surfacing with a handful of treasure. It just so happened at the same time I was standing directly in front of him with only the dirty container between us. Having lived in New York, the sight of a man mining in garbage was hardly shocking, and I do not believe I paid him much attention but, I guess, in Cherokee's mind I was paying attention.

This old man with his hands gripping a load of garbage instantly produced a genuine smile that was overflowing with sincerity. He quickly placed his valuables into a large plastic bag that was made to stand at his side by the collection of junk that had been stacked in its enclosure. I then found myself engaged in a conversation.

"Why hello. You must be a new fellow. My name's Cherokee," he said.

Cherokee stood over six feet tall and sported a pot belly which pushed forcefully against his tight and dirty prison uniform. His hair was a dingy yellow and white, which had the appearance of straw standing up and being blown away from the head that hopelessly anchored it. His teeth matched the colour of his hair and were fully displayed by his smile. Despite this unappetizing appearance, the friendliness and gentility he exuded, obliged a courteous response.

"My name is Victor," is all I could think to say.

His puffy cheeks swelled almost breaking out of his round face as his lips spread wider to extend the smile. "You don't get many Victors in here," he said melodiously, the voice matching the smile. "You look like such a nice young fellow. You don't look like you belong in here." At this point he had made me a mend for life.

Cherokee looked down at his bag of junk which seemed as dishevelled and well fed as he. Then he said, "You'd be surprised how much good stuff I find around here, like cups and shoes and socks. Why, once I found me a pretty good coat. Wasn't nothing wrong with it. I gave it to

another young fellow who didn't have one to wear." Then he chuckled, "You young folks today seem to like to throw things away."

I wanted to say something but I did not know what so I just nodded and he continued to speak. "I give a lot of stuff away to anyone who needs it. You know how fellows can get down on their luck. So if you got anything you want to throw out, you be sure to let old Cherokee know. And you don't have to worry about me, I'm okay. Everybody knows me. Just ask anyone about Cherokee."

After saying this, he picked up his bag and began to lumber off in the direction of another trash can which was also overflowing with garbage. After taking a few steps, he stopped, turned around and said, "Oh, did I tell you I collect stamps? If you get any, I hope you'll give them to me. I'll stop around your cell." With that, the man and his garbage moved on.

Throughout my stay at Graterford, I often saw Cherokee. Usually he was digging his way into a trash can or dumpster, but sometimes he would stop by my cell and ask if I had any stamps he could have. I would give him all the cancelled stamps from the letters I had received, and this seemed to make him very happy. Once in a while I offered him some cigarettes, candy or coffee, but he refused to accept anything as if I had insulted him simply by making an offer. What I ended up doing was putting some commissary items in a brown bag, then when he would come by my cell I would give him the bag to "throw out for me." He would always take the bag and never say a word. His smile was all that needed to be said. .

There was no doubt that Cherokee had lost his senses and might not have even been aware that he was in prison. But it was not Cherokee's odd behaviour which made him noteworthy, it was the way the prison administration treated him. Cherokee stood out in a prison world of misfits because his keepers wanted him to stand out.

Cherokee was allowed free run of the prison to forage anywhere at anytime. The only requirement being to return to his cell for the 9:00 p.m. count. He needed no pass to get anywhere in the prison and his cell was only locked at 9:00 p.m. He could eat anything he wanted from the kitchen and staff members

would often give him candybars and snacks purchased from a prison vending machine. It was unlikely that any prisoner would say an unkind word or in any way threaten Cherokee because if the guards did not get him, the prisoners certainly would. This treatment of a prisoner in a maximum security prison is extraordinary.

At first I did not give much thought to the special treatment Cherokee was receiving, after all he had spent an un-Godly amount of time in Graterford and his seniority had entitled him to some consideration. Besides, he was a harmless old man who was kind, likeable and not likely to escape even if all of the prison walls were to come tumbling down. The sad reality was that Cherokee's home was Graterford.

Before long, I became suspicious of the institution's altruism toward Cherokee, which began when I met other men who had served as much, if not more time in prison than Cherokee. The institution chose to treat these men as they would any other prisoner. There were no special Privileges. Naturally, I wondered why Cherokee had been singled out by the prison administration to receive the benefit of their kindness.

The prison administration's motives became more apparent once I realized that tolerance of Cherokee's odd behaviour was not really a form of kindness or humanitarianism. If prison managers wanted to do the decent thing by Cherokee, they should have sent him to a better prison or helped him to get a commutation of his sentence so he could be committed to a nursing home. All these things were possible. Even if they were not, the least that should have been done was to provide Cherokee with adequate mental health care. Somehow, to allow this harmless old man to live out his life bobbing for goodies in prison trash cans does not reflect kindness or decency, but, is in fact, degradation and humiliation, regardless whether Cherokee had the sense to know it or not.

This understanding led to the realization that Cherokee's privileges were not primarily meant to benefit him. These measures were calculated to advance a prison interest, displaying the administration's vision of the model prisoner.

The prison system had invested over 40 years to hammer, bend, fold, shape and, in the end, rehabilitate Cherokee. In their eyes, they had achieved their purpose. The old convict was

obedient, functional, low maintenance, harmless, completely dependent and not likely to injure another human being. What more could a prison want? It made no difference that in the process of rehabilitating Cherokee and making him the perfect prisoner, he had become mad. But Cherokee had to be punished for his crime, and forfeiting his sanity was a small price to pay for achieving Graterford's version of redemption.

So what passed for kindness was actually inducements for others to conform to the lifestyle of the model prisoner. Certainly, staff members had grown a fondness for Cherokee and their relationship to him contained an element of affection, but in a prison, fondness always stands a distant second to control. Cherokee was a poor, helpless and unwitting pawn in a prison's endless scheme to control its prisoners.

Understandably, it is difficult for anyone who has not felt the pinch of prison shackles to believe that an American governmental bureaucracy would knowingly induce human beings to abandon their senses and become mindless dependents reduced to searching for their piece of the American Dream somewhere in the dirty darkness of a prison trash can. But, if you were the warden of an overcrowded prison plagued with violence, corruption, drugs, disease and perpetual lack of resources, Cherokee's fat and smiling face, fresh out of a trash can to respectfully greet you might secretly tempt you to pray that every one of your prisoner charges would somehow become as respectful, obedient and well-behaved as Cherokee.

I THINK I'M GOING CRAZY

It is always getting harder to find time alone in a prison's general population. Overcrowding has seen to that. So whenever I find an opportunity to be by myself, I exploit it. I remember one hot summer day in 1988 when the heat was so oppressive that few prisoners bothered to venture out into the small area of dirt and dust shamelessly designated as the prison recreation yard.

In the early 1980's, some prisonocrat had developed an ingenious plan to renovate Pennsylvania's oldest penitentiary in use by building a new 500-cell, 1,000-bed housing unit within its walls. More specifically, the plan called for three phases. The first phase called for

building the new housing units in the main recreation yard of Pittsburgh Penitentiary which was also known as Western. The second phase called for shutting down the old housing units at Western and converting them to a massive counselling and work complex. The third and final phase called for the demolition of existing work and counselling building and the construction of a larger recreation yard and field house.

By early 1988, the first phase of the plan was completed and Western had lost its recreation yard and gained 500 new cells. Unfortunately, funding for phases two and three had dried up and the oldest functioning prison in the state now held twice as many prisoners. Western had become the most densely populated prison in the state.

There I was that hot summer day looking for some privacy in a walkway running between the various housing units that the prison administrators of Western had designated "the main yard". This yard had no grass, no space and no room to exercise. All that remained was a long, crooked concrete walk flanked on both sides by parallel strips of dirt which had a few bleachers intermittently placed wherever they could fit.

Finding any unoccupied space under these circumstances was usually impossible. But this day, because of the stifling heat and burning sun, the yard was completely empty, so I hurried to a remote spot and sat on one of the scorching bleachers. This was a small price to pay for privacy. I closed my eyes and forgot the discomfort as I slowly drifted off into myself.

Before I had a chance to fully appreciate my solitude, I felt a tap on my shoulder accompanied by a voice. "Victor, I need to talk with you," the voice said with urgency.

Normally, I would have ignored the voice until it moved away. But I recognized the voice as belonging to one of the more respected and honourable men in the prison. I had known this man at Graterford before I had been transferred to Western Penitentiary. He was a prison gangster who did not take a lot of nonsense from anyone. But he was also a fair and reasonable man who only challenged those who tried to interfere with his space. His name was Kareem. While I numbered him as one of my mends, I

nevertheless made it a point to stay out of his way. Realizing it was Kareem and recognizing the urgency in his voice, my eyes immediately sprung open as my thoughts were instantly refocused on the moment and I felt danger was near.

"What's going on, Kareem?" I asked fully alert and expecting to learn there was trouble on the way.

Kareem must have detected my concern so he adjusted his voice. "No, it ain't nothing like that, there ain't no trouble. I just need to talk with you about something personal," he said.

My body was still racing with the adrenaline his initial statement had produced. I was too aroused and anticipating to be able to do anything else but listen to what he had to say. Soon Kareem was sitting next to me on the bleachers. We were the only two men foolish enough to brave the yard. The sun had chased the other 2,300 prisoners indoors.

"What can I do for you?" I asked a little annoyed but nevertheless interested. Kareem was not the sort to waste anyone's time.

"I'm going crazy, Victor, I'm losing my shit," he blurted out as his eyes hawkishly searched our surroundings.

"What do you mean?" I asked surprised and uncertain about the nature and direction of this conversation.

Kareem's dark brown eyes were soon on me, wide and piercing as he explained, "I've been hearing voices. I know they're not real, but I hear them anyway."

What was I to do? I was sitting in a prison yard burning under a hot sun and listening to a man tell me he was hearing voices. Prison life has taught me to be prepared for anything, and so I collected my thoughts as I slowly leaned back to rest against an upper row of bleachers. Then I calmly asked, "What do these voices say?"

Kareem must have detected my look of resignation because he immediately relaxed and allowed his muscles to uncoil. "They tell me to do stupid stuff You wouldn't believe it. I don't do any of them. I just hear the voices," he said.

My curiosity had been peaked and I realized I had the opportunity to talk to a man who was on the verge of some mental breakdown. For some reason, the mechanics leading to this breakdown interested me. "Yeah, prison will make a man hear voices. It's a shame what they do to a man in here."

"Isn't that the truth?" he answered sounding relieved that I understood his problem. "I've seen lots of old heads lost their shit but I never thought it would happen to me."

"Well, maybe it's just a temporary thing and will go away. You're a strong man. You can beat this," I suggested with confidence.

"No, man, I don't think so. I can feel myself flipping in and out. I tried to fight it a couple of times but my mind just keeps snapping - I'm just going crazy," he chuckled.

Hearing him laugh about his predicament encouraged me to get personal. "What do you think brought this on?" I asked.

"Nobody in my family's crazy - it has to be this prison. The time is getting to me. I've been doing this bit for a long time," he said.

Kareem had served over 20 years of a life sentence and his prison escapades made commutation less than a remote possibility. For a minute I reasoned that maybe he was a drug abuser whose mind just suddenly surrendered to his addiction. Almost as if Kareem knew my thoughts he said, "All my life I've avoided drinking and doing drugs because I'd seen what it did to other people. Now look at me anyway," he said in disgust.

"I don't know what to tell you, Kareem. Sane or insane, these people want their time out of you. You're going to have to fight this thing," I told him.

"You know, I've done a lot of time in the hole. When I started my bit I didn't care nothing about going to the hole, but these last few times, they were real rough," Kareem said as if ignoring what I had just said to him.

"What happened in the hole?" I asked.

"Nothing this last time," he answered, "but just being down there with these guards messing

with you and all that time alone. I think I started slipping while I was in the hole," he announced.

"Did you hear these voices in the hole?" I asked.

"No. I just started hearing these voices. When I was in the hole, I didn't hear nothing. I'm not good with reading so I just sat in my cell sleeping and thinking," he explained.

"You think the hole made you crazy?" I asked.

Kareem thought for a moment. "No. I don't think it was the hole alone, I think it's everything put together. You know, doing time ain't no joke," he answered.

"No it isn't," I agreed.

"And you know what is the most amazing thing about all this?" Kareem asked with the animation of a little child who was eager to share a secret. "The way it just kind of crept up on me. One minute I was normal and then the next minute I was bugging out in my cell talking to myself I didn't know going crazy could snatch me from behind like that," he confessed.

There was then a long silence between us as if neither of us knew the other was there. Both of us had a lot to think about.

"You're doing a life bit too, aren't you?" Kareem asked.

"Yeah, I got eight in and that's killing me. I can imagine how you feel," I answered.

"No you can't and you really don't want to," he cautioned firmly. "Don't you worry about any of these motherfuckers messing with you. You just make sure you hold on to your mind. Don't let these people sneak up behind you and snatch your shit," he said as he reached out with his hand and made like he was grabbing at something in the air.

"Nobody deserves to be treated like that. They might as well have killed me," were Kareem's last words as he got up and left me alone on the bleacher. Suddenly I didn't feel much like being alone. I realized I would never forget my conversation with Kareem.

IT HAPPENS ALL THE TIME

Tony was my neighbour when I was at Graterford. I met him the first day I entered general population. He was a tall rectangular man who cast an imposing shadow into my cell. His thick black, well-trimmed beard with matching neatly-groomed hair gave his block of a body a crown of sophistication. "If you need to know anything about this joint, just ask me. My name's Tony and I live a few cells down," I remember him tell me as I was sorting through my belongings.

There was much I needed to know about my new home and Tony was more than willing to instruct me. He had read about my case in the paper and knew I had knowledge of the law, this is what motivated him to be as helpful to me as possible. Nothing is free in a prison, and the price for Tony's friendship was my help with some criminal cases he was appealing. You see, Tony was a jailhouse lawyer. Every morning he hung a paper sign up in front of his cell announcing, "LEGAL AID."

His cell was arranged as much as possible, considering its location, like a small office. The steel desk mounted on one side of his cell had all the necessary office supplies and adornments including a manual typewriter. Alongside his desk was a makeshift chair, assembled out of stacked boxes and old newspapers. The chair stood alongside the entrance to his cell so a client didn't have to enter too far into his home in order to conduct business. On a shelf above his desk and peppered throughout his cell were big thick law books which completed the statement he was trying to make.

Tony was admittedly no legal wizard, and when asked what he did for a living he would proudly and without hesitation announce, "I rob banks." Tony explained helping people out with their legal work kept him busy and his cell filled with commissary. He was doing 15 to 30 years so he had plenty of time to occupy.

Tony was an intelligent and a well-disciplined man, so he had managed to teach himself enough about the law to recognize legal issues and fill out appeal forms. However, he lacked the ability to properly litigate an appeal to its end. In most cases, he would read a man's transcripts, fill out an appropriated appeal form and have the court appoint a real attorney for his

client. For these services he would charge what he felt the man could afford; from some cigarettes purchased in the commissary to a couple hundred dollars.

Tony functioned as effectively as any legal secretary I had ever known and he provided a needed service. Many men at Graterford were illiterate and the only way for them to begin the process of appealing their convictions, was by using the services of a jailhouse lawyer. The reality is that most collateral appeals filed on behalf of prisoners are the product of jailhouse lawyers - a poor man's last hope for justice.

As you can imagine, there are some jailhouse lawyers who are honest and qualified and others who are con-men hoping to jilt prisoners out of money and worse yet, ruin their chances on appeal. Like the streets, the caveat "Buyer Beware" holds true in prison as well.

To his credit, Tony was a reliable man who made up in enthusiasm what he lacked in legal knowledge. Often I would refer minor cases, like parole violations and guilty pleas, to his able office. This spared me a lot of nuisance cases and made Tony very happy. Once I became his neighbour, his clientele doubled and he gained a few pounds from all the commissary cakes and candies he was eating.

Every morning before I went about my business, I would stop at Tony's cell, sit on his clients' chair and be treated to a hot cup of instant coffee and some commissary pastry. Tony and I would then chat for a half hour or more about legal issues, the prison and anything else on our minds at the time. It was always a good way to start off a morning. One afternoon while I was working at my assigned prison job as a janitor in the infirmary, I was asked by one of the nurses to escort her to the special needs unit. This unit was a small caged-in portion of the infirmary where the seriously mentally ill were housed. It was a dark and bleak place where men resembling zombies would spend their day sitting or pacing and waiting for their meals or medications to be served. These men were not allowed outdoors for exercise and some had spent years inside this forgotten limbo.

Female nurses liked to take a prisoner janitor with them when they made their rounds in that ward, because it made them feel safer. In turn, janitors liked to make these rounds, despite

the unit's depressing conditions, because it gave them an opportunity to flirt with a woman. After all, men will be men.

As instructed, I gladly carried a tray of medication, complete with little paper cups filled with water, behind the nurse as we headed toward the special needs unit, also called D-Rear. The guard assigned to D-Rear unlocked a wire mesh gate and allowed us entry into the dark, dirty and fowl-smelling unit.

Ghoulishly assembled around a large table were about twenty men eagerly waiting for the nurse to hand them their medicine. Men of all colours, sizes and shapes stared with wide-eyed expectation for the nurse to call out their name. Whenever a prisoner was called, he would slowly shuffle over to the nurse who would hand him his medication. Then I would give the man a cup of water, he would take his medication and move away somewhere into the darkness to wait for the drugs to take him away.

It was such a sad sight. I could not wait to get out of there. I did not want to be reminded that places like this existed. When the nurse finished calling all the names on her list, she told me to follow her to a patient who was not able to walk. Reluctantly, I trailed the nurse deeper into the bowels of D-Rear. Somewhere in a far corner of a common area sat a lone man obscured by shadows. Everyone else was slowly walking a tedious circle around the ward getting some recreation for the day. Here, it was too dark for me to be able to identify the man.

Looking away at the ceiling as the nurse gave the man his medication, I heard myself being asked to bring some water. I walked over and reached out with a small cup of water only to be shocked by the sight of Tony sitting motionless with drool oozing from his mouth.

"Tony, that can't be you," I called out in complete astonishment. I had had my usual morning coffee and chat with the man less than eight hours earlier. "This must be some kind of mistake," I told myself.

The nurse saw my alarm as I attempted to awaken Tony. "He can't hear you, Victor. He's on too much medication. Is he a friend of yours?" she asked with genuine concern.

I wanted to tell her about Tony, what a smart guy he was, the little office he had in the cell, and the way he never took advantage of people, but I could not. All I could do was stare at this shell of a man who sat silently in front of me. "Yes, he is," was all I could say.

The nurse gently swung me around with her arm and began to herd me out of the unit, but while my body turned my eyes remained on Tony.

"Look, there's nothing you can do for him. He's really out there right now," the nurse comforted as we finally exited D-Rear.

"What happened?" I finally thought to ask. "No one really knows. I got a call to report to the block to pick up a prisoner and take him to the infirmary. When I got there, your friend was laying on the bed in his cell mumbling gibberish and repeating that he couldn't do the time. He wasn't violent or anything. He was pretty much like you saw him. Do you know if he got some bad news about anything?" she asked.

"No," I immediately answered, despite the fact that I had no way of knowing. "What's going to happen to him? What can I do?" I asked in a delayed panic.

"Calm down, Victor. There's nothing you can do. The doctors will treat him. And soon he'll be back out in population. He'll probably have to stay on some kind of medication. There's lots of guys who go through this and they come around eventually. It happens all the time," the nurse told me and then walked away.

In 1983 I filed a class action lawsuit against Graterford and the Department of Corrections challenging, among other things, the conditions in D-Rear. A federal judge, after inspecting D-Rear, declared it an unfit place for human beings. Shortly thereafter, the D-Rear was discontinued and a licensed mental health group operated an independent special needs unit inside Graterford.

When the new mental health unit finally went into operation, I said a little prayer for my friend Tony and all the others.

FAST WALK

Why do you think so many people become insane after being in prison a while?" I asked

while I tried to keep up with my exercise partner's pace as we fast walked around the yard.

"You're writing some more stuff?" he asked as he quickened his stride.

"Yeah," I huffed. "I wanted to do something on madness, like what it is about prison that drives people crazy."

"Why do you say prison drives people insane? My experience is that a lot of people come into prison half crazy already," he said, his voice without a hint of physical effort. I thought to myself that if he didn't slow down I might not be able to finally this discussion.

"What do you mean?" I asked trying hard to ease my breathing.

"Well, most guys coming into prison have some kind of drug addiction or alcohol addiction. They've lived hard on the streets and by the time they come to prison, their madness just catches up with them," he answered slowing just a bit.

"So you think drugs cause all the insanity we see in here?" I asked with a little disbelief.

"No. It's not only drugs and alcohol, but it's mostly that these guys are just weak individuals who crack under stress. It just so happened that they got the stress in prison so these weak people lose their mind," he I clarified.

"So prison does have a part in driving men insane because of the stress?" I countered.

"No. Listen to what I say. These people are weak individuals and while the stress from prison might have taken them over the edge, it really could have happened anywhere. If they were out on the streets walking somewhere, the job stress might have driven them crazy. If you're weak in prison, you'll go crazy in here," he explained picking up the pace once more.

"I don't know if I buy that. I mean I've seen some pretty tough guys go crazy in here," I countered, my disbelief giving me the extra strength to keep up.

"How tough could a person be if he went crazy? When I first came to prison over twenty years ago, one of my old heads told me that prison will either build a man's character or

break him down to a fool. Those were the truest words I've ever heard. If a man isn't strong enough to deal with prison, it will crush him," he explained.

"But then what you're saying is prison drives people crazy - but it's only weak people or people who are partially crazy already." "Well, I'm not sure I'd put it like that, but yes, prison don't make you crazy, your weakness does," he tried to explain.

At this point I was pretty confused and I was not sure whether it was because I was out of breath or because I was not sure if he actually did agree with me. I stopped walking and watched as he continued to speed walk down the track. He never said a word. I decided to get a drink of water from the fountain.

As I caught my breath I thought about what he had said. Certainly, some of it was true, but I think he placed too high a standard on human beings. Certainly, there were conditions that could drive the strongest man crazy - and in my thinking, prison fostered those conditions.

By the time I reached the fountain I began to wonder if prison had made him a little crazy and I knew that he thought the same about me.

TOMORROW'S MODEL PRISONER

While the prison in the past dispensed justice by testing the extent of human physical endurance, a more enlightened modern society required prison managers to develop a less physical means of punishing law breakers, one which would leave the body unbruised and intact. But this enlightenment did not require a humane limit to punishment, but only sought to bring about a change in the way punishment was dispensed.

In response to this enlightenment, prison managers relied less on punishing the body and more on punishing the mind. Gone were nightsticks, leather straps, whips, chains and unrestrained acts of brutality and cruelty. In came psychologists, counselors, medication, electric shock and solitary confinement. Behavioural modification, á la B. F. Skinner became the new bible of prison salvation and redemption. Prisons became Skinner boxes complete with mazes, bells, whistles, carrots and the occasional stick.

As behaviouralism swept through the criminal justice community, rehabilitation became a glorious end as prison managers hoped to find utopia in the promise of behavioural science. After all, if Skinner could teach a chicken to play Tic-Tac-Toe, then certainly prisons could teach human beings how to be law-abiding citizens. Unfortunately, humans proved to be less responsive to conditioning than were chickens and laboratory rats.

Thus, rehabilitation was foolishly tied to a mistaken belief that people could be conditioned into conformity, regardless of their own desires. This doomed arranged marriage of the ideal of human rehabilitation and the stern "science" of behaviouralism was, in my opinion, the cause of the criminal justice system's current state of ruin and absence of meaningful purpose.

This unfortunate state of affairs has been motivated by the assumption that the shortcomings of behaviouralism has proved that rehabilitation is not possible. The ends of rehabilitation should stand independent of whatever failed means might be employed. Therefore, abandonment of behaviouralism should not have included the rejection of a belief in human rehabilitation. But it did.

The criminal justice system has placed itself in a holding pattern until such time as another model can rise up out of the ashes of discarded behaviouralism and once again provide some meaningful purpose to achieve. This state of limbo has left prison managers with only a single strategy adopted by default: warehousing and controlling prisoners.

The rise in the use of super max prisons, "no perk" prisons, solitary confinement cells and mind-altering drugs clearly reveals the end product envisioned by prison managers. They are limited to creating prisoners who have suffered punishment and become obedient under supervision. The question of whether that convict can or cannot be rehabilitated is no longer a consideration. However, since concerns over humane treatment still prevail, prisons have been forced to rely on medicine and psychology to punish and control its multitude of unredeemable prisoners without breaking the skin.

Unfortunately, because psychological and chemical inducements leave no visible scars or

physical damage, prison managers are able to inflict more punishment on their wards, in the form of psychological and emotional distress, than they were in the past when using physical force. Since mental and emotional pain and suffering have not been determined to be legitimate grounds for complaint by prisoners, prisons have not been inclined to develop some means of controlling the amount of pain and suffering they might inflict.

I am not suggesting that some plot or conspiracy exists aimed at mind control and psychological servitude, I simply believe that a lack of purpose has led the criminal justice community to focus entirely on the management and economics of the system to the exclusion of any notions of rehabilitation. A person entering prison today will find himself required to do nothing more than obey all of the volumes of rules. The ends of this prison machine being limited to ensuring obedience and conformity.

Convicts have always been subject to the nightmare of becoming "stir crazy." This condition is a natural byproduct of institutionalization. Contemporary prison management has accelerated this process by venturing into the business of applied psychology and psychiatric medication to induce population conformity. This abandonment of rehabilitation has left every prisoner in danger of becoming nothing more than a bitter prisoner. Whether being a bitter prisoner ultimately proves to be a form of insanity, society will have to make that determination at some point in the future.

Until then, I will be left to remember Cherokee, Kareem and Tony and pray for the realization that human beings are redeemable so I may be spared the fate of becoming tomorrow's model prisoner.