

Letter 33

4-18-26

The Voiceless

Communication is key. Not only is this the most generic relationship advice, it's a fact of life for inmates. Communication with the outside world allows us to keep family ties, keep contact with our jobs, and helps maintain the morale and mental well-being of those incarcerated.

This is important enough that the FCC has set limits that ensure corrupt institutions don't overcharge for communication. This measure is taken to protect an often voiceless and vulnerable population from predatory business practices.

Without these important rate caps, who knows how many important calls would not be made because inmates and their families couldn't afford the price of a pretty basic need.

Unfortunately, it was recently uncovered that our jail had been ignoring these rate caps. Perhaps this was just an unfortunate oversight that cost inmates both financially and emotionally. Although, reportedly, when this was discussed at a county commissioner's meeting, the concern was the loss in revenue that compliance would create. The county was forced to drop the price of calls from 25 to 17 cents per minute. This loss of excess revenue from overcharging the residents of the county was an issue for the budget that had become accustomed to profiting from violating the regulation.

Nevertheless, the price was dropped and the institution was brought into compliance. This was fantastic news to the inmates and their families. The elation was short-lived. In order to make up for the shortfall, some creative bureaucrat decided to double the price of electronic messaging between inmates and their contacts on the outside.

For inmates, the cost went from 3 to 7 cents per minute to read, write, and send messages. For those on the outside, the price jumped from 25 to 50 cents per message into the jail.

Presumably the laws and regulations have not yet had a chance to be implemented to protect electronic messaging, so the county is taking the opportunity to exploit this vulnerable population in a new, more modern format.

On average, an innocent soul that can not afford bail will sit here for at least six months before they get the chance to prove their innocence in court. They can't afford bail, they can't afford to be overcharged for communication. How much excess damage is being done to their lives during this period when the voiceless are strategically kept that way?

Letter 34

4-20-26

Mr. Lee

I find myself impressed with the jail's diversity and inclusion initiatives. It seems no one is excluded based on race, sex, or social status. Although, money does seem to play a factor. Mental health status does not. In fact, this place seems to be a catch-all for a variety of mental health issues.

I'm talking about more than criminally stupid, you know, people so stupid it should be a crime. While we have plenty of those, they aren't the ones I'm referring to. I'm talking about the folks that hit the generally accepted definition of "crazy" in its myriad of flavors.

These people need more supervision and security than the local psych center can provide, but also need more mental health help than the jail can provide. When faced with this dilemma, the county seems to default them to the jail where at least people will be "safe". They are housed here while the next steps are sorted out.

If this were the world of Harry Potter, one could simply put a magical hat on them and sort out which flavor of crazy they are. Since that either doesn't work, or just as likely, the county lost the hat, it has to be done the old-fashioned way. Unfortunately, the old-fashioned way happens to be agonizingly slow.

Some need to be evaluated to see if they are fit for trial. This can take months. Want to claim insanity? More like a year.

Some come with a known diagnosis and just need to be housed until court. They, as grown adults, can choose to take their meds or not. In rare cases a judge can overrule their choice to not take meds, but again, that process takes months.

Some have a known diagnosis, choose to take their meds, and still manage to strike twelve on the cuckoo clock. There isn't much the county can do but house them with everybody else, as long as they remain no danger to themselves or others.

The end result is that about half the time we are blessed with the presence of those that this county has no better place for. Perhaps the world contains those that are "fun crazy" or "entertaining crazy," we don't seem to get those, we just get "annoying crazy."

We've all met people that have a favorite topic that they seem to wedge into every conversation. For the crazy annoying folks, that topic is invariably themselves. This would be bad enough, them constantly talking about themselves, but the "Fun Facts" that they share are neither fun nor facts.

As an added bonus, crazy annoying only comes with one volume: too loud.

We currently have one on our block that I will flatter by calling Bruce. He would like that because he has the soul of Bruce Lee contained within himself.

Bruce has been charged with a couple of felonies and is at the start of his legal journey. The good and bad news is that he will be released on supervised bail next week. The good of that, both for him and me, is that it means he gets to go home next week. The bad news is that he doesn't realize he isn't done with court, and very likely jail, yet.

He is under the impression that due to his unique awesomeness he got arrested for his felonies, saw a judge, spent a couple weeks in jail, and can now put all this nonsense behind him. He is yet to grasp the fact that bail means he still has to actually do the whole criminal process. If he doesn't figure it out beforehand, I will let him know, but not until it's time for him to leave. Whatever meltdown happens can happen elsewhere, for now he continues to exist in ignorant bliss.

The rest of us? Well, we just get to exist with his ignorance. Luckily, dear reader, I do not want you to miss out on the statements he has made, loudly, to each one of us individually. Of course, since it was done at full volume each time, we are all well acquainted with the mysteries of Mr. Lee.

"TV looks better to me because I have dragon laser vision."

"We are living in the 5th dimension. We have been since Trump nuked Iran and caused the earth to respawn and reset."

"I was a shark for 1,000 years. That's why I can smell when a girl is on the rag."

"The leader of North Korea is also a super soldier. This means he doesn't need to piss or shit. (Obviously.) I wanted this power so I ate his soul telepathically."

"My dad me every day because he hated me. He hated me because I ruined his 'flesh light'. Being the oldest and first born of my mother, he hated me because I ruined 'his' vagina."

And my personal favorite, which I may steal,

"As strong as I am, I can only do 2 pushups because my immortal bones are so dense."