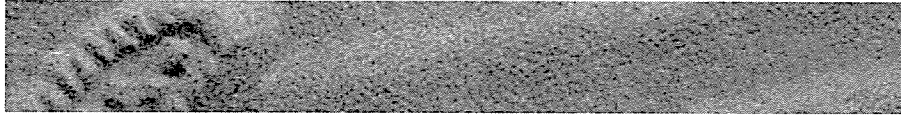


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...words...from some great local writers

Trapped in... Paris!



karen amster-young :: The Beach Chair Chronicles

...weekly observations & discoveries from manhattan to the east end...

Writer's note(s):

* = names have been changed to protect privacy

** = a number that is less than the actual real number; fictitious number used to protect my own reputation and not upset Mom.

I am in the mood to explore confinement – physical confinement, mental confinement, relationship confinement, emotional confinement: confinement in general. Confinement also means, for purposes of this column, a sense of stagnation, being trapped and simply not moving on. Unless you were literally in a box somewhere during the last week or so (see box stuff in last column), you are aware that Paris Hilton, the most famous, non-famous person to ever exist, was put in jail, released from jail and confined to her extravagant home and then put back in jail with special medical facilities to deal with her unspecified medical condition (it was alluded to but never confirmed she was in a dangerous mental state). I am sure her medical emergency dissipated, at least slightly, by the time she reentered her home and will emerge again when she is once again confined to a small room with a basic commode, cot and no privacy. By the time you read this she may very well be back under house arrest, with an ankle monitor, but certainly surrounded by the luxuries that she has grown accustomed to. I am not bashing Paris; that would be too easy to do. In fact, I can relate to wanting to scream when you are somewhere you don't want to be – physically or

emotionally, in any aspect of life. Paris is literally in jail. I want to discuss how we all can feel and be locked up sometimes. I want to talk about not being able to move on. It has been said before that life is a journey and it certainly is. I personally have noticed a pattern of movement, stagnation, movement, stagnation. Sometimes the journey to where we want to go simply takes too long. Sometimes there is no movement at all. Sometimes we have no idea where we want to go. Sometimes we don't even recognize how important it is to move on and get out. Sometimes we simply have to be where we don't want to be.

Despite the fact that she was a fixture in Hollywood before my time, I thought about true Hollywood legends, such as Katherine Hepburn. Here is a woman who broke the rules and did it with grace and style. She was an independent woman who did not care what people thought. She wore pants in Hollywood when everyone was wearing flirty skirts and trying to please the masses. She would have abhorred someone being famous for not being famous. Kate the Great, despite her haughtiness, was obsessive about her craft and the quality of her work; she worked hard. Paris is trapped right now because she has to move forward. She has to actually work at something and become something to earn the notoriety she has. She simply can't continue like this. She has to move on.

You can feel locked up, recognize confinement and see stagnation in numerous situations.

- A bad relationship that you just can't leave
- Being stuck on the L.I.E. going east and just not moving (don't even try to convince me that you "know the back roads"). Even YOU get stuck in traffic
 - Too many obligations and not enough "down" time
 - Literally, as in an elevator (don't get me started)
 - Locked in a self-destructive pattern (don't get me started)
- Trapped at a bridal shower or some other event that we all pretend to like (don't even try to tell me anyone likes these except, perhaps, if in honor of an immediate family member)
- Bush's irrational, ineffective war in Iraq (note: please refrain from thinking that I am even comparing being stuck on the L.I.E with our country's war)
 - When confined to any small space not designed for humans
- A stalled career, no career or perhaps the most concerning, no desire for

a career

- Not being able to let go of “old” stuff

I thought about all of this recently.

“I won’t eat that bread,” my daughter yelled at 8:00 in the morning last Wednesday as I was packing her lunch for school. I was unsuccessfully trying to convince her to accept that I did not have any more potato bread for her sandwich. I am out of the “right” bread. Lose one point for Mom! I find it amazing that I have to go to the supermarket again this week. It amazes me that with just one child I find myself going there a ridiculous amount of times to make sure the princess has all of her special snacks, lunch bag requirements and meals in general. I have to use a certain kind of freakin’ bread. She is six. She will only eat one kind. That’s how they are.

Perhaps I am just not shopping right? Maybe my husband ate three sandwiches over the weekend that I did not know about? This has to change. It is monotonous. The deli guy knows me and knows what I want. I have become my mother. It feels like 1966 again. Despite decades of progress for women, we are still spending too much time running the household and replacing the bread. This has to change. My daughter needs to change too. She needs to learn that there is more than one delicious bread choice in life. In the meantime, I took her to school. She was devastated about not having potato bread for her sandwich. I have to change my food shopping strategy. I feel totally trapped in the supermarket lately – literally and figuratively. It sounds ridiculous but I want to get out of the supermarket in more ways than one.

Robin* had me on the phone last week for a good hour. She had received an obnoxious and irrational letter from an old friend – someone she had a falling out with over ten years ago that we both knew from college. Robin had recently reached out to Jill* to try to rekindle the friendship. Jill’s response was quite angry considering the nature of the ancient falling out but Robin was despondent. I listened sympathetically and tried to give her some good advice. “Why do you even want to reconnect with her? What do you miss about her friendship?” I asked. She could not really answer. “I don’t know. We used to be such good friends,” she said. “I know, but that was a long time ago,” I replied. “Maybe you don’t have much in common

anymore." I said it nicely (I hope). "Maybe she just is not supposed to be in your life anymore."

Isn't it amazing what great therapists we are when it is not about our own lives?

Robin was trapped in the past. Moving on without closure is a tough one. Why do we hate letting go of relationships that don't work and haven't for a long time? Because it is hard. I have been there. Letting go of old stuff. That's a big one.

Andrea* reached out to me this weekend. She was devastated. Her boyfriend of three years had not called after their last fight. "You just never really know when it will be the last time with someone," she cried to me. "I know," I said. "I will die without him," she continued. "What was your last fight about?" I asked. "Same shit," she said. I was waiting for her to tell me that he insulted her again; that he made her feel like crap when he disappeared on certain nights and was not present – especially mentally because of too much vodka or too much fun. "But he never called when you needed him too," I reminded her. "I know, but I LOVED him," she said. "I know," I said. "There are some people you just love even if they hurt you again and again. I am not sure why." "You have to move on," I said as warmly as I could. I cared about my friend. Despite the passion, this relationship had not worked for a while. Andrea knew she was trapped in a bad relationship. She may not be ready, but she has to move on. Change sucks sometimes.

My Mom called me for the third** time today. She was devastated. She could not leave her house because the stupid driveway guy had decided to repave it while her car was in the garage not knowing she was home and therefore she was stuck in suburban hell. "You really should move already," I said. My father had passed away over five years ago and she was in a house that she really did not need anymore. I mean the lawn, the driveway, the roof, and all the crap that no one really wants to deal with especially when you are over a certain age and trying to do it yourself. My Mom does not want to move from that house. Who would want to deal with packing up a house that you've lived in for 30 years or more? Mom changed the topic to

my food shopping strategy and how I really have to stop complaining about going to the supermarket so much; she also starting talking to me about how my daughter needs to learn to like a greater variety of foods. Isn't it easier to tell someone else what is wrong with their lives? It takes the focus off of you. As much as I know that Mom loved our old house I know she knows she has to sell it soon. I wouldn't say she is trapped in the old house. I wouldn't dare. She would be furious if I said that. She is a happy person. But change is hard and I think she is trapped in that house. Without a doubt it is time to move.

Katherine Hepburn's credo was "Go Now". According to a review of a recent book, "How to Hepburn: Lessons on Living from Kate the Great, her salient lesson for the modern age is to act and then figure it out. A lot of her life was about doing things that terrified her. She made plenty of mistakes but at least she went for it. She would not condemn Paris for messing up; the great Kate certainly did that. . But she would tell her to get her act together and do something that she was proud of. She would tell her to be strong, do her time and then come out and accomplish something of value so she could move forward. That is the lesson to be learned here. We need to always move forward. We need to strive to get better, get out of a bad relationship or a stalled career or simply out of the house.

Most of all, you just have to get out of the supermarket to move on. As Hepburn would say, "Go Now".

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