



“Where have you been all day long?”

By Ines Aubert

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I am in Texas to say good bye to my longtime friend Robert on death row in the Polunsky Unit because he has an execution date next week. On the days I can't see him I'm visiting with my other pen pals in prison.

This morning, in Woodville, Texas, when I sat in the visiting room, waiting for Seth, my 20 year-old pen pal who is not on death row, I observed a Hispanic grandmother with three young children next to me. She was handing the phone to one after the other so they could talk to the man sitting on the other side of the glass. I heard one of the boys say into the phone with his little voice: “I miss you, Daddy. Where have you been all day long?”

So many inmates could ask their fathers this question: Where have you been?

Robert's father was mostly absent in his childhood and couldn't give him the guidance and care a child needs. The same goes for Seth. Both Robert's and Seth's fathers are in prison with long sentences. The little boy's father, obviously, is in prison as well.

I just hope that for these children “all day long” doesn't equal “all their childhood”.

By the way, Robert and his father have been denied a visit although there is the possibility to transfer one of them to the prison of the other and put them in adjacent cells so they can talk the whole night. They haven't seen each other for 18 years.