

AMERICAN GULAG

Lock down, Day 46:

As a result of the recreation yard disturbance on Thursday, May 26, 2011, we continue on our current lock down status.

The Light at the End of the Tunnel

As bad as current circumstances are, the news from June 30, 2011, has improved the spirits of myself and those in the cells around me. On that day, the United States Sentencing Commission voted unanimously to retroactively apply the new crack cocaine sentencing guideline to those of us imprisoned for decades already.

Congress last year substantially lowered the sentences for crack-related crimes such as possession and trafficking. One result of the new law is to bring the penalties for the drug more in line with those for powdered cocaine. The question before the commission on the 30th was whether people already locked up under the old law should benefit retroactively from the changes. Thankfully the answer was yes!

Federal prisoners will have to petition a judge for a sentence reduction, and requests will be decided on a case-by-case basis, with the court taking into consideration the defendant's behavior in prison and his likelihood of recidivism. Prosecutors will be allowed to weigh in as well, and the earliest anyone could be released is November 2011.

In addition the federal Bureau of Prisons estimates that over the first five years the change will save \$ 200 million taxpayer dollars.

It is my sincerest hopes that my Judge acknowledges the Man I am today, and not the boy I once was. After all that I've seen and experienced, I can honestly say that I'm even more infused with ^{an} Optimism about the future, and about the rest of my life that is luminous and burns brighter as the days continue. This crucible has provided the opportunity for reinvention, to start from scratch, and learn by doing. The great thing about remaking oneself, is that you can jettison all the things you hate, while plotting your passions and allowing them to take you to new places.

Retrospective review of my life, the decisions, and the results, ~~have~~ proven essential in preventing the quality of the rest of my life from becoming dramatically poorer and weaker.

The tough challenge of differentiating the popular, from the worthwhile, taught me that knowledge is the most valuable commodity. The ability to articulate your personal positivity connects you to other positive people on a higher, more intelligent level.

I am not a victim, I am not intimidated by the future - I embrace the future - not because I wanted to, but because I had to. I've taken control and used every opportunity to educate myself, refusing to allow prison to define me negatively or indefinitely. The greatest thing about America, for all her faults is that she can occasionally bestow Second Chances.

I can see the end of the tunnel.....

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• To Axel, I would be very interested to hear more about your country, and my friend, let no-one say that your country is a cesspool, South Africa is an inspiring example of what happens when Good People stand-up and stand firm.

• To ruffcuff4, I appreciate your insight, Thank you.