

A PRISONER TO MY PAST: INDIANA POLITICAL PRISONER

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**"Doing time creates a demented darkness of my own imagination;
doing time does this thing to you. But of course you don't do time, you do without it,
and other times it does you. Time is a cannibal that
devours the flesh of your years day by day, bite by bite."**

Comrade Leonard Peltier

Since 1987 I have been on a journey of growth and development, forced to live and grow up in a controlled environment: the Indiana Department of Correction. Society may not know this, or simply never taken the time to see it this way. Prisons are only a microcosm of the larger society. The daily realities that occur in society also occur in prison, if on a smaller scale.

Some prisoners who are non-violent enter these environments and encounter various forms of disrespect, mistreatment and harassment. These men or women, due to their unfortunate experiences, slowly begin to internalize their anger and rage, and that progresses to a propensity for violence: when a prisoner catches an internal prison battery charge on a prisoner or a prison official. This never goes away. So long as you are a prisoner, that will be a permanent part of your permanent record.

When your conduct goes from negative to positive, the Indiana Department of Corrections will never allow you to live down your past. From the first time I received my initial conduct infraction, the prisonrats here in IDOC documented everything. In 26 years, I believe that I acquired maybe 12 battery charges, three of which were created out of one incident in 2006, at Wabash Valley Correctional Facility (SCU unit). Three officers provoked me into defending

myself. When it was over, instead of criminal charges filed on them, I got charged with three separate assault and battery charges. This became a permanent part of my conduct record.

Currently I have spent 18 years in solitary confinement because of this documented history of violence. Some of it is my fault, other times I was provoked. While I will never regret actions taken to defend myself, I do wish at other times I could have been disciplined enough to overlook their disrespect,.

It took years, but I am conduct-free, and these things don't affect me as they once did. My past is just that; a past. However, I am currently judged, considered and denied on the basis of my past.

They told me there is nothing they can do to cause myself to be viewed in a different light. Having completed multiple educational, religious and life skills programs, none of this means anything to them. What happened to rehabilitating men and women so they will be better people for society? Having the stigma of having killed a prison guard (for which I continue to declare my innocence), one thing is clear. The IDOC plan is to make me pay, by allowing me to deteriorate slowly, mentally and physically.

I have changed but I am haunted by my past conduct. They will not let me live that down. This is why I conclude that I am a prisoner of my past. They refuse to let me conquer my past. I write what I like.

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