

## Stolen Dreams

Outside my window is a barren concrete courtyard with a large storm drain in the center. Amazingly two big sunflowers grew from this drain and for me were a symbol of beauty rising from a dark, dank drain. I guess it should not surprise me that the warden would order this flower torn out and destroyed but somehow extinguishing the only part of nature that exists in my world left me disgusted. For hours I paced my cell angry at the vile human being that is Warden David Berkebile for stealing this bright yellow flower that made me smile. Darkness fell and I looked out into the courtyard one more time and just as I was about to turn I looked at the brilliance of a thousand points of light in the night sky. I know in fact there are millions of stars but in that moment satisfaction intruded upon my bitterness as I thought how though the Warden could kill the plant I so admired he could no more extinguish those points of light anymore than he

could extinguish my motivation to defeat petty men like him who use the weight of their power not to change the hearts and minds of men that have broken the law, but instead to do their best to crush the mind, body and spirit of those in their care. Prisons are full of men and women in America whose dreams have been stolen by a cruel and sadistic system of men who seek not to rehabilitate but who seek to suppress independent thought, squash hope, and steal dreams. To men like Warden Berkeley it is better to use brutality and manipulation to gain a measure of subservience than it is to show my peers the beauty of life, the righteousness of compassion and empathy, the moral superiority of charity and self sacrifice to the common good. The Warden is too busy to listen to inmate pleas but has ample time to kill rogue sunflowers. He has about as much a chance of stealing my dreams as he has of extinguishing the shining points of light in the night sky.

- Jeremy Pinson 7/18/13