

Daniel Gwynn Blog Update
Date: 9/1/13
Subject: DOJ Back Again

The people from the DOJ were here again for a 3 day tour last week. They wandered around the compound in search of a mentally ill prisoner suffering from the oppressive conditions of their Restricted Housing Unit (RHU) confinement. They pulled out the usual suspects with a documented history of mental illness and excessive disciplinary problems. Surprisingly, they found no raving & ranting madness, just lucid & sociable prisoners. It's ironic because after multiple years of visible deterioration (just months before the tour), just when this tour comes they're all the picture of mental health.

Just a few months ago, one prisoner was ranting & raving at specters from his past taunting him, and his hygiene was atrocious; another was smashing his cell appliances to bits in a fit of rage; and another committed suicide. How did such a drastic reversal come about after so many years of instability. The staff is not trained or equipped to handle these prisoners with special needs. All I've seen the staff do is exacerbate the decline by agitation, disciplinary action, or drugging the prisoner.

Unfortunately, the DOJ reps didn't talk to any of the prisoners that live around these victims of the prison mental health care system. The staff lacks the proper training & facilities designed to handle mentally ill prisoners. Nationwide, State mental health facilities has been down-sized, and the push has been to lock-up people with mental illnesses in state prisons. They're ushered into these State prisons and drugged up, with no thought to proper mental health treatment.

Since the tour, some changes has been implemented: all mentally ill prisoners has been herded onto one pod; and a day-room is in the works to get them out of their cells; and the mental health staff member comes to see them more often.

I wish the DOJ reps would've talked to the people living around all of this, because they would've acquired multiple accounts of their deterioration and the emotional toll all of this has on us.

