

Blog Post - /1385/ Mr. Quinones' experiences with Life Behind Bars (continued) 11/12/13

→ But the blame does not rest solely with the inmate. While it is true that many - close to 95% I'd say - of the people who land in prison have led a life of crime, not all wish to continue doing so.

The criminal element of one's lifestyle can manifest itself in the form of drug addition, family violence, gang culture, or any number of factors! But not everyone who has broken the law has made a lifestyle or habit of it. You only have to violate someone's rights once to become outlawed.

What I would like to discuss now is my personal experiences, as well as what I've witnessed other prisoners go through. (Keep in mind that most government entities have rules, policies, and standard procedures for dealing with a particular situation / person.)

So when I speak of these things, it should be noted that they apply to anyone else who may find themselves in my / this position. In other words, "if you do this... expect that to happen."

Many people know that in prison one doesn't get to choose what kind of food they eat or how much time they get to spend in the exercise yard. Prisoners don't get to choose what time they have to lock down in their cells, or what type of jobs they'll have to perform.

Much of society is aware of the expensive phone calls, the strict visitation guidelines, and the standard prison garb issued to every inmate. Some are even familiar with the restrictions placed on an offender's mail, his access to resources, outside contacts.

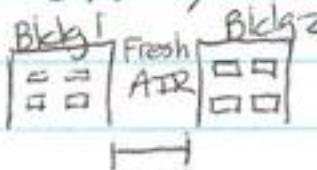
But few people have any idea of hardships that are endured by inmates housed in long-term solitary confinement, an isolation chamber built like a prison inside a prison. This segregated and maximum-security holding facility is what I wish to discuss with all who are willing to participate.

While the dimensions of these solitary confinement cells remain the same as regular population cells, and we inmates are served very similar meals as general population (Gen. Pop.), little else remains of the conditions seen in Gen. Pop.

The cell floor space varies from 50-60 sq ft., depending on which facility you're at. We are served approximately 2,000 calories per day. The food comes on a plastic or rubber tray; sort of like a rationed school lunch tray! I have a total of 115 months served in jails and prisons since my eighteenth (18th) birthday, 186 months ago. And I can't even force myself to eat some of the food that is served here at WSP. Mainly, the cat-meal, jelly, salad, certain "lunch meats", and fruit - that comes spoiled. We are not exactly starved, but some of the food is quite inedible. Unless you want to have an upset stomach, diarrhea, gas, indigestion, the works. No thank you.

Out of all of the recreation yards available in this state (WA), Intensive Management Unit - IMU - (South) has the only yard that offers no direct exposure to the sky, or sunlight.

The "outside" rec. yard actually is not outside at all. It is simply another room, 7 ft x 12 ft, built right alongside a common cell, here at the Penitentiary in Walla Walla. The room is completely closed in on all sides. The only access to fresh air coming through four screens over two windows measuring 6["] (in) x 36["] (in) hardly enough for a breeze, especially since half the "yards" face toward the outside wall of the building adjacent / across, a 20-foot space separating them.



Only a small 'dip' bar

is available for exercise. 8' ceilings. 1 pay phone.

For more on this topic please log on to /1385/. Comments welcome.