

Daniel Gwynn Blog Update

Date: 3/22/15

Subject: "My Complaint To The Department of Justice"

To: the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division,  
Special Litigation Section

Re: The Harsh Conditions of Long Term Confinement At Greene

I've been in the Restricted Housing Unit (RHU) at SCI-Greene since 1996, housed under the oppressive conditions of punitive practices, isolation & severe hardships which has been detrimental to my health (physically & mentally), and which infringes upon my rights to be free from cruel & unusual punishments under the guise of penological interest.

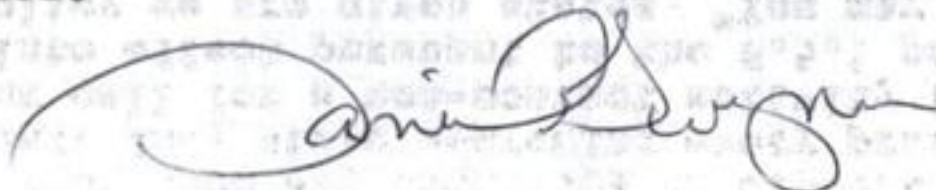
I've been sent here to be warehoused until my sentence to be executed is carried out, not subjected to hostile/judgmental guards or punitive practices for infractions I did not, nor intend to commit.

The biggest problem is that I am issued an Inmate Handbook with policies that don't apply and/or aren't feasible; then told that there's another policy (6.5.8) that do apply, but we're not permitted to see it yet expected to follow it. To justify an unreasonable punitive measure, the management claims "Security" to shut down any inquiries or opposition. For example: On February 2nd, strip searching every prisoner every time we exit our cell for a non-contact activity (shower, library, etc.) came into effect pursuant to the 6.5.1 policy; yet the DC-ADM 203 policy we are given states, "You may be strip searched, when necessary, for the security and safe operation of the facility." When I asked the Unit Manager about this I was told "It's security", shutting down my complaint.

Another example: Several years ago, it was prohibited by the DOC for prisoners' family/friend to make outside purchases for them, but I discovered that the law said they could. When I brought this contradiction to their attention, I was told that I was correct but they weren't going to do anything for security reasons.

Time & again, it has been proven that policies imposed upon us do not work. The guards who actually get along with us while executing their duties--Custody, Care & Control--operate in a fashion that soothes the daily operations, at the behest of the Unit Management's decree to make the Unit work. Management does not listen to these guards with the experience down here, so instead they make things worse, creating the clashes between the staff & the prisoners.

I personally feel my mental & physical health deterioration every day, as I am subjected to unwarranted punitive practices & hostilities from judgmental guards who believe it's their jobs to punish me in addition to the sentence I received from the court. A C.O. Arnold enters the unit and announces his disdain for us and his intentions to hurt someone or write them up. Then goes around slamming the wickets & doors, banging his baton on metal objects. They continue to let him down here after we report this behavior.





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The constant cell illumination continues to disrupt my sleep. I've become more tired & irritable than usual. It makes no sense to leave the night light on when there's no one making rounds. The cell could be illuminated when the guard is making rounds as we did back in 1996-2000.

Being strip searched every day (sometimes multiple times a day) to go to the shower, library or yard is ridiculous. It makes me reluctant to leave my cell for activities or medical services. It's excessive and serves no legitimate penological interest, as there hasn't been an incident to justify stripping me naked & searching my orifice & anal cavity for contraband. It's also humiliating to have a man gawk at me in a peculiar way as I'm ordered to bend over and spread my cheeks. It makes me uneasy, especially after hearing about the sexual assaults at Fayette.

The constant handcuffing from behind has been hard on my wrists & shoulder joints. My hands often goes numb, and my shoulder burns with pain. When I went to medical, I was given Ibuprofen and sent on my way. When I insisted on an xray, we discovered that my joints were deteriorating from the constant cuffing from behind. They claimed nothing could be done. Many years ago (1996-2000) we were able to move about unrestrained yet escorted to the shower, library & yard. There was no incident to warrant putting us in restraints.

There isn't any meaningful review of my custody status that could afford me an opportunity to effectively challenge the conditions of my confinement, and make my case for less restrictions & more privileges. The current perfunctory Periodic Review Committee (PRC) merely rubber stamps my status to remain in the current punitive RHU hostile environment. When compared to Disciplinary Custody/Administrative Custody level prisoners, Capital Case Unit is just a step above, when actually, were supposed to be far removed from those harsh conditions like the general population. All I've ever heard from the PRC is "There's nothing they can do, It's policy." When a policy causes more harm than good, and fails to serve a legitimate penological interest, procedures should be in place where proper meaningful review can be held.

In closing, we were slated to be akin to the general population (with restrictions), but without due process we were locked down and stripped of privileges. The current harsh conditions hasn't all been listed here, but they have created a hostile environment where I sit in constant fear for my safety & health. The current punitive lock down measures are unwarranted & excessive, albeit some measures of discomfort is to be expected in a prison facility. But the court did not charge the DOC with the task of meting out any additional punishments to my sentence to be executed.

I wish to thank you for your time and consideration in this grave matter.





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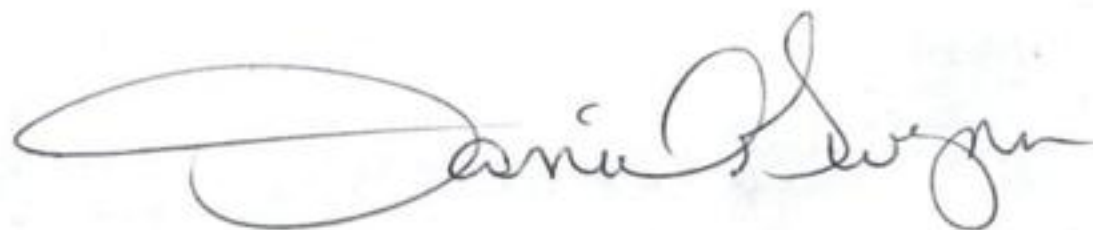
Subject: "another Department of Justice visit"

It was a week of hope, as the department of Justice (DOJ) attorneys came through and announced that they were here to review our complaints. I was in the yard when they made this announcement over the loud speaker. They stated that they would be walking around to each cell later in the day to collect our complaints. Their main focus was on the mental health aspect of our solitary confinement.

I was excited like everyone else, and hopeful for this opportunity to effect a real positive change around here. So far, by the grace of God, I have survived the hardships here-cracked but not broken. I may not be drooling in my soup, but the oppressive conditions of my confinement has affected me, and continues to as I struggle to maintain my sanity.

I don't like complaining because with prison-life comes expected hardships. But what I've experienced here at SCI-Greene goes beyond any ordinary hardships that's expected. I'm in a Restricted Housing Unit (RHU) where men are treated inhumanely and are broken, either physically or mentally, from the long term restrictive confinement. The deprivation of human contact; the disconnect from family & friends; the judgmental guards doling out pain punishments in addition to our sentences; witnessing the mental & physical deterioration of my neighbors; the isolated lock down; sleep deprivation due to constant cell illumination; strip searched every time we leave our cells; and the unfeasible policies that create a hostile environment.

This visit has given me a renewed sense of hope that change is possible, hopefully before I end up drooling in my soup.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Daniel Gwynn". The signature is written in dark ink and is centered horizontally on the page.