

## Silencing of Transgender Existence

There is a prevalent and systematic culture of abuse to transgender prisoners in California, and the authorities are not doing enough to stop the abuse, but appear instead to be content in covering reports of it up.

In my personal experiences as a transgendered prisoner, the evidence of abuse is apparent only in the most severe cases, i.e., resulting in serious injury or death. However, there are everyday abuses and harassment of transgender inmates that are silent abuses.

Examples of these types of insidious abuse can be seen in the everyday experience of transgender prisoners; like the forced coupling of incompatible inmates, with no accountability on the part of administrators when an attack occurs as a result of such policies; like the policy which punishes and isolates the transgender who brings ongoing harassments to light; like the systematic indifference by corrections officials and guards, who side with violent and abusive inmates when allegations are raised.

I am a victim of this systematic culture of abuse and silencing of transgender existence.

The "culture of abuse" includes acts by staff to restrict transgender self expression, a non tolerance to femininity within the male prison yards, where staff use catcalling and masculine pronouns in addressing us. These are just some of the psychological tactics employed by staff to discourage and defeat us. The hardest thing is not being able to do anything to stop the harassments; not having a voice except for a handful of transgender organizations, but even they are unable to intervene in CDCR politics.

I have wondered how long I could go on with the current system of silent abuses. It's like I am a piece of meat and people are trying to get some booty all the time, and if I am strong and do resist, they threaten me with violence. Transgendered people should not be forced to endure this environment without alternatives or protections that are real, not just lip-service. Fact is, if you don't have a "husband" or are part of some gang, you face a real and ongoing threat to life, and this sense of dread lasts for months and, in my case, for years.

I feel trapped by my status as a transgender here, and I didn't choose to be this. But men here do not understand this at all. As far as they are concerned, this is what I want. The abuse and the come-ons, all are part of being a "bitch" in a mens prison. To be honest, I wish I were not this way right now. I wish I had some alternative to wanting to express myself this way, but I do not, and so goes the torture and silencing of my existence.

--Cindy CeCe Young  
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