

MY LIFE ON TEXAS DEATH ROW

The 2 most common questions I & others here get asked are: 1) What is life like on Death Row ("D/R") & 2) What is a typical day like for me. So I thought I'd answer both questions in this 1 article. Let me start by saying there are 2 D/Rs in Texas; 1 for the men & 1 for the women. The women's is at a Unit in Gatesville, which I think is close to Waco. The men's is in Livingston - which is about 1½ hours NE of Houston. Us men get treated much more harshly than the women, & I'll give examples shortly. I 1st came to D/R in May of '96. Back then we were housed at a Unit in Huntsville - which is about an hour west of here. When I arrived at the Unit - it was nothing of what I expected. I was told that because I was an ex cop - I had to do at least 6 months time in "single-man recreation" as opposed to being in "group recreation". Group recreation?! Yup. I had thought we'd all be separated somehow. Then they brought me to my wing & I looked in & saw TVs along the wall & guys playing basketball & handball outside in the rec yard, all getting along just fine. Every race. As I walked to my cell towards the end of the run I heard some guys taunting me with names like "pig" & wanting me to get outside with them. Since they had seen about me on TV, I expected that. After I got inside my small cell, my neighbor Earnest Willis asked me if I needing anything, as did a few other neighbors. My 1st thought was that they were trying to "punk me out" somehow, so I declined & said I was fine. Yet within days I was sent things like a new t-shirt by Genaro Comacho & toothpaste by Hank Skinner. Altho still receiving some taunts - I figured it was more just harassment & didn't feel threatened. So 2 days after my arrival when I was coming back from a routine medical check-up - I asked the captain if I could be placed into group recreation with the rest of the guys if I signed some sort of release form for if I was harmed. He told me there was such a form & he took me to speak with the warden & classification committee. They agreed to release me & I showed up in the next rec days' group. Long story short, I got along just fine with everyone. I worked out with them, & played basketball & handball with them. It was in that rec group that I met Charles Hood, who to this day is still my best fellow prisoner friend even tho he accepted a deal for a life sentence & is at a different Unit. After 6 months I became eligible for the work program. Work program?! Yup. I worked in the garment factory making pants for the TDCJ guards. We had large pointed scissors, screwdrivers, needles, & other "weapons" at our disposal, yet not 1 incident occurred! I met some very decent people who had made some horrible choices in their lives that ended the lives of their victims, yet now they were totally changed men. Hood is 1 such person all of you reading this would love to have as your next door neighbor if you didn't know his past. I met 1 of the best examples of a Christian ever, yet

he was executed. His name was Jose Gutierrez(sp) & I'll never forget him. I also met someone I still consider to be my 2nd best prisoner friend, - Eric Cathey. I'm also still friends with Hank Skinner & never even knew he sent me that toothpaste until he finally admitted it to me last year! Unfortunately we all got transferred to this Polunsky Unit (or what we call "living hell") in 2000. While the women still have group rec, a work program, TV, shaving razors, nailclippers, pencil sharpeners, multi-plug outlet extension cords, & church services to my knowledge; us men have had all that taken away from us. Why?! I didn't do anything to warrant such punishment or discrimination. But that's TDCJ & Polunsky Unit officials for ya. And apparently Texas Sen. John Whitmire knows about all these unjust actions against us, & maybe even initiated some. Polunsky works it such that if 1 man does something wrong, they punish all 250 of us rather than just that 1 man. One guy here, Richard Tabler, got hold of a cell phone & called Whitmire & harassed or threatened him somehow. Yes, I agree we DO have guys in here who deserve being punished for THEIR actions because THEY break rules. But now we ALL get locked down & severely shaken down every 90 days whereas the women are 1-2 times per year like we men USED to be. Here again, I (& others) did not & have not done anything wrong,- yet I (& we) get punished?! Can you imagine this kind of injustice happening to YOU all out there reading this? Your neighbor commits a crime & YOU get punished for it as well?! This mentality by TDCJ is WHY we have prisoners who are released & commit crimes once again because they have been TAUGHT by TDCJ's example of just how corrupt the system is & it gives them no hope or desire to want to do good. The system SHOULD lead BY EXAMPLE of doing things properly & justly. But the example is injustice & corruption & many prisoners LEARN that example very well & exercise that knowledge when they get out. There is SO MUCH EVIL here at Polunsky & TDCJ, & I'm NOT talking the prisoners! Every day,... EVERY DAY in this Polunsky hellhole is a "fight" for justice for me because I'm MISTreated somehow. Even tho I will not bother going to my single man rec time or even to the shower booth, I STILL get abused somehow. They are SUPPOSED to now give us shaving razors when we go to the shower booth on Sunday, Wednesday & Fridays. But do they? NO! I have not been able to shave in 26 days now & there's no end in sight because they are claiming they don't even have anymore razors on the Unit because they are back-ordered. Now remember, the D/R women have their own razors & can buy them from commissary along with 140,000 other TDCJ prisoners. But not us D/R men because 1 man, who has since been executed, made a "razor vest" to protect himself from being beaten up by guards. They had even taken away our earplugs for about 2 years because of 1 guy. EARPLUGS! Altho I have to say that MOST guards are pretty decent with us, MOST of the officials here are not. They tend to hate us & want to inflict harsh treatments upon us for no valid reason at all. And BY FAR,

the VAST majority of guards who mistreat me & others are WOMEN! Polunsky officials love placing women who are man-haters or have some "issue" where they feel a "need" to exercise abusive authority over men, over us D/R men. Women oversee all our grievances, incoming & outgoing mail, & monitoring video surveillance. Oh, that's something else only us D/R men have; video cameras that watch us everywhere we go when we are out of our cells. And us D/R men get stripped naked anytime we are coming back to our cells from the rec areas & visits. In other words, female guards are watching us men get naked all day long. Are male guards allowed to strip-out the female prisoners? I'm just askin'. And can you imagine yourself not being able to clip your finger &/or toenails for 4-5 weeks? If not, come to men's D/R! Here again the women & 140,000 other prisoners can buy nailclippers from commissary. So the "policy" for us D/R men is that nailclippers are to be brought to me/us once every week. Are they? Pffft. See all my grievances on this matter, & see how the women always deny them regardless. Then on my pod's night for the clippers, I have to ask, & ask, & ask, & ask for them for many hours before an officer MIGHT go get them & complain to me about it. Yeah, they complain even tho I'm not even supposed to have to ask because they are supposed to be brought to me automatically. Just another "fight" I have to routinely deal with here because Polunsky officials don't care.

Polunsky Unit has what they call 6 "pods" that were all for us D/R men back when we had over 400 of us. Now with only about 250, 2 of the pods house general population ("G.P.") ad-seg (administrative segregation) guys. Each pod has a total of 84 cells; 2 rows of 42. Each pod is divided into 6 sections, like a pie. In the middle of the pod/pie is the pickett(sp) where at least 1 officer remains to work the buttons that electronically pop shower & cell doors & gates open. Because everything is made with concrete & steel, it's LOUD in here & sounds bounce off the pickett & walls, etc. There SHOULD still be a popular blog that gives pictures & more information about the cells & Unit overall. I THINK the addy is: www.minutesbeforesix.com & you should check it out.

As for my routine days, - depending what section I'm living on, breakfast is served about 3:15am. I save the food & go back to sleep until awakened again about 5:30am to ask if I'm going to recreate &/or shower. I rarely rec early, so I either refuse or say yes to a rec time that's after lunch & go back to sleep til about 10am IF I'm lucky. But there are always interruptions for something. Lunch is served about 10:30am & that's when I eat my saved breakfast & save my lunch for my 1:30 snack. After I eat the breakfast, I either read (if I have anything to read) or start writing letters, or get ready to go to rec IF I'm going soon thereafter. I then do a little workout either in my cell or the rec area, then have my 1:30pm snack. I then write

or read or study legal material if I got some from the law library here. (I do alot of legal filing myself, pro se). I generally do another little workout in the afternoon then eat another snack around 4pm. Then it's back to writing or studying, then I eat another snack about 6:30pm. Dinner is served around that time sometimes, but I don't rely on what time it comes. Being hypoglycemic, I eat on my own schedule so long as I have enough money sent to my account from people out there so I can buy food from commissary. But if I save dinner, I eat it around 9pm, which is my last meal for the day. I have NO control over what time they shower me, so that will vary anywhere from as early as 5:35am to 11pm. Mail gets brought to us around 9:30pm but can vary from a RARELY early 7pm all the way to 1:23am the next day. Again, officials don't care how late we get kept awake or awakened even tho it SHOULD be no later than 10pm. I TRY to be in bed by 10pm, but that is RARE. So most nights I'm not asleep til anywhere from 11pm-12:20am; which is why I try to sleep-in til about 10am due to all the sleep interruptions. I try for 8 hours sleep total, but usually don't get it. If I were out there & had my way, I'd be asleep by 10:30pm & up by 7am. My workouts don't last that long. We don't have weights here, so I do pushups, pullups, & improvise exercises. I workout 6 days/week & my total workout time each day is maybe only 30 minutes total. I take the Sabbath (Saturdays) off.

I stay in my cell alot & mostly only go to the shower booth when it's razor day so I can shave & cut my hair in there. In addition to writing letters, I do articles such as this, & am currently working on an entire website project that I hope I can get posted by someone on www.endracialandreligioustensions.com. Wanna help me?:) No?! Well that's okay. Just please send some money to my TDCJ account via jpay.com or ecommdirect (which costs less) so I can hire a web designer:)


Oh, I get cuffed behind my back before I come out of my cell, or the rec area or visitation. I'm cuffed like that wherever I go, & escorted by 2 officers.

Most of the letters I write are either trying to get new friends, or legal help.

Much of the sleep interruptions come from fellow prisoners too. For the past few months I have 2 neighbors who talk to each other for several hours a day even tho they are separate by 3 cells, so they are quite loud. Many nights they don't even start a conversation til after 10pm & go on loudly til 12:35am. I'm a firm believer that we should all stop "B/Sing" come 10pm. Most guys agree with that, but some have that attitude of: "This is prison & I'll do what I want when I want". My response is that that's the identical attitude they had out there that landed them in prison in the 1st place! But they don't care. Since coming to Polunsky, racisms have increased TREMENDOUSLY, as have what we call "cell warriors". They're real brave behind a steel door because we don't have group recreation anymore. At the initial Unit, guys were more considerate & "respectful".

Top officials of TDCJ wrote specific rules & regulations for Death Row. It's titled the "Death Row Plan", & Polunsky wardens on down are SUPPOSED to FOLLOW those rules. But do they? Pffft. Heck no. Polunsky Unit officials have always done whatever they felt like doing to us D/R men; hence no razors, nailclippers, earplugs, etc. If you read the Death Row Plan - you'll see that there are 3 recreation schedules that Polunsky officials MUST choose from & assign to us to follow. But instead, & in typical Polunsky "do their own thing" fashion, they've assigned a totally different schedule to us that gives us LESS hours than the schedule we were on up until 11/7/15. Then they cut it even shorter whenever they feel like it. For example, today is 3/6/16. Last week we were only allowed to recreate on: 3/1/16, 3/3/16, & 3/5/16. Today & several Sundays prior, they don't bother recreating us or showering us because they always claim they are "short-handed". Whereas I'm sure many officers get too drunk on Saturday nights to make it in on Sundays, they SHOULD: 1) PLAN for the alleged shortage by scheduling more officers to come in on Sundays since this is a recurring problem, or 2) better yet, only have 1-2 officers on each pod rather than the current 3. As previously explained, we are cuffed & escorted by 2 officers every where we go. But so long as we are not leaving the pod (i.e. - just going to rec or shower), there is NO NEED for us to be escorted at all. One officer can sit in that pickett & roll our doors open 1 at a time for us to walk to rec or shower by ourselves. It's totally safe since there'd be no one around to harm or get harmed, & it would save tax payer dollars from having to hire more officers. That's the way this Unit was designed people. Our cells & the shower booths already have a wiring system so that speakers can be installed for us to call to the pickett & vice versa. So you see, there really is NOT any shortage of officers, but rather unnecessary employments & wasted manpower & efficiency. Furthermore, the current rec schedule is NOT authorized by the Death Row Plan. But Polunsky officials are ALWAYS violating the rules & laws, but no one, including the government, cares about this corruption.

Also in typical Polunsky fashion, 1st shift shut rec & showers down as I said. So now 2nd shift came on duty tonight & do you think THEY ran recs & showers, or at least showers? Heck NO! The reason? And I quote: "The lieutenant said that since 1st shift didn't do the showers, we're not going to do them either." I then asked: "Are you short-handed too?" The answer: "No. It's just that it's not right for 1st shift to do nothing & leave all the work for us." Now people, I agree that 1st shift is ALWAYS slow-bucking & shutting things down. That doesn't give 2nd shift the right to deny us our recs & showers too! But this is TYPICAL Polunsky D/R shift wars, & us men suffer for it. Again, no one cares about the mistreatment, abuses, & violations of rules & laws & Constitutional Rights even us D/R men are SUPPOSED to be protected by.



Well, another day - another update. Now it's 3/7/16 & Polunsky officials have changed the days they will let us have razors to shave while in the shower booth. The inhouse rule is us men only get razors on our rec days of this new schedule, & only Monday thru Friday; no weekend razors. Wow, talk about lazy! People, on this new rec schedule - we rec on Monday, Wednesday, & Friday one week; then Tuesday & Thursday the next week. And it keeps alternating like that. That means I/we will only get to shave 2 times a week one week, & 3 times the next week. Just like this new rec schedule, this extremely limited dispensing of razors is NOT authorized by the Death Row Plan or any other rules in writing from TDCJ headquarters. And remember, the D/R women & 140,000 other TDCJ inmates are allowed to buy razors from commissary & keep them in their cells. This discrimination against us D/R men keeps getting worse. What's really sad is that TDCJ made an AGREEMENT in a lawsuit against them made by inmate Ruiz, claiming that TDCJ would be giving ALL privileges BACK to us D/R men so we'd be treated like the D/R women & other inmates & no longer discriminated against. They made that agreement so the lawsuit would be dropped. So the suit was dropped ONLY because of the agreement TDCJ officially made. That agreement was approximately 14 years ago, & all Polunsky & TDCJ have done since then is take more & more away from us D/R men. Even tho pro Death Penalty people are always happy when TDCJ takes more away from us, an official agreement is an official agreement, & TDCJ officials are corrupt liars for going against their word & constantly inflicting more harsh abuses upon us. It reminds me of the movie: The Longest Yard where Burt Reynolds makes the deal with the warden so his fellow inmates wouldn't be abused anymore, but then the lying corrupt warden inflicts even more harm on the inmates. That's exactly what TDCJ & Polunsky officials have been & keep doing to us D/R men. Lies are lies & corruption is corruption. That's TDCJ for ya, & that's the example TDCJ is setting for ALL their inmates & their families & friends.

Since the ACLU & other organizations & law firms won't file a class action lawsuit on our behalves, it's a shame that all the anti-Death Penalty people around the world who manage to collect tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars for some guys in here - don't pool together to hire an attorney to file another suit against TDCJ for all these abuses & mistreatments & violations of the Ruiz agreement, TDCJ rules, State & federal laws, & Constitutional Rights. Sadly, it'll never happen no matter how often the folks of the KPFT Prison Show complain about our mistreatments on the radio. We need ACTIONS, not words.

I guess that's all for now folks. I hope this enlightens readers to what my life is like on Texas Death Row, & God bless.

Well, I spoke too soon. I want to make 1 more update before I mail this off to

Between the Bars. Today is 3/8/16. Yesterday was my/our razor day but 1st shift left 32 showers & a few recs for 2nd shift to do, so 2nd shift officers were griping about having to do some work cuz they're just as lazy as 1st shift. I was 1 of the 32 needing to shower & shave. Well in order to get guys to "V/R" (Verbally Refuse) their shower, the 2nd shift officers (Jordan McBride & Kendrick Ryans) LIED to us all by claiming 1st shift did not leave any razors for them to give us. Since I KNEW that was a lie, I told them I wanted to speak with rank. (Mind you, I always talk respectfully to the officers - even when they are young & abusive). After telling me 2 more lies of excuses for not giving me 1, both refused...REFUSED to get rank to speak with me to resolve this matter, & then REFUSED to shower me by writing "V/R" on the shower sheet - just because I said I was going to write them up. I get suicidal thoughts whenever this place abuses me like that, so I told a pill nurse who was making the rounds to please tell rank I need to speak with him because I was having suicidal thoughts again. She then told McBride - who was escorting her. Needless to say, McBride did NOT tell rank cuz rank would have seen they DID have razors & made them shower me & give me 1...HOPEFULLY, depending on who the rank is! Obviously the pill nurse didn't tell anyone either cuz no one came to speak with me. I was VERY upset & had to keep praying & trying to think nice thoughts to avoid the suicidal ones, & couldn't get to sleep til about 1:40am. Sure enough, this morning when 1st shift came on at 5:30am, the officers told me "Well over 30 razors" were still in the pickett & they realized 2nd shift didn't give us any. Thankfully they gave them to me & the other guys who got screwed over by 2nd shift. But I had to shower & shave at 5:56am! So this is a prime example of how my sleep gets interrupted routinely cuz nothing ever runs smoothly around here. Polunsky Unit has ALWAYS been out of control with us D/R men. The 1st Unit (Ellis) was not. They treated us like all other TDCJ prisoners. In my 4 years there - I may have filed 3 grievances total. In my 1st 4 years here at Polunsky, - probably 100. Then they **placed** a limit on the number we can file, naturally. But I've probably filed over 300 total here. Again, no one cares about how we're treated.

Okay, I do believe...th..th..th..th...that's all folks!

Peace,

Bobby

Bobby Fratta

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