

The September 11th attacks were the most tragic event I have witnessed in my lifetime. I was stunned and shocked as I watched the events unfold. Our country will never be the same. Massachusetts state prisoners donated over \$10,000.00 to relief organizations, which is an incredible amount based on the meager funds prisoners have access to. I think it shows that the stereotype society places upon prisoners is off base and the majority of those men and women who are incarcerated are compassionate human beings who have fallen victim to the evils of poverty, drugs, and various other social plagues.

Civil liberties may well end up being the biggest "victim" in the aftermath of September 11th. Racial profiling was a hotbed for many libertarians before the attacks and that issue seemed to be well on its way to becoming a topic that would be addressed in a manner that may well have reduced its occurrence. That seems to be out the window with the attitudes following the tragedy. If you fit the bill the "authorities" will scoop you up, toss you in a cage, and ask questions later. Back in the USSR, so to speak. When civil rights are threatened, many times the testing ground is in our prisons. In the wake of the tragedy this has begun to be the case here in the great Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

In October the Commissioner of Corrections ordered his agents to start enforcing a mail policy that entailed the opening of privileged legal mail outside of the presence of the addressee. He had cited the section of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations that gave him the authority to promulgate mail procedures. Even a layman reading this section of the CMR can see that nowhere does it give the Commissioner the right to violate rights protected under the United States Constitution. The opening of "legal mail" outside the presence of its addressee has long been held as unconstitutional by every branch of our nation's court system. The department of correction took advantage of the the aftermath of the attacks to implement this policy under the ruse of protecting those of us in its charge. It's a laughable concept when you see the daily abuses and crimes against humanity that are perpetrated against the prisoners placed in the charge of the Department of Correction. The Federal Court of Appeals ruled in the case of *Bieregu Vs. Reno*, that "prisons pattern and practice of opening properly marked incoming 'court mail' which is correspondence between inmate and state or federal judge, clerk's office or other courthouse address, outside of inmates presence infringes communication protected by the right to free speech; such practice chills protected expression and may inhibit inmates ability to speak, protest, and complain openly, directly, and without reservation to the court." This pretty much says it all. The Commissioner of Correction is well aware of these protected rights and is just using the events after the attack to circumvent litigations, reports of abuse, complaints, and the like that prisoners must voice through the mail system. We are the testing ground. It starts here than moves out to the free world. This concept must be recognized by the citizens who care little of what happens behind prison walls; The stripping of rights never starts at the top of society, that is a fact.

This may seem inconsequential to most people who are outside of prison walls, but I would like to point out that the first right stripping moves of Adolph Hitler seemed the same to the people of ~~that~~ that time. This country is the model for the free world. To let the tragic events of The 11th of September cause us to backslide would give unwarranted power to the event and the evil monsters who were behind it. We are better than that as a society and stronger as a nation founded on unshakable principles. We must stop the foundation from being laid upon which our protected rights will begin to be stripped

unnoticed to most. Racial profiling cant be tolerated. Prisoner's protected rights cannot be violated. The Constitution must stand ever-strong, especially in the wake of the tragedy. That is the United States of America I was told of by my grandfather.

God Bless America!

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