

The Cauldron

A cacophony of sound assaults my ears. Three or Four rap songs play simultaneously. My neighbors are trying to drown each other out as they compete for dominance. My thoughts are in disarray as I try to concentrate on college homework.

Trash rains down to the ground outside my cell. The inmates on the tiers above mine toss their waste over the rails rather than walk to the garbage cans. Shouts and loud conversations rise above the background noise. The voices accentuate the disrespect I feel. I am told: "don't take it personal". And, people tell me, "guys are just being free to relax". Worst of all, others say, "they have a right to enjoy themselves". I wonder, do their rights supersede mine?

The actions are a form of aggression. Why must I be subjected to them. When I complain, others make it a race issue. Well, I am part of the human race. I resent the actions of those around me that forget they are too.

The environment seems to be deteriorating here. I experience negative changes regularly. The prisoners become more depraved as the mantra "all is well" echoes through the institution. However, I am all too aware of the fallacy. Courtesy and empathy are missing; even more so, respect for oneself and others is unique. But, those that understand and strive for growth form tight bonds. We support each other in this cauldron. I thank God for the men who are joined together in sacrifice and service. The comraderie we have in mutual self-development and servitude is priceless.

By: Patrick Rathsack T-45624
San Quentin State Prison
San Quentin, CA 94974