

QUARANTINE
(Day One)
May 11, 2020

One of the guys was having problems breathing last night. Turns out he's been sick for several days now, but didn't want to go to medical, because of what he knew would happen. In here, any inmate who makes the slightest complaint of any type of COVID-19 related symptom is immediately taken out of their cell and placed in a completely separate building with other suspected and confirmed COVID-19 patients. Their property is packed up by someone else, usually by one of the officer's pet rats, who uses this as an opportunity to pilfer a few items here and there. And reporting symptoms to medical doesn't just impact the person feeling sick, either. He's the only one who's actually removed from the building, but EVERYONE else is immediately placed on lockdown. For the next 14-days, medical will be over here taking temperatures 3 times a day, and every time someone has a fever or shows a COVID-19 related symptom, the 14-day period starts all over for EVERYONE in the building.

Anyway, this is the first day of our quarantine. We're supposed to get out of our cells for an hour per day, but there's simply not enough hours in the day to get everyone out of their cells, so it's looking more like we're only going to get an hour every other day. How meals are also a thing of the past, as this morning's breakfast consisted of 3 pieces of "cheese", a tiny bag some banana chips, 2 slices of bread, 2 tiny graham crackers, a half a pint of milk and 4 ounces of juice. They didn't even have the decency to hand us our meals. Instead, they put it on the ground and left it there for an hour before opening our doors so we could reach down and grab it. Lunch is even smaller. They gave us an orange, 3 slices of cheese, 2 slices of bread, a tiny bag of banana chips and 2 tiny graham crackers. We're told that we'll get a hot meal for dinner, but we know better. They're going to put our food on tiny paper trays in the dining hall, which means we're only going to get half of what we're supposed to get, and then they're going to walk it over and serve us, by which time the food will be cold. Morale was down before the quarantine, the effects of dealing with well over a month of COVID-19 related isolation, so as you might imagine, this isn't helping things any whatsoever.

I can't help but make an observation here. Out of 5 buildings, mine was the only one that hadn't had anyone complaining of being sick. It was also the only one whose officers routinely wore their masks, but that all changed almost a week ago. The regular officer was reassigned to another position, and the officers who replaced him refused to wear their masks, an issue I've raised again and again to anyone willing to listen, but no one cares, and why should they? Visitors are no longer allowed into the prison, which means that, not only can our loved ones not come in to see us, but our advocates are also prevented from coming into the prison to see first-hand what's going on.

CBS News just reported a story about someone donating 10 million dollars to help prisoners during the COVID-19 pandemic. The money will be spent to provide inmates with masks. This, of course, assumes that prisons will actually allow their inmates to wear masks. We went through Hell in here, trying to get permission to wear masks, and for what? To protect the officers from us? We weren't the ones who were infected, it was them infecting us, which means the masks aren't going to offer us any protection from an officer who refuses to wear his mask. Still, at least someone cared enough to do **something**, although I wish the money would have been spent shining a light on prison conditions and releasing people early.

Democracy Now just reported that the California Institution for Men (CIM), which is the prison I'm incarcerated in, had another 3 COVID-19 related deaths over the weekend, bringing the total number of people who've died in here from COVID-19 to 4. The real number is actually 5, but they're not counting the one because he died 2-days after he was released from prison. They also reported that there are more than 330 confirmed cases of COVID-19 at this prison. I can't help but wonder why mainstream media hasn't latched onto this story like a pitbull on a steak bone. As of this writing, there are only 2,964 confirmed cases of COVID-19 throughout the entire county of San Bernardino, the largest county in California, which means this one place represents more than 10% of all known cases. If only they knew what was really going on in here.

Something else I can't help but notice is the fact that most of the buildings have no working ventilation whatsoever, something we've complained of for years now. Their response is always that they don't have the money to do anything about it, but over the weekend, they brought one of those blow-up tents onto the yard, along with a generator and a huge air conditioning unit to keep the tent cool. In a matter of minutes, they had everything set up and the A/C running full blast, and then left it there, completely empty, where it's sat all weekend long. They can't afford to fix our ventilation system, but they can afford an A/C unit and a generator to run it for a tent that's empty?

I don't think people realize just how utterly impossible it is to practice social distancing in here, **even while on quarantine**. You'd think the opposite would be true, but it's not. They're still showering us in groups, which is a perfect opportunity to spread the virus. These are communal showers, and even if they weren't twice as small as they should be, it's still the perfect way to spread the virus. It's a small room with no working ventilation whatsoever, filled with steam and virus particles expelled as people exhale. Think you can avoid the virus by skipping your shower? Okay, but what about the phones? We all use the same phones, breathing into the mouthpiece, holding it against our cheeks and ears. Of course, this is a problem that could have been avoided altogether, had the prison simply allowed GTL to give the inmates an electronic tablet that could also be used to place a phone call, a prepaid, monitored and recorded phone call to preapproved numbers only, just like they did in other states, but thus far, the CDCR has steadfastly refused to move into the 21st century. Had they done so, then I could be sending and receiving e-mails right now, making calls, not just to let people know what's going on in here, but also to prepare for my upcoming parole.

They just did the first temperature check of the day. After observing the way they're doing it, there's no doubt whatsoever in my mind that the infection is going to continue to spread. Even though we're only allowed out of our cells, 5 cells at-a-time, when it comes to temperature checks, they want us all out, 20 cells at-a-time, all of us standing in a line, "nuts to butts," as the expression in here goes. One at-a-time, we go up to the nurse, who uses an infrared thermometer to take our temperature, and as he does, I can hear him telling each patient their reading. When it comes to me, I allow others to go in front of me, curious to see who, if anyone, is running a fever. No one has a temperature over 100, yet, but several had readings slightly over 99°. No doubt, theirs will be even higher at night, once they've been up and about for awhile.

There was a story on FOX News about how inmates in LA County Jails are **intentionally** infecting themselves with COVID-19 in an attempt to get out of jail early. They showed some video footage of inmates drinking from the same water bottle, but I wasn't convinced. According to what prison officials have told us, the virus can't be spread by drinking after someone. They also showed some footage of inmates supposedly taking turns sniffing from the same mask, which, admittedly, is more convincing to the Sheriff's claim, but if you ask me, people are overlooking the real issue. What does it say about conditions in the LA County Jail if people are willing to put their very lives in danger by knowingly trying to infect themselves with COVID-19?

As I suspected, dinner was actually worse than breakfast and lunch. It consisted of broccoli mixed with noodles, no spices whatsoever, some lettuce, a pat of butter and some peas mixed with carrots. We also had 2 slices of bread and an apple. Nothing to drink, and it was cold, as they made no attempt whatsoever to cover the trays with anything to keep protect them from the outside elements, let alone to try to keep them warm. They just put a couple of trays on a bread rack, put a bread rack on top of that, put a couple of trays in that bread rack, and so on and so forth, until they had enough trays to feed everyone. Morale is definitely at an all-time low in here

Just out of curiosity, if we're "all in this together," as everyone continues to claim, then why is it that the IRS has begun contacting inmates who've received stimulus checks to ask for them back? Are we not just as affected by the Coronavirus? Did we not suffer? We lost our visits, our ability to go outside for yard, to interact with people, to go to school, to earn time off of our sentence and so much more. We're complying with social distancing protocols, even when officers aren't, and doing it with a smile on our faces, so why are we now being excluded from something that could actually help us? Speaking personally, I **need** this money. Assuming I'm not killed off by a Coronavirus infection, I'll be released from prison in a matter of months, at a time when no jobs are available and no one has any resources left to give. \$1,200 might not be a lot of money, but it could have at least gotten me a motel room for a month, or so.

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