

QUARANTINE

(Day 8)

What a stressful weekend this has turned out to be. Late last week, medical staff came in to test each and every single inmate in my prison. Notice I said "inmate," and not person. So far as I'm aware, the prison hasn't tested a single staff member in here, medical or custody. Either way, since we were tested, they've been slowly (very slowly), processing the results, and each day, medical contacts custody to let them know which inmates to add to the list of confirmed infections. When that happens, the inmate's doors are "capped," meaning that they're placed into the "locked" position, and won't open with the rest of the doors. If the inmate has a cellmate and only 1 of them tests positive, then both inmates are locked in their cell, and will remain locked in until they've provided 2 separate negative tests results for COVID-19. As you might imagine, there are good points to being notified as the results as they come in, and bad points. On the one hand, the faster someone knows they're infected, the sooner they can be completely isolated in an attempt to prevent the further spread of the virus, in theory. On the other hand, you can cut the tension in here with a knife, as people are in a constant state of worry over whether or not they're infected with the virus.

I don't know exactly how many people are infected, but clearly there are more people infected than there are cells to quarantine them in, so, instead of moving everyone to a separate tier to be quarantined on, they're being quarantined in their own cells. Again, there are good points and bad points to such an approach. On the one hand, knowing they're not going to be uprooted and placed into a completely different building and cell might encourage people to come forward when feeling symptoms, but at the same time, it's important to note that this prison is **NOT** taking proper precautions when it comes to protecting us. For example, the people who are in charge of cleaning up are not being given **ANY** Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) whatsoever, despite orders to the contrary. Secondly, the people on quarantine are allowed out to shower and use the phone, which is the right thing to do, but these buildings don't have **ANY** ventilation whatsoever, which means that, when they're in the shower, the steam drifts from out of the shower area and into the dayroom, spreading throughout the entire building and potentially infecting anyone who breathes the air. To make matters even worse, while the showers are now being sprayed with bleach (yeah, they **FINALLY** started giving us bleach), it doesn't really matter as it's not the surfaces that are in need of being sanitized, it's the air, and as studies have already shown, the virus can linger on the air currents for hours, and there's probably no environment as fertile for such a virus as the warm, steamy air in a communal shower. And let's not even get into the phone usage. Basic human decency says that, if anyone should get to use the phone, it should be the person who's infected, but there's no way to disinfect a phone receiver (there are too many holes in the receiver and earpiece for the virus to lodge into), which means that anyone who uses these phones runs the risk of infecting themselves as they call home to check on their loved ones. This, I should point out, is something I warned about well over a month ago, when I requested that GTL be permitted to come into the prison and hand out personal tablets to the inmate population, which could have then been used to place a prepaid call to a preapproved number, which would have been monitored and recorded, just as any other number. As of this moment, they've continued to balk at my request, citing money as their reason. Clearly, they don't believe that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Sadly, I've spent more than 25-years of my life behind bars, and this is the **FIRST** time I've **EVER** seen a prison hand out bars of "real" soap, by which I mean a namebrand bar of soap, as opposed to something manufactured by the prison system. It's also the first time I've **EVER** seen real hand sanitizer, let alone seen it passed out to inmates to have in their cells. The ingredients aren't listed on the bottle, but according to the label, it's a "World Health Organization Formula," so, presumably, it contains some alcohol. If this is indeed true, then, for those who are familiar with the prison system, you already know how this is an unprecedented move on their part. It remains to be seen whether this is going to be something they do again, or if this was a "one-time" event. Either way, I'm just glad they did **something** besides standing around with their thumbs up their asses, arguing with each other.

I didn't get to see the story, but I did see the teaser for ABC 7 News. They said that (California) Governor Newsom has proposed that the size of the prison be reduced because the State has went so far into debt fighting this COVID-19 pandemic. This is truly a tragedy, not that the population of a severely overcrowded prison system is being reduced, but that it wasn't until they ran out of money that they seriously considered it. When people were dying because the overcrowded conditions meant inadequate medical or mental health care, they fought hook, tooth and nail to keep every single inmate in here for as long as possible. When people passed all of these propositions seeking to let people out of prison early, the prison system fought them even harder in an attempt to exclude, or outright deny, as many people as possible from being eligible for so much as a day off of their sentence. When the infection started to spread throughout here like a wildfire and people started dying as a result, they continued to fight the idea of allowing anyone to be released early. Even when early releases were given, so few were given, and given in such a way that rendered the attempt completely meaningless, but now that they're running out of money, they suddenly want to discuss the possibility of releasing inmates early. Clearly, they understand where their priorities lie.

On a side note, people have been asking the experts whether or not they'd be immune to COVID-19 after recovering from an infection, and if so, how long their immunity would last. This morning, on Good Morning America, there was an announcement scrolling by that said that 13 of the sailors who'd recovered from their infection aboard the aircraft carrier had once again tested positive. Still, until this morning, I hadn't seen proof firsthand that such a thing was possible. Well, now I have. Several of the guys who tested positive for COVID-19 were guys who had recently recovered from COVID-19, so clearly, the tests are either repeatedly providing false positives, or the immunity, if any, doesn't last very long. Either way, I'd say this is something to be concerned over, particularly because it speaks volumes about how the success of a potential vaccine.

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