

QUARANTINE
(Day Five?
Day Five.)
May 15, 2020

We've been on some form of isolation far longer than we've been on quarantine. This, and the fact that everyday in here is a carbon copy of the one before it, makes it difficult to remember how many days have passed. One way of avoiding this problem is to maintain a log of sorts, which is how I was able to verify that this is Day 5 of the Quarantine, and day "who knows" of the isolation.

With that said, today is rapidly proving to be one of the most unusual days yet, which is saying something for a place like this. For starters, keep in mind that not only is the entire country in some sort of State of Emergency, but this prison is the epicenter of the Coronavirus outbreak in California's prison system. There have been more than 500 confirmed cases of inmate infections in the CDCR (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation), more than 350 of which have been here at the CIM (California Institution for Men). And today, David Muir of ABC 7 News confirmed that tests for the Coronavirus have produced false negatives as high as 100% of the time, depending on when the person was tested. In other words, the number of people who are infected with the Coronavirus are probably much, much higher, with many of them coming from those who tested negative.

You should also keep in mind that we've been completely isolated for well over a month now. No visits, no transfers, no new arrivals, they haven't even allowed any volunteers in to teach our various educational and rehabilitative classes. Our **ONLY** contact with the outside world for more than a month now has been through the medical staff and prison guards who work here. It's also important to note that the entire prison was tested less than 48-hours ago for COVID-19, the results of which have yet to come back. Finally, keep in mind that we're supposed to be practicing social distancing protocols, which includes maintaining a minimum of 6' from each other, wearing our masks, not having more than 10 people in a room at any time, etc. Keeping all of this in mind, someone please explain to me why it is that more than a dozen officers all rushed Colusa Upper first thing this morning to search their cells? (The buildings all have names, Alpine, Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, etc., and each has two tiers, an upper and a lower, and at the moment, Colusa Lower, which, like all of the buildings here, doesn't have any ventilation whatsoever, is where they're housing suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases) The guards are now in their cells, many without masks, searching them, and for what? We've been on lockdown for well over a month now, with no contact with anyone but medical and guards, so what could they possibly be looking for? More important is the fact that the cells are the size of a closet, the perfect breeding ground for spreading the Coronavirus, which means that there's a very good possibility that the officers are searching the cells of people who are positive, and have yet to have those results confirmed, or are themselves positive, and are leaving the virus behind as they paw through the belongings, including toothbrushes, cups, etc., of the men who inhabit these cells.

During the search, a process which took several hours, everyone from Colusa Upper, about 100 people, was put out onto the mini yard. The yard is so small that it's physically **impossible** to maintain adequate physical distancing. This means that, for hours, you've had people who've been tested for COVID-19 mingling in close contact with each other, which in turn means that, if someone does come back as being positive, then there's a pretty good chance it's going to be spread during this period of time, and for what? So the guards could search a few cells? When are they going to start taking this seriously? We've already had 7 people in here die, and another one died 2 days after he was released. Is that not enough?

Want to add insult to injury? The officer who used to work my tier once a week just returned after being gone for more than a month. Turns out that he was gone because he was infected with COVID-19. Anyway, he's back now, and is now assigned to this tier 5 days per week. He frequently removes his mask when talking to us, which completely defeats the purpose of wearing the mask in the first place, and then has the nerve to order us to wear our masks. Listen, I fully support the requirement to wear a mask, but keep in mind that my wearing a mask doesn't protect **me**, it protects **you** from me, should I be infected. With that said, my wearing a mask is a social contract. It says that I'm taking the need to protect you seriously, which means that you should take the need to protect me just as seriously.

On that note, as I explained earlier, each building has two tiers and each tier has a single officer assigned to it. Then there's a rover, who moves freely between the tiers. The guard who's assigned to our building has **refused** to wear his mask, resulting in my filing a grievance, one which the prison has yet to acknowledge. In my grievance, I asked that it be treated as an emergency, meaning that the prison had only 48-hours to respond, as opposed to weeks or even months, and my reasoning was simple. The majority of the people who have COVID-19 either don't have any symptoms, or the symptoms are relatively mild, which means that there's a pretty good chance that this officer could currently be infected, or could become infected, and become a silent carrier. Considering the fact that many of the people on my tier have co-morbid symptoms, I felt that emergency intervention was needed to protect the lives of the inhabitants of this building, the officers who work here and anyone else he happens to come into contact with. Sadly, not only has my appeal not been acknowledged, I've also just learned that one of the members of the Inmate Task Force (ITF) just tested positive for COVID-19.

In case you're not familiar with the term, the ITF is a more accurate, and politically correct, term for a rat or a snitch. Members of the ITF work closely with the guards, telling on anything they can in an attempt to curry favor and generally trying to see how far up the guards' asses they can shove their noses. This guy spends his every waking minute under the guards' feet snitching on everyone, cleaning their offices, shining their boots (kind of gives a whole new meaning to the term "boot licker!!"), and generally talking to the rest of the inmate population as if he's some kind of junior officer. If he became infected with COVID-19, then he either got it from the previously mentioned officer, or gave it to the previously mentioned officer.

I hate to say "I told you so," but...

It's only been 48-hours since they tested something like 4,000 people. Given the urgency, and seriousness, of getting these results to everyone in a timely manner, I'm guessing that they're not going to wait until all of the tests have been completed before letting people know. I'm guessing that they're going to let people who are positive know the moment they find out. Then again, their actions earlier today proves they lack any and all common sense whatsoever. Either way, they just slammed the entire yard, forcing **everyone** to return to their cells, which means that something's definitely going on. I'm betting they did this the moment the first positive result in their batch of 4,000 tests was received, and that we'll be "locked down" until all of the results are in, but what good does it do? Transfers from one prison to another may have been canceled, but they've been moving guys from one cell to another, from one building to another, as if it's the thing to do. Even as I'm writing this, I can hear the guy under me talking about how he'd just been moved out of the cell of the guy who tested positive for COVID-19. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that you're never going to get control over a virus if you're playing musical chairs with people who are potentially infected. The only way to stop the spread of the virus is to cease all movement and interaction, a lesson our own government has failed to understand time and time again. We could have eradicated the virus in less than a month, had the government ordered a stop to all movement and paid everyone a living wage for the time we were prevented from going to work. And best of all, it would have went a long way towards ensuring that the economy didn't tank as badly as it did. Instead, our illustrious "leader" is clamoring for people to return to work, inciting people to "take back" their states and doing other things so horrifying that I can't even begin to understand how no one else is seeing what's going on.

Something I can't help but notice is how everyone complains when it comes to releasing violent and sexual offenders, but in times like this it's not the violent and sex offenders who are out there committing all the crimes. It's the "white collar" criminals who are out there in full force, ripping people off of everything they worked a lifetime to obtain. These are the kind of people who commit their crimes, over and over again, the kind of people who share their craft with others who go on to commit additional crimes, the kind who can leave the biggest trail of destruction during a time like this, and yet, these are the people everyone wanted released. I've got less than 6-months left on a 21-year prison sentence, this last part a consecutive sentence for a nonviolent misdemeanor offense, but I'll have to serve out every single day of my sentence because my base term (the first sentence in a series of consecutive sentences) was for a violent offense. A term I completed long ago.

They won't tell us who, but we did learn that 2 people on my tier have tested positive for COVID-19. Why they won't let us know is beyond me. What are they afraid of? A violation of a patient's right to privacy? Like we won't know they're COVID-19 positive when they transfer them to the COVID tier? Shouldn't they be letting us know, privacy rights notwithstanding, so they can do contact tracing? But again, such things are common sense, and for those who aren't familiar with the prison system, common sense is against the rules.

Did I mention that our 14 days of quarantine starts all over now that someone tested positive? 14 more days of being locked in my cell. 14 more days of half portions. 14 more days of waiting to see whether or not that time will start all over again, because yet someone else doesn't feel good. 14 more days of, well, everything...

Dinner tonight was even worse than usual. We had some beans, about 2 bites worth, a tiny chicken puck, some macaroni noodles, minus anything in them, of course, 1 tiny slice of zucchini, 2 slices of bread, an apple and a half of pint of warm milk with a sell by date of May 10th. And before you ask, yes, they realize it's the 15th of May. They do this a lot, wait until after the milk is expired to give it to us, and when they do, it's not only past its expiration date, it's spoiled. I'm not sure which is worse. The expired milk, or the yogurt that's so expired it actually has chunks, and yet, they still put it on our trays.

THIS JUST IN: As I mentioned earlier, they tested around 4,000 inmates from this prison about 60-hours ago. As of this moment, they've completed almost 80 tests, and out of those, **39 are positive for COVID-19!!** The Captain has been calling us to the dayroom, one group at-a-time, to share the news, and you can see that he's **PISSED!!** For months, he's been arguing against medical transporting people from yard to yard, and no one listened to him, and now we're about to pay the ultimate price. When asked whether or not officers and medical personnel were tested, his response was, and I swear, I'm not making this up, the only officers who've been tested are those who have tested on their own. The prison will **NOT** be testing any of the guards because it's his belief that 90% of the guards who work here are positive for COVID-19, that 90% of the guards who work in the State are COVID-19, and how do you run a prison system when 90% of your officers are known to be infected? If they haven't been tested, they can claim plausible deniability.

When these results are finished, how many in here will be positive? How many will come back as a false negative? During the meeting, the Captain admitted that 4 out of every 5 negatives were false negatives, which really bothers me a lot, to put it mildly. I feel as if I'm watching a train coming at me in slow motion. All I have to do is move to the side, just the slightest bit, and I can save myself, but for some reason, I can't. I know it's going to hit me. I know it's going to hurt, and there's not a damn thing I can do about it.

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