

# Mississippi Prison Insanity

The insanity of the Mississippi prison system never ceases to amaze me - Central Mississippi Correctional Facility is a prime example of how far down the prison system has fallen. The facility is able to house 928 women and more than 2000 male and juvenile offenders combined. At one point in time there was structure and order at this facility, but time and people have turned order into chaos.

Many of the rules that are in place here have been allowed to be broken on such a regular basis that it seems they have become void. The women housed here do pretty much as they please and have no regard for authority. Many of the officers exacerbate the problems by playing around with certain inmates, bringing in contraband, and getting into relationships with inmates. I have seen officers play basketball with or just hang out and talk with inmates instead of doing their jobs. While the officers are distracted other inmates take care of any "business" that needs to be handled. Of course, distracting the officers usually is not necessary. For example, kitchen workers are allowed to steal state issued food, before feeding, then sell it to their fellow inmates without fear of being punished. This often causes them to run out of food before everyone is fed.

Like at so many other facilities, contraband is a major problem at CMCF. Officers have found that they can make way more money bringing in cell phones, tobacco and drugs into CMCF than they can by simply working here. Cheap dollar store flip phones with the

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Chargers go for \$300.<sup>00</sup> each. Cheap touch screen phones start at \$500.<sup>00</sup> and go up - Tobacco and drugs are outrageously priced as well. Everywhere you look people are laid back talking on their phones and using drugs. If you don't have a phone, just go to someone who does and they will sale you a monthly contract to use their phone so many times a month. A loaded green dot card will buy you anything that you want, except your freedom.

Even though the facility is trying to crack down on cell phones for every one they confiscate there are three more to take its place. Many of the women who are on lockdown for being caught with cell phones already have new ones. Blocking the cell phone signal didn't even slow these women down - They simply figured a way around the block and kept on making calls. You would think that someone would figure out that in order to stop the inmates from having ~~the~~ phones, you must first fire the officers that bring them in. No one wants to lose their "extra" income so that is not going to happen. Besides, that is a temporary solution at best.

On a daily basis some inmates roam from zone to zone doing whatever they want. Most officers let them for fear of being attacked. For some of these women beating up officers seems to have become a favorite thing to do. With so many of the women here having life sentences most will tell you they have nothing to lose, and therefore do not care about paperwork or going to lockdown. In fact with the 51 bed max unit full and an extremely long list of women waiting to go, CMCF has been forced to turn

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one zone (116 beds) into a lockdown unit. Just like in max there will be no T.V.'s, microwaves, or electrical items; i.e. hairdryers, flat irons, radios, or personal T.V.'s - Meals and medication will be brought to them and showers will only be turned on three times a week. These women will be locked down 24 hours a day, most days, because yard cases here are few and far between.

Since organization is non-existent here everyday is mass confusion - Trying to get all of the non-trouble makers out of the new lockdown zone so they can move all of the trouble makers in has proven to be more than the officers can handle. They have a group of inmates pack to move, then thirty minutes later tell them to unpack because they made a mistake. They packed inmates from the wrong building which shows a degree of incompetence on the officers part. On another occasion an entire zone was left unsupervised for over an hour, in the gym, which is an unsecure building. Anyone could have walked out and through the open gate to the men's buildings. The officers seemed unconcerned when the recreation department director called them after finding 116 women, many of them half naked (boxers and bras), wreaking havoc in his gym. He was so mad that he demanded the women "get the hell out of his gym!"

I often look around and it saddens me to see so many women satisfied with their lives here. They are satisfied with disgusting food and filthy conditions, they don't even care

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when it is 120° in the building all summer long. The majority of them stay so high that nothing seems to phase them. As long as they have their drugs and their phones, and have the run of the building they seem happy. It seems that at some point prison became home for them and that is unacceptable! When and why did they give up and stop fighting for their freedom? They have gotten comfortable and built their own world behind these walls... A World unknown to those who have never been in prison.

How do the powers that be explain an unsupervised prison? Sure there are officers but they are only here for the paycheck, not to do their jobs. How do they explain the vast amounts of drugs and number of cell phones in this facility? With a shrug of their shoulders I suspect. I am still somewhat in shock because I remember the days of order and control, but those days are long gone. The inmates run the show and the officers are merely paid spectators. Wow! How things change! Of course, in an attempt at control the officers will play with your health, medical and mental health care, keeping you from appointments just because they can. To me, that just shows how weak they truly are and how badly they desire to be obeyed. Unfortunately they lost the ~~privilege~~ privilege of being in control and obeyed when they began violating the very rules and regulations they were sworn to uphold.

What can I say? Such is the insanity of CMCF and

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the Mississippi prison system, where the women are thrown ~~on~~ away and forgotten, left to their own devices in what some of us consider a living hell. When will the insanity end?

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