

I was just 3 months into an 18-month sentence for a technical violation of my probation; I failed to report for my scheduled probation date. Given the fact that I was in school and working part-time before my incarceration, I was having a difficult time adjusting to a life ~~of~~ inside. There are only so many hours one can play cards or watch T.V. My time was also occupied by the recovery work I was doing on myself.

Just 2 weeks before I was moved to the 4-3 unit, also known as the (addiction) recovery block. That unit is one of 3 program units in a separate building inside the jail. It also differed from the other units because its ~~cells~~ cells were slightly bigger and the toilets/sinks were in a separate room, not inside the cells. These cells still housed 3-men each and you had to deal with whoever you got stuck with. [#]Being a gay man in jail and trying to hide it is difficult. I managed to do just that for the first week. Unfortunately someone I knew came to jail and proceeded to tell people about my orientation. From that point on my cellmates started to throw little dings at me about being gay. At first I supposed it was all in good fun but after a few days they started calling me homo and fag. It was so very stressful and difficult to maintain my composure. I couldn't go to the officers on the unit because

I would have been labeled a rat. The other options were to just take it and waddle through as best as possible or fight with my cellmates. Not very appealing options, I took it as long as I could until one day it got to be too much. I told them as forcefully as I could to stop; they didn't and the harassment continued. There finally came a day that I was backed into a corner and forced to physically defend myself. It was a horrible experience and situation to be put into.

Later that day my cellmates came to me and said I had 2 options; Move or apologize. If I chose not to do either of these I would suffer a massive ass-kicking. I told them I most certainly was not going to apologize for defending myself. The only other option I had was to go to the unit lieutenant and ask to be moved from the unit. I was sure this would solve the problem. I was very wrong!

The time was about 2:15 in the afternoon and their shift ended at 3:00 pm. When I went into the lieutenant's office there was another officer in there with him. I told him that I was being harassed and threatened by my cellmates because I'm gay. He began his response by yelling and cursing at me for doing this too close to the end of

this shift. (a move like this required paperwork in the form of a small report.). After his tirade I said to him in a very respectful way that he did not need to speak to me like that. His exact response was, "Shut the fuck up!" I was horrified.

So, he began the process of moving me from the unit. I had no idea what this process entailed. Two more officers appeared and cuffed me. I was taken from that unit to the segregation unit (also known as the hole). At this point I was very confused and afraid; I did nothing wrong, I simply asked for help. I was strip searched and placed in a single cell with just my socks, boxers and T-shirt. I asked why I was being punished like this and was told it's part of the process. The day I moved to segregation was a Saturday and I was there until the following Wednesday.

Being in solitary was very difficult and confusing. I thought I was doing the right thing by asking for help yet I was treated the same way by the very people who's job it was to help me. I also suffer from bi-polar disorder and severe depression so it was an overwhelming task to stay positive. I slept a lot those few days. I cried some too. I was emotionally hurt, frustrated and angry.

That Wednesday I saw the D-board (disciplinary) and they asked me about the incident and why I wanted to be moved from the general population housing units. I reiterated my experience of being harassed and threatened because of my sexual orientation. The members of the board tried to convince me that I would be fine if I just moved to a separate unit and they would place a "Keep Separate order" with me and my two old cell mates. If you know anything about jail then you know that this may work to keep you safe for only a very short time; word travels fast in here and they (my old cell mates) had friends in here, I did not. After much pleading and convincing on my part the board reluctantly agreed to move me to the protective custody unit. I moved that afternoon.

I wish I could say that my experience since then was stress free. The majority of the inmates in the P.C. unit are here because of sex offenses or because they told or switched on someone. For that reason, the officers who worked this unit treated everyone here in this unit the same; they talked disrespectfully to us, treated us with scorn and hostility. Our unit (P.C.) is subject to more shakedowns and ill treatment than the general population units. Our unit had no recreation area outside like all the other

units and therefore don't have outside rec time as often as the other units.

I am glad that I'm leaving in only 5 more weeks. I did feel it was important to me that I educate the public on the need of reform in the use of Solitary Confinement in jail. The use of Solitary as a "stop-off" for those like myself who ask for help is not acceptable.

Just 3 weeks before my confrontation with my cellmates an inmate here was killed in a fight with another inmate. It was accidental, but the inmate who did it had asked the unit officers repeatedly to move him to another cell because he was being tormented by his cellmate. They refused and the end result is that someone lost their life and another was forced to defend himself.

The frustration for those of us involved in the system is that the general public just accepts the opinions of our elected officials and the media the prison works and we need harsher punishments. I hope this sheds some light.