

PRISON LIFE

By Zachary A. Smith

It's a beautiful spring afternoon: the sun is shining bright; the temperature is 63 degrees, with a slight cool breeze. I am confined to my wing. The window in my double-man cell is void of a view and can't be opened to let in any fresh air--a sanction for having air conditioning. Personally, I would trade the air conditioning for fresh air. I live in an honor dorm housing unit, enabling me to have movement around the wing and use of six phones, nine showers, four tables, two microwaves, two old-fashioned clothes ringers, and two Maytag dryers. The rest of the prison is confined to their cells with a thirty minute wing rotation, three times a day, seven days a week.

My biggest complaint is having to share a cell with another man. I envy the prisoners I see on MSNEC's Lockup who have single-man cells. A person with life without parole should be accommodated with personal space. After all, I'm sentenced to spend the rest of my life in a box. I prefer to be miserable alone. If I had a single-man cell, I would spend my time writing; reading books to educate myself on everything that interests me; working on my self-development, actualizing myself into an artist of life; and listening to music. These are all things that require a setting of solitude. Of course, I still do them even though my activities--writing at the desk, typing at the desk, having my light on to read, having my fan on, using the toilet while he's sleeping, being in the cell while he's in the cell, playing my cd player too loud, getting mail when he doesn't, breathing his air, passing gas, etc.--annoy my cellie. I just can't do all the things I want to

do with any daily consistency and without childish behavior from another prisoner. Some prisoners want to improve themselves and should be given all the solitude they need to affect change, benefiting the penal system, society, and themselves.