

INTRODUCTION

It's a quiet night in January during shift change; all inmates are locked in their cells while a shift of jailers heads home for the evening and their replacements prepare in their locker rooms then head to the housing units. Of course, quiet is a relative term in a housing unit at Wayne Brown Correctional Facility: a television is still on excessively loud with an old re-run episode of "Gangland," doors are slamming loudly as correctional officers move about and perform a headcount, and the incessant loud buzz in the background is the constant flushing of industrial strength toilets, which double as trash cans for inmates. This is just a part of these inmates' nineteen-hour day locked in a fifty-five square foot cell, shared with another inmate. In the United States today, jailing and prison systems are different in many aspects, that difference symbolic in the jailing system's typical bright orange jumpsuits versus the prison systems khakis or blue clothing. With orange comes fear and doubt – these inmates do not yet know if they will be found innocent or guilty, they do not have a release date, they have been denied bail or cannot afford bail, and are forced to fight their case from within the system. A system that is by its nature a much more restrictive environment than a standard prison where inmates are already sentenced to a certain amount of time, know their release date, and have comfort in that known future. This essay is an ethnographic study – by involuntary participant observation – of the overall culture within pre-disposition detention facilities. It will provide an analysis of all cultural institutions functioning in such an environment. Typically, these cultures are filled with anger, lack of trust, and over-thrown emotion, as the environment in which it operates acts as a pressure cooker, attempting to submit detainees into non-jury trial resolutions as quickly as possible; that is, to submit to a guilty plea as fast as possible. This pressure is so intense that it often perpetuates more criminal behavior, resentment, and alienation amongst detainees from the rest of the 'free' society outside.

BACKGROUND

This essay is composed from qualitative data gathered from February 11th, 2009, to February 1st, 2010. It includes information from participant observation, informal interviews and conversations, and formal interviews, all conducted within five pre-sentencing detention facilities: Erie County Jail in Buffalo, NY; Correctional Corporation of America Facility in Youngstown, OH; Federal Oklahoma City Detention Center, Oklahoma City, OK; Sacramento Main County Jail, Sacramento, CA; and Wayne Brown Correctional Facility in Nevada City, CA. The greatest challenge in this study and report is the complete removal of personal bias and ethnocentric thinking. When I originally became a participant, it was not voluntary. I am a federally detained inmate of the Department of Justice who has been denied the right to bail. I defend my ability to write this report by adherence to ethical responsibilities; that is to attempt stay fast in a commitment to unbiased, objective analysis and by careful diligence remove ethnocentric thinking from that analysis. I also recognize that no other external analysis be as thorough and as detailed as the perspective my 'opportunity' grants me. It is legally impossible for a non-inmate to get behind a jail's walls as a resident and live in the general populations of

jails and detention facilities. Any other review of this culture is done from an outside perspective looking in, through glass or interviews only, not actual participant observation. Since this paper is produced internally from within the actual culture it can therefore capture a more holistic analysis despite the challenges of personal bias.

In many ways, I was and am considered an outsider by many inmates in this culture for a few reasons: 1) I am a first-time offender (I have never served a prison or jail sentence), 2) I am detained on a 'white collar' case which is not readily accepted within inmate populations, and 3) my background does not fit typical inmate socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. It has been a painstaking process to gain access, trust, and therefore reliable informant information and understanding of the culture in which I live. Removal of personal emotion and bias was of the utmost priority for this paper; however, I must acknowledge my presence as involuntary, but accepted.

The sample includes twenty eight cell mates I have been housed with in a shared cell, and hundreds, if not close to a thousand, of inmates interacted with in shared housing areas – called 'pods' or 'wings.' These 'pods' are clusters of two to three person cells that range from 15 to 60 cells and share communal showers, phones, microwave(if present at all), and a television. Time in the pod ranges from one hour a day to five hours a day depending on facility; the rest of the time is spent 'locked down' in your cell. Pod access and privileges are often removed for group punishment, administrative reasons, or investigative periods. The ages of those observed and interviewed ranged from 18 years to 68 years, and were primarily in their 30's and 40's and repeat offenders. I must note here a possible underlying reason for this demographic of inmate is partly due to my own personal classification as 'high risk,' 'flight risk,' and 'high priority,' and there for I was often -and am still- housed with 'maximum security prison pods,' meaning I am housed with inmates who have been in and through the penitentiary system before. Since I myself am male, and there is no co-ed living, no females or female populations were observed, and this essay cannot and does not speak to the female culture in jails. Almost all traditionally recognized races were present, but varied geographically based on facility. In New York, for example, an almost equal diversity was present. In Youngstown, Ohio, more than 9 out of 10 inmates I was housed with had black or very dark skin and ran with the 'blacks'. In Oklahoma City, an equal number of white and black inmates were present, with a healthy but minority number of Latinos. In Sacramento County Main Jail, the majority was again black, with minorities of Latinos and whites about equal in number. In Nevada City, I was housed in a unit where 9 out of 10 inmates were white, the only minority being Latino. In all institutions, almost no (or an extreme minority) of inmates represent middle-upper, or upper social stratification classes; almost all of these type of charged individuals post bail or arrange home arrest while fighting their case. A majority of inmates represented the lowest social classes and either border on or live in poverty when not incarcerated. In all facilities, close to all of the inmates admit to the continual use of narcotics or alcohol daily in their lives outside jail walls – even inside jail for many. These observations are roughly made and not specifically quantitative due to legal reasons.

GAINING ACCESS

Upon entering any institution, the process for the inmate is the same. After going through receiving and release ("R&R") where you receive your 'state issue' set of clothes, sheet(s) (if any are given), towel, and Bob Barker Inc., shoes, the inmate is sent to a general population housing unit. (Of worthy note, Bob Barker Inc., is just one of various corporate entities that continuously make very generous profits off of a monopoly-style domination of providing jailing facilities with clothes, shoes, and commissary products. I was given Bob Barker Inc., clothing and/or shoes in every facility I was housed from New York to Sacramento.) From receiving clothing and being assigned to a housing unit, the first 'job' of an inmate there is to gain trust and acceptance from others in the housing unit as soon as possible. The cultural restrictions have no room for being independent of the culture; you choose a race to 'be a part of,' then must prove one is not a 'rat' (one that co-operates with any government authorities), and finally one must also prove not to be a 'chomo' (sex offender or child molester). All three of these steps are qualifications-by inmates- for initial acceptance into general population housing units culture. Race is tricky in jail as it is in prisons. Behind every racial group is an affiliated command structure; usually directed by a prison gang behind it. This choice of race is made by the individual; for example, my skin color is pale, whiter than most, but I can choose to 'roll' or associate with Latinos. Meanwhile, Latinos in California are usually broken up into 3 groups: Northern, Southern, and Mexican Nationals. Now, while most of these groups and their members are not actually gang members individually, they are supposed to report and act upon direction as a group from orders that originate from gangs such as the Nortenos and Nuestra Familia for Northern Latinos, and Surenos and eMe for Southern Latinos. For 'whites,' non-gang members are referred to as the 'wood pile' and take direction from gangs such as the Nazi Low Riders, Aryan Circle, and the Aryan Brotherhood. Black populations typically are directed by BFG, Bloods, and Crips, which all are prison and street gangs both. So choosing a race means associating with others that take direction from gangs out of necessity – being a loner is not an option. A 'loner' or an individual who does not 'choose' a race out of the gate, will be preyed upon, abused, assaulted, and/or robbed. I have witnessed and been subject to this type of general harassment in my incarceration.

So after an inmate has 'chosen,' he is initially accepted, but each race is responsible for 'checking their own' - to ensure that the inmate is not a 'rat' or a 'chomo.' That means the inmate must submit their legal paperwork to other inmates of that race to prove they are not there for sex charges, child molestations, or elder abuse. To the general criminal population, these types of charges are unacceptable behavior, and represent a large cultural value and belief. These types of crimes are seen as 'lower,' 'disgusting,' 'perverted,' and 'sick,' some of the same words that the general free society chooses to use in describing general population inmates themselves. By stratifying the inmate population (acceptable crime versus unacceptable crimes),

the majority can again feel more empowered than the minority, a cultural reflection that mirrors the 'free' public. If an inmate is found out to be arrested on these types of charges, they will be assaulted by a group, jumped, or otherwise removed from that housing unit and will likely be put into protective custody. I have witnessed this 'removal' on three yards, on several occasions. As for being a 'rat,' this is harder to detect in pre-sentencing detention facilities, as cases are not yet complete and informants have not yet taken the stand as witnesses against co-defendants yet. However, the suspicion against possible co-operators is paramount, and if one is called a 'rat' by another inmate they must defend their cultural 'honor' or 'face' by fighting or proving in paper that they are not a co-operator. Many prison gangs keep 'no good' or 'rat' lists, which are spread throughout jail and prison institutions with relative ease. If an inmate appears on one of these lists, or another inmate detained on the same case produces paperwork proving him to be an informant, the housing unit's racial group that inmate is a part of will take action against him. This action is the same type of removal as that of unacceptable charges – physical, violent, assault until the jailing staff must put the inmate into protective custody. This cultural practice is a negative sanction against and punishment for working with the 'enemy,' that is co-operating with law enforcement agencies.

Personally in my incarceration, studies, and observation, I have had many difficulties in gaining access and honest information in the jail cultures I have come in contact with. Eventually, success was found, after some failures. In Buffalo, NY, after my initial arrest, I was a loner. I was on suicide watch in a maximum security wing, and for the most part inmates were cat-calling, 'shit'-talking, and verbally attacking me, but this was the most I had to endure as I did not respond in any fashion, verbal or otherwise. It was going to escalate to a physical assault at one point but I produced paperwork which showed I was detained by the federal government on bank fraud charges, at which point the inmates in the unit left me alone, simply acknowledging I was not one of them. Third-party observation was all I was able to gain from this facility. In Youngstown, Ohio, I walked into an extremely large housing wing, during day room privileges and over 90 black and 3 white inmates were all in the general area. Immediately, the pod assumed I was a child molester due to my obesity (265 @ 40%+ body fat at arrest, 172/112 bp), my lack of confidence in my walk, the fear that most likely showed on my face, and that I represented an easy target in an extreme racial minority. Again, cat calling, threats, and other intimidations were shouted out in a group fashion before I even got to my cell. I produced paperwork, and gave it to a white inmate, and he showed it to the black 'yard rep' – a cultural group leader position – and all problems subsided. In the 21 days I was there, I formed good relationships with two African American inmates, one white, and the only Latino in the pod and received invaluable information in regards to jail culture, and lessons in conduct; such things as wearing shower shoes(Bob Barker Inc., plastic, flip flops) in the showers at all times, being ready to defend myself at all times, flushing the toilet constantly when using the restroom to remove odor out of respect, how to clean clothes in the a shower or toilet, how to shower out of a sink('bird bathing'), and the absolute need for physical exercise. At Oklahoma City, I had the routine down good, had lost some weight, and was much more confident. The cat-calling did not

happen; I knew what to do and how to act. In 18 days there, I gained good trust in a group of multi-racial 'Christians.' They informed me that you can 'choose' to be a 'Christian' as a race and avoid prison cultural politics, but they are regarded as outsiders, and at risk. Mostly they were inmates trying to change their life through study and practice of prayer, meditation, spiritual principles, and recovery. I associated with this group the entire short stay, and saw immediately that most of the 'wood pile' – the group of 'white' inmates referred to earlier - looked at me disapprovingly, but I gained good information from various informants from all over the country in the Federal Prison System. Coming to Sacramento County Main Jail, I was thrown into the middle of one of the worst jails in California, and a hotbed of racism, gang action, and cultural friction and instability. I immediately proved not to be a rat or a child molester, but never claimed any racial affiliation. There was no Christian group, no group of inmates focusing on changing their lives. I was celled with Blood gang members, a Norteno gang member, and a slew of strung-out drug addicts on two-to-three-day 'dry outs.' It was here that a Norteno gang member basically forced me into daily physical exercise, which is now a habit that has stuck for over a year. This informant, whose initials are A.S., actually threatened me with physical violence if I did not join him in exercise routines. Here, at Sacramento County Main Jail, most of my information was gathered regarding prison gangs, and how their sphere of influence reaches county jails and pre-sentencing detention facilities. Many of the informants I utilized were lifetime offenders, repeat offenders, and validated gang members. I gained access at this facility by trading strategy ideas to inmates for some of their business ideas they hoped to start some day, general tax advice for returns they had not yet filed; most of this information was never and would not be used, but many inmates get through time by thinking about the future or trying to make plans of action when, in reality, there is no hope for carrying any of it out from their current situation. By the time I hit Nevada County's Wayne Brown Correctional Facility, I was readily accepted into the population, as the 'white collar' guy, and have had great success and time invested with many informants who were invaluable to this essay.

SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT

All cultures and societies are bound and limited in their practices, behavior, and adaptations by the biological and physical environment in which they live. This is true for the jail culture as it is any other society or culture. The culture is about control perceived and achieved: concrete walls, metal doors, loud sounds, and 'over-seers' in the correctional staff that are authorized to use force at will to control inmate populations. A large difference between prison facilities and jail/pre-sentencing detention facilities is that jail facilities control movement more and offer inmates less time 'out of the cell' than the majority of prison facilities. California Department of Corporations and the federal prison system have 'jobs' or 'work' for inmates, vocational training or schooling for those that want it, and outside of 'lock downs' are out of their cells for a good part of the day. In pre-disposition jailing, there are no programs, no work for the majority of inmates, and time out of the cells is limited typically to one- to five- hours per day. The inmate culture can only operate within certain limits, and the limiting factors are

extreme. Confined to space, with no work to do, inmate culture is derived from anger at their situation, boredom of imprisonment, and fear from not knowing the ultimate outcome of their case. Any adaptation, or practice that the culture adopts, must be approved, or at least tolerated, by the jail staff. Hence the culture is always in a state of concession and negotiations (spoken and unspoken) with those in power, the jail staff. The only facility out of the five that I have been in that had access to education, programs such as Narcotics Anonymous, and various spiritual services is Wayne Brown Correctional Facility of Nevada County, which seems to have adopted a philosophy of rehabilitating inmates in all stages of the judicial system.

ECONOMIC INSTITUTION

The most important societal institution in this culture of pre-sentencing jailing is the economic institution. Money is prevalent in every aspect of social interaction, and is the dominant motivation for many jail house actions by inmates. Money is infused to the system by two methods: commissary money put on an inmate's 'books,' which can be used to buy food, toiletries, etc., usually put on by an inmate's loved ones or family, and secondly by contraband and drugs which are smuggled into facilities by inmates (typically carried anally) or by corrupt correctional staff, which are then sold for commissary. The concept of money usually comes down to two currencies universally: stamps and/or Top Ramen soups. Top Ramen soups are worth \$0.50 to \$1.00 per soup depending on which facility you are in, and a stamped envelope is worth \$0.55 and a stamp worth \$0.44. There are typically two socio-economic classes within the general, accepted, inmate population: the 'haves' and the 'have-nots.' That is to say, those inmates that purchase commissary (store), and those that do not. Those that do not, have three ways by which they can participate in the economic activity, and gain 'wealth' as indicated by food, coffee, and toiletries and shoes. Through a) gambling, b) artwork sales and c) contraband sales. Gambling typically takes place in card playing, either variations of poker or pinochle, or by gambling on sporting events on television, i.e. basketball, football, UFC Fights, and almost any other thing on television there is to gamble on. Card playing can be the source of much conflict, and I have observed several fights originate over disputes on alleged cheating at the card table. Artwork is typically done by inmates who have exceptionally ability and they sell greeting cards for family members, portraits, or tattoo design or actual tattoo work. Contraband sales typically involve any mind-altering substance. This ranges from "pruno" (home made alcohol consisting of fermented fruit in garbage bags hidden in jail cells), to tobacco (which was outlawed in detention facilities in the past decade), to marijuana and other more hard-core narcotics. The profit margin of these products is huge for inmates who can get the product in. A \$50 issue (approx) of marijuana on the street (varies by location) can net as much as \$300 worth of commissary from other inmates inside the facility, a \$10 bag of tobacco can net as much as \$70 worth of commissary from other inmates inside the facility. So overall, the economics of inmates within pre-sentencing institutions is a stratified have versus have-not system, and is a cycle of money coming in from the outside, being spent on commissary, and the commissary is either consumed, lost in gambling, or given in barter or trade for contraband or mind altering

substances. This concept and cultural reality is summed by an informant statement (named R. W. of Oklahoma City Federal Detention Center) "...my mom wasn't putting no money on my books- I ain't no momma's boy- , so my hustle was pinochle and pruno, got me thirty to fifty a month at store with those two there. Yup, I know how to do time, I do me to the fullest...."

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

With money and surplus comes the fight for control of the surplus. In reality, every penny infused into the system for commissary is surplus; the inmate's basic needs for food and clothing are provided for to a minimal but allowable level. While the food provided is, for the most part, un-gradable in quality and around 2,000 calories or slightly less a day; not one inmate would die due to starvation or become sick of malnutrition. So all money put into the inmate's world can be considered surplus; the subsistence level can be considered the state, federal, or county issued food, clothing, and bedding. The system of economic distribution in jailing facilities has its roots in the penitentiary systems prison gangs. While most prison gangs have a 'constitution,' 'codes of conduct,' 'preambles,' and other associated bodies of organization which claims that its primary purpose is preservation of a certain 'race,' the true motivation for these gangs is control of money and narcotics within the jail system. Just as in the free society within the United States, the jailing culture is not free from ambition, a desire for power, and the seeking of self-glorification by its members. One can accomplish this jail-house 'power' and 'glory' through the prison gang structure. As mentioned previously, each race is under the control or orders of a corresponding prison gang. In prison, the races of each yard are further broken up into 'cars' based on geographic regions - i.e. blacks from Sacramento, blacks from San Jose, blacks from Fresno, etc. But in jailing institutions, the housing units are too small, with not enough inmates in each wing for this type of separation based on geography. The units are simply broken up into groups based on race. Now each racial group is responsible for a car, or a communal collection of commissary and/or contraband. This 'car' represents a tithe of sorts, or a tax, that each member going to 'store' must provide to the group, a form of redistribution. This car is managed by the yard rep, sometimes referred to as the shot caller, for the racial group. This car is used for the prison gang, yard reps, etc, personal use and discretion. Some of it used to new arrivals who have been 'checked out' (by the process mentioned above), getting them on 'their feet' as it were until they can either a) get money on their books and go to store, and then contribute to the car, or b) get a 'hustle' such as playing cards, selling art, gambling, or contraband sales, and then contribute to the car. Informant W.C. of Sacramento County Main Jail said "You gotta take care of your own, ya know? If you want protection of the group and other woods, you gotta support the wood pile yourself, somehow. Everyone's gotta role - are you a soldier, a leader, a hustler, a pruno maker, or gonna bring money in? everyone's gotta look out for their own. That's the white thing to do." This is the mentality that is passed on to every inmate of every race, just substitute 'wood' for 'black' or 'northerner' or 'Mexican.'. But in reality, most of the car assets or accumulated store product is used for the leader's personal use or the purchase of narcotics for said leaders or to gain influence over others. The

economic system goes to benefit the leaders in this system. These leaders use race as a unifying cultural agenda. Yes, there are race wars, riots, and battles, but these all mask the true motivation of a prison gang behind the racial group – which is to accumulate as much ‘jail house wealth’ as possible.

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

One of the most perplexing and amazing cultural concepts in jail – this is shared with the prison system – is the concept of acceptable behavior once accepted. In jailing and detention facilities, the one word cultural law on behavior is “respect.” From a ‘free’ perspective, this can be a shocking cultural value to be found in a place that may be thought to be a place that is devoid of “respect.” Because, it is reasoned, that if inmates had “respect” for society and the written law in the first place, they wouldn’t be “in jail.” In my observation, there is a significant amount of respect between individuals within these. However, this is not a respect borne out of spiritual principles, but of fear and the want to avoid conflict. It is a respect and deference that one has to learn, to practice, and to be constantly corrected on. Any action, by any inmate, can trigger massive physical results, conflicts, or battles. Because of this, everyone is very respectful. When one uses the restroom, it is expected that the toilet flushes constantly. When one is on the phone, the entire rest of the housing unit is expected to lower their decibel level. When people are eating, there are a corresponding set of respect rules, from chewing with your mouth closed to knocking on the table to notify other inmates you are standing up, so not to create unexpected movements. If an inmate accidentally bumps into another, an apology is quickly given and expected and accepted. Inmates make systems of lining up for phones and showers, and no one cuts in line, ever. No inmate steals from another inmate. If any of these ‘rules’ (which are not really rules, but simple manners of respect and deference), are broken, then physical, violent retaliation is not only approved, but expected. And if the incident that results from said retaliation is between members of a different race, expect the resulting incident to become a wide-spread racial conflict. Inmate M.Z from Nevada County’s Wayne Brown Correctional Facility told me “W[my handle for a while at this facility, along with BOOTS], when you get out, it’ll be hard. Someone will cut you off when your driving, or someone will cut in line at Safeway, or bump into you on the street. Man, when that happened to me and I was fresh out, I wanted to take off on’em [initiate physical violence] immediately. But its different out there on the streets. There ain’t no respect. People crowd you. People are rude. It ain’t like that here. People are respectful.” Inmates follow this self-imposed, cultural rule, more than anywhere I have ever seen. I met and developed a close relationship with inmate V.J. at Nevada County’s Wayne Brown Correctional Facility, my cell-mate for many months, who was the largest, most physically intimidating man in our housing unit who demonstrated more respect than any inmate I had ever met prior to that. He was a role model of the jail systems cultural value for respect; he could have been intimidating and forcing anything he wanted any time, but in his striving to emulate respect, and hence avoid conflict, he was a leader among inmates. And in these facilities, this respect is never mistaken for weakness. There was no doubt among any

other inmates that at an attack on inmate V.J. would cause conflict, as the term in jail goes, it would be 'on and crackin,'. That never happened, and is just a testimony to the strangely placed emphasis of the cultural rule of respect as the modus operandi of jails and pre-sentencing detention.

Another aspect of acceptable behavior that is accurately described as mandated behavior is physical exercise. Every inmate of most racial groups are expected to be in some kind of physical conditioning. The reason for this, as it is discussed among inmates, is to be ready for a riot, or some other type of physical violence. From my observations, and personal experience, I find that this spoken reason has little to do with the real, underlying reason. Physical exercise helps pass time, and this practice is encultured down through inmate generation to inmate generation. It speeds up the days, helps you sleep at night, and, in an otherwise extremely sedentary lifestyle in jail, is a physical must to maintain health of body and mind. Exercise is a group event, as always with your 'race'-based group, and can be used a method of intimidation to actually prevent conflict by creating an image of superiority in strength to potential adversaries. Even the most out-of-shape inmates in certain 'race' groups such as Northern and Southern Latinos are expected to at least 'remain on track,' that is, to run in place while their associates do more extensive work-outs. This behavior of physical exercise is cross-cultural in terms of geographical location of the jailing facility, at all five facilities I witnessed more physical exercise, in terms of overall percentage, than I had ever seen in my 'free' life. I have benefited immensely from my 90 to 180 minutes of physical exercise daily by gaining the 'respect' of others (being seen a more worthy adversary in combat), and 'feeling' as if there is a good end or bi-product coming from a terrible situation. Physical exercise is also one thing, and there are very few of these, that jailers cannot take away from an inmate. If there is no yard time, or if a lock-down in place, inmates continue to work out in their cells and simply 'bird bath' in the sink after the work out is complete. The power of choice and free will to work out that can not be removed by their jailers adds substantial meaning to physical exercise in an inmate's life.

FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY

The last cultural aspect I will review in this analysis is that of spirituality, faith, and religion among inmates. This is a very difficult subject to review in detention, especially in pre-sentencing facilities. In the penitentiary system, every inmate has already been sentenced, and has nothing to 'gain' from spiritual practice other than inner peace, and personal recovery. In pre-sentencing facilities however, religious practice and spiritual belief is often seen as 'fake' or 'a scam' by inmates to gather signatures of attendance or character reference letters for a sentencing committee or judge. In my observation, this fear and speculation is very accurate for a majority of inmates. It is a true minority that is practicing spiritual principles, studying the bible, sutras, or the Quran, attempting to gain enlightenment or correct character defects. For the most part, faith in the jail system is a faith in self, in the individual, and in strength and toughness. It is practically self worship of the individual. A skinhead inmate I was celled with,

an informant named O.I., told me "...all you have in here is yourself. All you have out there is yourself. It's a dog-eat-dog world, man. Do you and I'll do me and if the whites go to war I'll be there." Unfortunately, that type thinking dominates the inmates in pre-sentencing detention facilities. It does not help that almost all correctional facilities put no emphasis what so ever into rehabilitation or attempting to offer services that could help inmates change their lives. Of the five facilities I have been to, only Wayne Brown Correctional Facility, ran by the Nevada County Sherriff's Office, has truly, in action, supported detention as a rehabilitative effort. It is at that facility that I am currently housed and am able to be enrolled in college courses at University of Nevada, Reno. The United States federal government itself, in Ronald Reagan's era of the "War on Crime," issued as a statement in its "Sentencing Reform Act of 1984" the government edict that "prison and detention cannot effectively be used for rehabilitation and recovery. This model is inadequate and ineffective."¹ With those quick, short words, rehabilitation as a model in detention was thrown out in this country, and the model of simple punishment and detention has 'trickled-down' to the county, and pre-disposition detention levels. This philosophy has not changed in the last 25 years, even as the country socially has undergone radical cultural changes, there are still 3 million inmates detained, 1 out of every 50 children has a parent incarcerated², and the lack of true rehabilitation leads inmates to have faith and belief in only one thing: them versus the world. Some inmates, in the minority, practice, or attempt to practice, religious and spiritual principles. Doing so almost immediately ostracizes them from the typical, majority, racially based groups and activities, leaving them without the feeling of acceptance. It is a choice where the inmate must choose spiritual practices and withdrawing themselves from the culture in which they live, or chose being accepted into the culture in which they live by adhering to the cultural norms. It is a difficult choice for every inmate, and only a minority chooses the spiritual/religious or rehabilitative path as there is very little to no support in most institutions to do so, and because of the immediate societal and cultural consequences for them.

CONCLUSION

The system of pre-sentencing detention facilities in the United States has one primary motivation in operation: get inmates to plead guilty. That is the primary and only focus of a majority of institutions. With this as their directive, the quality of living provided to inmates is far below that of the penitentiary systems for inmates that have already been sentenced, time out of the cell is very limited, and resources to work and rehabilitation are withheld. All of these pressures create a unique cultural and physical environment for inmates. The culture revolves fundamentally around their definition of wealth, respect, and race. Those are the three fundamental aspects of culture in jails in the United States. The culture is intense, with an inherent lack of trust, over-thrown emotion, and raw physical violence as an always eminent possibility. The motivation for every inmate is simple: survival, and that survival is found through acceptance. This typically means throwing out a traditionally socially acceptable held set of cultural values and beliefs in exchange for a jail house cultural construct of values and

beliefs. Because of the lack of focus on rehabilitation, there is little to no chance to exit from this culture or worldview, and those that do make the choice to do so are often frowned upon, and become withdrawn from the association of their peers in incarceration. Hopefully the day will come when the free society of the United States, and its managers, truly looks at this system of detention –and the philosophy behind it- and reviews it to see the truth that it only perpetuates further criminal behavior, does not effectively act as a source of crime control, and only further alienates the majority of inmates from the rest of ‘free’ society.

Credits and Acknowledgments

1. United States Code Service, Appendix, Title 18, Sentencing Reform Act of 1984
2. “Sitting Inside”, Kobai Scott Whitney, 2003, Prison Dharma Network Publishing

The full names of my informants were abbreviated into initials and/or changed to protect their identities and for legal reasons.

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