

IMAGINE...

You are many miles from home. Or at least what you once knew as home. You're surrounded by razor-wire wrapped fencing, motion detectors along the ground, and cameras at every angle you can imagine. The building is one that is made of concrete and steel, with no actual openings to allow fresh air. Mainly because it is central air conditioning/heating. Another reason why the building is enclosed is because it cuts down on the security risks. Inside this building are boxes called "cells" that are seven and a half feet wide by thirteen feet long. This space is divided between two people. Inside this box is a bunk bed, a desk with two stools, a toilet and a sink. So the overall measurement of space is cut down. Depending on how much stuff you and the one you share the box with, you lose more space. This box only has one opening...a door. One which you enter and exit at the whim of whatever correctional officer happens to be on duty at that time. Unless it's the third shift. Then you're stuck behind a locked door that you can't get opened until about six-thirty the next morning.

If you are lucky, you have a box with a view. It is difficult to take advantage of the views offered due to the narrowness of the window that you gaze out of. No matter what view you have, you see a constant reminder of where you are not able to get away from. Not for some years. Unless you are one of the unlucky ones and you're stuck for life. That box is now your "home." Since it will be the place where you are going to sleep, possibly eat, and spend most of your time while inside the building you need to go about the process of making it as comfortable for you as you can. To cut down on how cold and unfeeling the box is, you should get a few rugs. It is also a good idea to get a few of the towels that are available for purchase as well.

Those two items can do a good bit towards making being in your "home" tolerable. The towels you should lay on the desk and the top of the cabinets that are wall-mounted. Not only does it provide a degree of comfort, it also covers the steel surfaces and make the area look cleaner. The rugs that you and the person you share the area with can be placed so that the section of floor that is trampled the most is covered.

Doing this provides you the opportunity to walk on "carpeted" flooring like you did when you were at your real home. It also takes away the coldness of the floor that is always there. So cold that you even feel it through the socks that you wear on your feet. Which is why a lot of those around you who aren't able to have rugs on their floor continuously wear their boots while in the box. There are many who try to avoid doing that. The reason why is because of what the bottom of your shoes track in throughout the day. You don't want to wear your shoes into your box. The idea is to keep it as clean as possible. Mainly because it is the area where you lay your head down to sleep.

Not only are you surrounded by fencing, concrete and steel, you are also surrounded by two groups of people. One is a huge group. The other group is large enough to maintain the authority of the building that you are in and the others around it. That authority group is supposed to "guide" you regarding the rules and other day-to-day functions of the place you are in. There are different levels to this group. From correctional officers who are responsible for maintaining the "blocks," to the lieutenants and captains that are responsible for them. There are also counselor's, unit managers, supervisors and deputy superintendent's to the warden. As well as "guiding" you during your stay here and under their custody, they're also to answer questions that you might have.

Do they get asked questions? Of course. Some they even provide an answer for. Most often they tell you what you want to hear until they are able to get away from you. As soon as they're out of sight, they forget what the topic concerned. I'm sure that they would offer the reason why as being that they had too much on their plates as it is and did not have the time to properly review what you asked. Or something along those lines. Oh, and then you have to deal with their attitude. Yes, you will run into many who seem to be unable to leave their personal life separate from their job. This tends to cause animosity to develop. That animosity only stirs up a chaotic environment.

Then there is the group of hundreds who live the exact life that you are living. At one time even they were divided into

two different factions. The "old-heads," and the "young-bucks." The latter are supposed to get their schooling about the life in here. Back in the day we "young-bucks" made it a point to go to the "old-heads" for the education that they had for us. Today? It's a free-for-all! No one turns to the "old-heads" for schooling. There isn't the unity there once was. Which is why we have lost the things we once had. I have shared a few story's with some who have come to listen about how the life used to be. They think me to lie and chase down the information from another. Who happens to repeat what I told them. When they ask why it changed I tell them one thing...unity. Where once you would find the whole prison willing to step up and speak out against the wrongs that were done. Now? You might find a few who are willing to put in the work.

Something that I think has had an effect on how people come in and adjust is how they live in today's world. The one thing that stands out the most is how everybody brags about the video games they were out there playing. Seriously? I sit back and listen to how animated these people get and can't believe how much of their life they have wasted. Then again, yes I can. The values that should be getting taught to the young as they get ready for life aren't being taught. They are being left to fend for themselves. Why? Because everyone is out there chasing that life that only an excessive amount of money can provide them! I used to think I knew what materialism was when I looked around at the people who had it when I was young. I was wrong. Materialism today is of such a high caliber that I am surprised that anyone can actually breathe the air that surrounds them!

What happened to the "old-heads" who were once available? They "retired." Or should I say "we" retired. We have had to take a backseat to how life is now. All of the stored up knowledge that we have just sits and collects dust. Why? Because the new breed of people coming in are too individualistic and don't have time to sit and hear what an "old-head" has to say. It's a "live-and-learn" lifestyle for them. The result of this attitude towards being taught by those who have been "playing" the "game" is that more and more stuff is being taken

away. The biggest thing that is disappearing is the quality of food that once was served. Things will just get progressively worse as time goes on.

What is it that could possibly affect people seeking what "old-heads" have to teach? Television. Cigarettes. . Coffee. I kid you not. People would rather sit around watching television while they drink coffee and smoke cigarettes than chase down the knowledge that might put back in their possession a better quality of food! If it wasn't for the ability to purchase a television, many would be having a very difficult time with adapting to this lifestyle. I once was told to pick my battles wisely. I have. I filed the necessary paperwork concerning the food that is served to us. The result? Nothing. Why? Because I was the only one out of more than two thousand people to file anything about it! So it came down to the answer of a lack of percentage complaining. No shit! They don't have a lot of people complaining because a lot of people don't know that the rules state that they are allowed to file a written complaint about the food!

There is a saying that I learned a long time ago..."Do your time, don't let your time do you." I would like to say that there are many who are following this to a "T." Yeah, I'd like too, but I can't. You can look around and see just how bad things are with the people who are coming through the gates now. Many of them have the same attitude about things..."Fuck that, I'm going to do what I want."

SUBMITTED BY:

Lee Whitt
LEE WHITT