

Does It Matter?

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"Be mindful of the lives you hold captive; God still listens to their words, even when you refuse to..."

If you've been reading my works, you know that I try to be pro-inmate, since I am one, but I also try to be objective in what I say. Most of my works are Christian-based or inspirational in nature, but there are times where I see frustrations that we, as inmates have because society has been conditioned to believe that we don't have a voice, and that prison staff believes that we have no value to them, and commonly persecute inmates for the lightest of altercations, while they completely refuse to acknowledge when they break the rules, or laws.

It forces me, as a Christian, as a human being, and as an inmate, to strongly consider, does it matter what happens to inmates? Does it matter that we still have a voice? Does it matter that somebody's mother, wife, girlfriend, brother, friend, ect are concerned about ^{us} ~~out~~?

Does it really matter?

Ask any prison staff member, like here at USP Tucson,

and in public, and they'd say, "sure, these people matter. Our job is to rehabilitate them, to also ensure that they do their time, as appointed by the U.S. Government Justice System".

Pardon me while I gag...

If you ask these people, if we, INMATES, matter, the politically correct answer is, "yes". But examine the heart, pull back the curtains of the prison system, and the answer is quite different... and troubling.

Sometimes I write off the strength of emotions, using how I feel to "vent" or in some cases, "bear fangs" as I often said in my blogs online.

Folks, sometimes I get so upset at what prisons do to inmates. They make up ridiculous rules for us to follow, and punish us over standards the average citizen could never uphold. Yet, they are equally ignorant to their own accountability; when they do wrong, yet refuse to even think about the consequences they've dropped on us.

Case in point, this week, the so-called "Correctional Officer Appreciation Week".

Let me state, for the record, this week has done absolutely NOTHING to encourage me to honor this demonstration of hypocrisy.

It just feels like somebody in B.O.P. (Bureau of Prisons) felt that society ought to honor prison guards, as if they're protecting the country. Our men and women who serve the military has my upmost respect, but if you're familiar with how many of these correctional officers, and staff, have abused inmates, in a demented sense of justice, you'd strongly consider if such an "honor" ought to be bestowed.

Now, can I say that every correctional officer is dishonest? Of course not, and perhaps I ought to share testimonies of GOOD officers- but perhaps another time.

This essay ain't about that.

The focal point of my essay is this; "Does it matter to the prison, USP Tucson in general, does it matter what inmates think, or trying to do"? I'd love to think the answer would be in the affirmative...but this one doesn't quite go that way, but I'll let you decide.

So, let's back up to Monday, June 8th, the beginning of "Correctional Officer Appreciation Week" or as I'd call it, "Inmate Persecution Week".

This prison decides to celebrate "Correctional Officer Appreciation Week" by setting up a series of fun-filled events for the officers. A merry week for the prison to show their appreciation of their fellow employees...

Ok, I get that. I've got no problem with that, even if there are officers here (and other prisons) that don't deserve a job here...some need to be in prison along with us. Still, if you wanna celebrate your profession, fine...

But not at the arrogant and insensitive expense of other people.

Prisons stress strict adherence to THEIR rules, based on what premise? A rule with no true foundation of justice, compassion and common sense isn't a rule- it's a weapon.

So let me walk you through the current week we've lived.

To be fair, the prison did put up a memo up for the week before "Correctional Officer Appreciation Week" (...gosh, I get nauseous saying that...). The memo told the inmate population that because of the upcoming week, the hours in the library would be altered. Normally inmates can go to the library to work on their appeals, type works, study and so forth. For guys here fighting to get their lives back, to get to the courts, this place is absolutely essential to a second chance to justice.

We have certain hours per day to use the library. Generally, the weekday hours are from Monday- Thursday 8am-10am, 1pm-3:15pm, and depending on which side of the prison you're on, either 6:15-7:15pm OR 7:30-8:30pm. On Friday, the

hours are the same, but the evening hours are excluded. Weekend hours are a little different, but I won't include that here.

Why does all this matter?

There are inmates trying to get home, to their families. The so-called Justice System let these guys down, not giving them true representation. Most inmates find out AFTER their sentence, that their Public Defender did the bare minimum to help them. Let's face it, if I'm a Public Defender, I get paid the same amount of money, whether I lose or not...

And because the U.S. Courts have like a 98% conviction rate... we inherit losers, who get paid to just play the part (how they can live with that on their ^{conscience} ~~conscious~~, I don't know). So most inmates come to prison, realizing that they had options that weren't told to them. Only now, AFTER the judge gave them 99 years for a charge that didn't deserve a tenth of that, do they realize that they didn't have real representation.

Ok, I'm getting a little off topic. But my point is this; that library is the ticket back to court for many of these guys. It's their constant hope. So every minute in that library is a step closer to somebody going back to court, or home.

So when the prison restricts time to the library, it

directly affects these guys who are fighting for their life. It amazes me how often the prison finds ways to shut down the library. I might guess if a pigeon flies too low to the walls, they'd close the library. Heaven forbid a bird creates a security risk...

(Ok, that's low, my bad...)

So in light of the week, the prison alters the library schedule. They cut off the library on certain hours from Monday- Friday, and we are told of it. We don't like it, but there it is, in black and white...

Then Monday comes...

The day begins with half the compound getting recreation outside. The other half of the prison is pretty much stuck inside all day, until the evening. The schedule has been screwed up. The library was closed from 1-4pm.

Then comes Tuesday.

The schedule is screwed up again... we get called for recreation 30 minutes late... that's half an hour less in the library from 8-10 (now 8:30-10)... and the library was closed from 1-4pm.

Then comes Wednesday... library closed from 1-4pm.

And today, Thursday, when unexpectedly, after the memo told us the library would be closed from 8-10am, the prison decides to close the library from 1-4... so the officers can have ice cream and treats in the break room...

Does it matter?

To inmates trying to get justice, yes, it does.

To inmates trying to get home to their families, yes it does.

To inmates trying to overturn a poor decision by the courts, yes it does.

It matters to them, but apparently having ice cream, and changing the rules on inmates at a scoop of ice cream, is more important than those inmates who are trying with all their heart to get justice.

Now, a pause here. Not every inmate is a monster. Yes, there are some dangerous people here... some in my dorm, but ironically, some wear shirts and ties. Yes, there are some inmates that need to be in prison. But don't be fooled that the justice department conviction rate is equal to fair justice. We've been conditioned by television that in the end of that hour-long show, the bad guys are always locked up. Our justice system would NEVER lock up an innocent man...

(Really?)

So today, the inmates here have had no time to go to the library, as the prison has been changing the rules so that their fellow officers and staff can make merry... at our expense. I mean, who cares what we, the inmates think? It doesn't matter, does it? As a Unit Manager once told me, "You're just inmates."

The prison doesn't have to care about our welfare. They don't have to care that guys here are trying to fight for their freedom. If it was any other situation, a story about a man fighting for his life, we would commend the person, but because we're talking about prisoners... criminals, we cast doubt on the integrity of their mission because we believe the justice system was fair and partial.

Yeah. Fairly biased and partially unrighteous.

Many guys here are upset that even though the prison gave us the memo that the library would be closed from 8-10am, they not only closed it in the morning, but also the afternoon. Now, as I write this, I hear it might be closed this evening, meaning no library at all today.

And take a guess what the hours are on Friday:

CLOSED ALL DAY.

Guys working on deadlines can't make them if prison is insensitive to their rights to appeal their cases. It causes frustration and resentment to the officers and staff, who seem to be making things up as they go. As a guy who loves to write, I use the time in the library to transfer my writing to a word processor, so I need the library time. So it's a huge inconvenience when the prison changes the rules without letting population know.

I might imagine the easy (and cheap) response to this would be, "well, it's prison". Well, yes, it IS prison, but who determined how people would be treated while in prison? Society places incredibly high expectations on inmates to be rehabilitated by prisons employed by many dishonorable men and women. And if, by the grace of God, they DO manage to do the impossible, and change their lives and return to society, the very people that had such a high standard for ex-felons, abandons the belief and rejects them. So they continue to do time, even after paying their debt to society. Many officers and staff reflect this ideology.

So, for the week, the inmates won't get a lot of time in the library. Heaven forbid we get in there, and actually LEARN something. The prison doesn't care, it's not like they're suffering.

It's not like the staff in the library has to care. After all, it's "Correctional Officer Appreciation Week". The prison honors their fellow officers and staff. It doesn't

matter what the inmates think...

Does it matter? Yes it does...

It does to the inmate falsely charged, and given LIFE.

It matters to a father trying to get home to his wife and kid.

It matters to a 23 year old trying to write a letter to his stressed-out girlfriend.

It matters to a guy trying to make the deadline to get his case back in court.

It matters to a guy studying to get his GED...

It matters to a guy who's trying to share prison life to others, so they can understand that we have a voice too.

So yeah... it matters.

Even if the prison refuses to acknowledge it.

Sorry I havent written in awhile. Not many letters, & USP Tucson has been investigated by FBI for tampering with our legal mail, and destroying family & friends letters. Hope to write more soon,

Ym.