

Conscious Prisoner ~ The Evolution of Uhuru

Different Prison, Same Old Abuse (Part 1)

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I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I was bearing witness to the most horrible sight one could imagine. On 11/09/16 at approximately 6:20am, I was awakened by the sound of loud footsteps. When I made my way to my cell door (half asleep), I saw 15 to 20 correctional officers running up the stairs into cell HU4B36. Moments later, I saw officers drag the stiff dead body of a prisoner out of the cell, carried it down the steps, placed it on a stretcher, covered it up with sheets, and wheeled it out of the pod and out of the building towards the infirmary. It is rumored he had been deceased since 9pm the previous night.

And then, it happened again.

At approximately 9:55pm, as I was sitting on my top bunk looking out of the window trying to make sense of what I had just seen, I saw another prisoner from HU4A with his pants down around ankles and his genitals exposed, being wheeled out of the building by correctional officers on a stretcher towards the infirmary. A nurse was frantically performing compressions on his chest. He reportedly died in the infirmary.

At approximately 2:10pm, we were all made to exit our cells and stand in a straight line while a drug sniffing dog was run down the line and through each one of our cells in search of drugs. None was found. Afterwards, no cleaning materials were issued so that we could properly sanitize our cells after the dogs left hair and tracked mud and feces in our cells which left a foul odor.

On the morning of 11/10/16, approximately one-hundred officers swarmed our pods A and B in Housing Unit (HU) #4 to perform a shakedown (search) of each cell. We were ordered to strip naked in front of our roommates, spread our butt cheeks, squat and then cough (this is done to determine if we have contraband concealed in our rectum). Then, we were forced to kneel on the cold hard concrete, our hands were cuffed behind our back, and our cells were ransacked for an hour by officers as we stood in front of our cell and watched wearing nothing but our underwear.

Afterwards, pods HU4A and HU4B was placed on modified lockdown, we were only allowed out of our cells for one hour of pod recreation three times a day. We were allowed to participate in work and religious activities, but not recreation. We were fed all meals through a tiny slot in our cell door. This continued until the morning of 11/14/16.

On the morning of 11/14/16, the entire prison was placed on complete lockdown where we were confined to our cells 24-hours a day; two adult men confined to a space no bigger than your average-sized bathroom where we must endure the smell of each other's urine, feces, body odor and flatulence. We were allowed to shower every three days. The officers had to pass out the meals which they dread doing because it meant they actually had to work for their paycheck and not sit around on their ass talking on the phone or pushing buttons on a computer screen. So our meals often arrive late, cold, and in some cases, inedible. We were all locked down in our cells, and we were all hungry, cold, irritated, and pissed off.

Searches of our cells continued throughout the prison until lockdown was lifted on the morning of 11/20/16 for every pod except for the one I am housed in (HU4B), where lockdown was extended until 6:30pm on 11/21/16. The reason: Because someone screamed profanities at the warden, T.S. Ray, as he was making his rounds (aka slave checks). The phones and kiosks were turned off so we were unable to call or e-mail our family members even as the upcoming holiday (Thanksgiving) was approaching. For those of us who do not get visits or mail, we were completely cut off from all communication with the outside world. Warden T.S. Ray—who we suspect of being a racist because of his rude and condescending attitude towards Black prisoners—didn't even have the decency and respect to come around to each cell and explain to us why we were lockdown in our cells while the rest of general population prisoners were allowed to participate in religious, educational, and recreational activities. I suspect the reason why Warden T.S. Ray targeted this pod for continued punishment (i.e. repression) is because both the prisoner who died in this pod was white in a pod that is over 90 percent Black! Never mind the fact that when someone dies in prison, it's almost always because prison staff failed to perform their job in a professional and ethical manner. Instead, prisoners are always used as a scapegoat to cover-up the unprofessionalism and crimes of prison staff.

This is classic group punishment/behavior modification, where all of us (old-timers included) are being punished for the actions of one or two younger prisoners. Group punishment/behavior modification as practiced in the VA prison system is used to inflame hostilities, animosities, and violence among prisoners, to justify continued punishment and abuse in an effort to further aggravate our suffering, and to indirectly target those prisoners who embrace certain religions and political views that are deemed radical, objectionable, and un-American by these fascist prison authorities.