

- 1 -

Visitations In Prison

Frederick Mason #55487-056

USP Tucson PO Box 24550

Tucson, AZ 85734

I haven't had a visit here at USP Tucson since I've been here (currently 3½ years), but after hearing by guys I know, I wonder if I'd want to; staff here at USP Tucson seem to get a kick out of persecuting inmates AND their loved ones.

My cellie had family come from Florida, to Tucson, Arizona and he told me that they (staff) searched his parent's CAR! They're not driving THROUGH the prison! He also said that they refused them entry because of the clothes they wore. I can see if they came in with swimsuits, but jeans? Really?

Another friend of mine had just had family come from Maine. They (staff) refused his people TWICE because of their clothing, and had it not been for another (kinder) staff member, who could vouch for the inmate, he would not have had a visit at all.

Another friend here had his parents visit, and his 70-year old MOTHER was refused because her bra had metal in it. She had to go to buy a sports bra just to visit her son. They came from Texas.

Let's see...you rejected the visit of a 70-year old woman because of metal in her bra? What's she carrying, a file? Sometimes these people who work here are as heartless as vampires on a blood binge.

I thought the purpose of the visit was to ENCOURAGE loved ones on both sides. Not DISCOURAGE them, as apparently the prison does all too well. Of course, the prison will hide behind the letter of the rule- and completely ignore and reject the spirit of the rule.

The highest priority of any prison should be security; ok, I get that. But just as important is the PEOPLE, not only inside the prison, but their loved ones as well on the outside. If prisons expect compliance by inmates, there must then be compliance by officers to respect the humanity that is inside AND outside the prison.

And yeah, I know some officers and staff may not like that; my advice, being curt...get another job.

It's NOT your lot in life to make people suffer, regardless of what the courts say they did. Many officers here are just as bad, or worse, than the inmates because they believe they have a court order to make life hell for inmates AND their families. What did an inmate's mom in Florida do to you, that you treat her like she's doing time?

This is where prisons like USP Tucson ought to "extend

the olive branch" of peace, and offer their best hospitality to CITIZENS who paid for, and travelled thousands of miles for a few hours of a visit with their loved ones.

I make my argument "argumentum ab invonvenienti" , or the appeal based on hardship and inconvenience involved. From what I've heard, visitation here NEVER starts on time, which is supposed to be at 8am...not 9am or 9:30. USP Tucson makes it a hardship for inmates, and adds inconvenience to the already stressed time both inmates and loved ones are going through.

Consider this: you've got a son, or husband, or friend or whomever, doing time in Tucson, Arizona. You live on the East Coast, and you want to visit. You go through the process of being approved, then make arrangements to get from (Maine, Florida, New York, for example) to get to Tucson for a Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday visits. You spend HUNDREDS of dollars, travel THOUSANDS of miles... why?

Because you care about that person you're going to see. And for many people, that person they're visiting may NEVER get out of prison (or is there a LONG time). So you get to USP Tucson, and now have to go through the delays, searches and possible rejection for details COMPLETELY devoid of of hospitality and compassion. But you endure it, because it's the only way you'll see your loved one.

What should have been an experience to bring people

together, with the help of the prison, turns instead into a frustrating ordeal, filled with complete apathy by the prison, simply because these people aren't trained to respect people, only to make life hard for inmates and their loved ones. Perhaps one has to wonder if officers at visitation make it hard for citizens because they just want to. Inmates could argue "non bis in idem", Latin for "not twice for the same thing". Why punish inmates further for their charges? Why punish their loved ones if they've done no wrong at all?

Now, if this sounds trivial to you, I'd appeal to you that visitation is CRITICALLY important for inmates. There are almost 1500 inmates here at USP Tucson, most from the East or Midwest. The idea of most inmates getting a visit is slim to none, and even if travel was possible, it's expensive. In order to get a visit, the planning, cost and stress of travel wears on our loved ones, but apparently USP Tucson, doesn't care about a 70-year old mom travelling 1000 miles to visit her only son. I guess there's been an escape attempt here involving the elderly, where officers feel that this woman wearing a bra with metal could cause some treachery...

Please... get real! Have a heart! I mean, maybe 1% of the inmate population even GETS a visit!

I get upset when I see the hypocrisy here, when the prison acts like we can do no right, that we're completely unredeemable, but yet a critical part of prisons is rehabilitation. If USP Tucson doesn't care about MY mom, who

travelled 2500 miles just to see me, why on earth...how on earth, am I supposed to respect the prison?

Here, the visits are Fridays from 5pm-8pm, then Saturdays and Sundays from 8am to 3pm. Yet, the prison cheats people out of valuable time, by "stalling" and not getting these people in on time.

Folks, visitation is the closest we can get to our loved ones. Phonecalls are limited to 300 minutes a month; letters and e-mails are short (and letters are often "lost" by mailroom). This- visitation, is the best thing we've got... for both sides. Why, in all that is compassionate, would the prison knowingly make it an ordeal for loved ones and inmates?

There is a need and purpose for rules, especially in prison. But ANY rule applied without common sense, and devoid of compassion is a foolish rule...and resorts only to persecution. My friend from Maine would have lost his visit had not a staff member not spoken up for that inmate. I find it demonically disturbing that officers would find trivial reasons to reject people from coming darn near 3000 miles, already approved, only to be twice rejected because of their clothing.

The purpose of those officers is to accommodate those people, using professionalism, common sense and compassion. Yet they lack all three, because it's simply easier to be lazy

and ignorant.

...ok...so my venting has reached the boiling point...sorry...

But I really get upset when prisons abuse inmates- and their loved ones, simply because they can. I still contend that, all things considered, USP Tucson is one of the better prisons to do time (if you HAVE to do time). Inmates get along here far better than most prisons, which CLEARLY speaks volumes about the inmates; not staff. But things like screwing with people's visitation is a reminder that there are indeed officers who come to work to condemn and punish, which is NOT their job.

Officers like that make prison harder that it needs to be.

These guys here wait months- even over a year, for family to plan, save money and travel long distances to see them, only to have staff treat ~~our distances to see them, only to have staff treat~~ our families like 3rd rate citizens. They don't deserve that. Heck even INMATES don't deserve that. So when I hear staff act like that, it frustrates me how oppressive this prison is to our families and loved ones.

And it doesn't matter that I personally haven't gotten a visit; I care about those here who do. For what it's worth; they're my friends, and their families are worth better

treatment by Federal employees than the insensitive ones that work here. What would I do if my family or friends came to visit, only to be harassed by the officers? Could I contain my anger and frustration? I pray I never have to answer that...

Anyway, that kinda gives you an inside look at prison visitation here. Maybe it's not so bad in other prisons...maybe worse. All I can do is write about it, and pray for positive solutions. If you're reading this, consider a prayer for us.

Until next time....

All letters appreciated;
Fred