

THROUGH MY EYES THE SHAKE DOWN

By Kenneth M. Key

The setting is one all familiar - we are usually awoken by someone who gets up early and notices the water and the toilet has been cut off. Indicating we are about to be shook down.

Its a level one shake down and its a Statewide, which means officers from various institutions, so 30 plus will be converging upon us. To search for contraband such as knives, home made wine, drugs, phones etc. Its over four hundred officers

Inmates are awoken 6:45 am. There are four units B, C, D and E. 290 men per unit, but water is cut off and they will only shake one to two units a day.

Two men dressed in Orange Riot gear bullet proof vest, tear gas, large oak stick and large containers of mace are at your door.

Inmates lie hatters on the floor, one to the front, the other to the back of the cell. Face the wall, this is where you are stripped butt ass naked, lie hatters commands, open your mouth, move your tongue, stick fingers in lift your nuts, turn around, spread your cheeks, squat and cough.

You are not allowed to wear underwear or socks, only a shirt and pants and shower shoes - whatever the weather. You're cuffed from behind and you are told to face the back of cell, while your celly goes through the same ritual of humiliation.

There are 29 cells to a gallery, not one door will open until inmates are searched and cuffed. When done all doors are opened and we are marched to a location such as the gym, chapel, or dining area and placed standing along the wall. You will be standing for the minimum of three hours or longer.

There are no bathroom breaks, mind you, you just wake up and if no one has noticed the water has been cut off, you won't be able to use the washroom, wash up or drink.

Some inmates are randomly taken off the wall for drug drops, there is no talking, just silence, like death with these huge masked officers behind you with sticks that often tap you, punch you with these oak sticks, if you're moving, seem to be imitated by the standing etc. Any feedback will automatically have you removed from line and taken to segregation immediately. This is about Power and Intimidation.

This is done several times a year and, something no one ever gets use too. You will return back to your cells and depending on the type of cell you kept and the type of officers you draw. Your cell will be totally ram-sacked, yes! imagine "Katrina" taking place in your cell and your property, and cellies are all mixed together.

Food opened, containers taken, bowls, anything they feel you shouldn't have despite you're purchasing it or it being sent. It depends on why they are here in the first place that will determine the level of damage.

Officer assaulted, man get ready, happened in your cellhouse, well you may have your TV smashed, cassette player thrown off the gallery. Earphones stepped on. One thing is certain, everyone will be touched by their actions.

It will take several hours to clean up, take inventory of things destroyed, taken or missing. As a jail house lawyer and considered a agitator I am always prepared for the Tsunami of Shakedowns. Off into Court you go and if you win - you are given money to replace your property from the Inmate Benefit Fund, but its not money

From the State or employees money, but the recycling. Its your money (used to purchase Commissary, books etc.

This is another thing you will have to, but never get use too. Trust me after 35 yrs still bothers the hell out of me. Here your girl, wife, or Family or Friend sends you \$280.00 to purchase a 13 inch Digital tv and its been smashed and if you sue, you will only get \$100.00. Its called depreciation and this claim could go on for a year to a year and a half or longer.

In the meantime you are without a tv or what ever property you have lost, unless you have another \$280.00 to get another or your celly don't mind you looking at his until you get another one. You're in waiting for some type of justice.

This is one of many shake downs that will take place. We have the ones that take place every 30 days, the random and wine shake downs, the snitch shake downs and sometime you can be shake down four to five times in a week or month and loose something everytime. Unfortunately this is part of the perils of prison life.

Last year they took everyone's type writers in a maximum security

prison, claiming a security threat. Imagine the brother who saved up \$300.00 dollars or Family just sent it, buys the typewriter and the following week they take it, NO REFUND, and yes its what they did.

Now everything is done by long hand, you are allowed to purchase two four inch rubbery state pens only. Trust me not a lot of ink, when you are corresponding, doing legal work or writing in general.

This is a prison where your property isn't your own and can be taken at anytime on the whim of the prisonrats, without due process and without ever replacing what was sold or given to you and this is life in prison.

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