

Persisting: A life under the direct line of gunfire.

No one, nobody, not a single person ever considers the long-term effects of living in the direct line-of-sight of a (mini-14) rifle, while being incarcerated in a prison in the great state of California. It is unimaginable even to the most callous of individuals to think that someone would have to endure this constant threat of imminent death, day in and day out, repeatedly, and forever. That each moment of every day of your life is now at the whims and fancy of a correctional officer, whose sense of law and justice is only a monotonous job. My life is literally, in their hands and down their riflescope forever.

I want you to look at a model of the cell and imagine being locked into, what amounts to sharing a ½ bathroom, with another man, for most of the day, each day. Yes, it is very crowded. Cramming two (2) full-grown men into such an enclosed space, which seems like it was designed to create claustrophobia. No, prison is not comfortable, nor should it be, but that is not the worst of it. As you sit, lie-down, use the restroom, eat, sleep, read a book, you need to be mindful that each and every moment of your existence in prison you can be shot, shot dead, maimed, or otherwise disfigured by being shot.

I am not sure why nobody ever discusses this paradox of living at the risk of dying. Most prisoners block out this conditional existence, but none of us forget it. Now I ask you to consider if this is ethical. Yea, o.k., but really with the advancements of electrified fences and secure perimeters does this requirement of “direct line of sight” really need to be there? Better question, how many years can a person stand this? Keep in mind that CDCR has kept people in prison for more than 4 and 5 decades, and current mandatory sentencing can go well past the 100-year mark.

As I sit here in a cell writing to you, I want your compassion and empathy. I am a human being who has endured this existence for over 30 years, I am not sure when or if I will be released, but I don't want the next generation of prisoners to have to suffer the indignities and humiliation of living a life under the gun. I promise in the next life I will make you proud of who I turned out to be, but for now I am just surviving.

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