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SOC. 447 - Correctional Systems
Homework Assignment: 7
ch. 11
Essay # 7

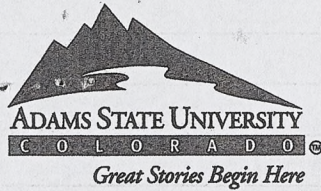
Explain how the development of rights for female prisoners has differed from that of the rights of male prisoners.

The Supreme Law of our land is the United States Constitution. Authors of Corrections in the 21st Century, Frank Schmalleger and John Ortiz Smykla point out that the one question at the heart of any discussion of prisoners' rights is this: What does the Constitution have to say? Scholars have found no requirement that prisoners give up all of their rights as U.S. citizens (and human beings) after conviction (297).

With that being said, interpretation of our Constitution of the courts is where the issues arise. It is these courts that justify restrictions on the constitutional rights of prisoners.

The "prisoners' rights era" began to emerge around 1970. Cases were both won and lost but still fundamental changes were looked at for rights of prisoners. The prisoners' rights movement has been largely a male phenomenon. Male inmates would petition the courts for expansion of their rights, while female inmates main fight would be to simply gain the same rights male inmates already had.

I see this to be a reality that continues to exist. The prison claim at offers very little educational or vocational opportunities compared to the mens prisons. The mens prisons allow them to learn carpentry, welding, license plate designing, classes for more hands on learning for their



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education etc. The males also have more equipment for recreation phones in their rec yards. classes that teach them to bread, play guitar, and have pool tables. The men also have a different commissary list to order off of than us women. They can order hot plates, bread, chalk, even the little things that differ such as guitar pics.

Our text points out many cases where female inmates are left with inferior opportunities compared to the available privileges available to male prisoners. In *Grove v. Johnson* a district court case filed by female inmates in the Michigan system claimed they were denied access to the courts and constitutional rights equal protection comparable to those for male inmates. Prisoners demanded equal educational + vocational opportunities as the men (319). It was ruled that lack of funds was not an acceptable justification for unequal treatment of male and female prisoners.

Female and male prisoner rights also differ on the health aspect for inmates. In New York female inmates file a case alleging inadequate medical attention violated their civil rights. It was accepted by the U.S. Supreme Court, a case called *Cooper v. Moyn* stating neither inconvenience nor cost as a justifiable excuse for treating female inmates differently than males (320). Cost-effectiveness issues continue to be distinguishers between treatment of male and female inmates.

Medical care, general conditions, vocational and educational opportunities are all elements that separate the rights of women and male prisoners. I see first hand that the guys at the mens prisons definitely do have more access to and get more privileges. The women tend to fight more between each other than stick together for a cause, where as the men they have more camaraderie.



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References

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Jacobs, James B. (2001). "The Prisoners' Rights Movement and Its Impacts." (2nd ed) Los Angeles; Roxbury. p. 211
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