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UNDERNEATH

"What happens behind closed doors."

York Correctional Institution is the only female prison in the State of Connecticut. "A world within a world," some say. The world that doesn't publicize its misfortunes and tragedies. It's not the only place that keeps deep, dark and dreary secrets. Enclosed, behind the wired fences are women with a beating heart and story they're dying to share.

How do you respond to a "Hi, how are you?" from your mother who is on the other end of a recorded phone line? Do I tell the truth or a white lie? Why would I want to share the unimaginable things I endure daily? "Good," I mumbled as a tear shed on 1-9-3 Thanksgiving days.

First things first, you cannot explain jail to someone who's never been. And, even then not everyone around you has the same mindset or perspective as you. Some say it's a vacation away from their life and visit frequently. Others use their time wisely to prosper from the shitty experience so they won't return and some, well, they just don't care what goes on; they want to do their time and go home.

My first experience was to unwillingly get undressed for female officers who weren't to friendly. The C/O's snickered as they made derogatory comments about the other ladies' bodies during the cavity search. If I wasn't ~~un~~ comfortable already I was about to be as they watched me take a maximum two minute shower. Upon completion I was thrown in what seemed like a cage with the other 20 females waiting to get processed. I was given #422255, no longer was I Enysia Jde. Property of State of CT now. Uniform of the day: burgundy shirts and ugly blue jeans. "Great", I said. "You'll get use to it" I heard from across the cage.

As the crucially long days continued I did not get use to the routine of life behind bars. Days turned to weeks then months, even a year. Holidays, birthdays even funerals came and went like I never existed. Incarceration isn't easy to say the least. Especially when your innocent, like myself. It's an adjustment to the life I once lived. There's days I've waited like a sad puppy for my cell to open just so I can take a cold shower. — but it never opened. On several occasions I've gone up to 5 days with no shower and certainly not by choice!

I heard a faint cry of a baby in the cell next door. Sure enough a brave young lady and her heroic bunkie delivered her now 2 year old daughter. This came after c/o's denied her medical attention for hours. While D.O.C's mission statement is to provide and maintain "safety & security" through out the facility at all times, they failed to do so. One job and one job only and they couldn't even do that. How would you feel if that was your daughter, niece, sister, cousin or friend? Think about it...

When I've tried to voice my opinions and concerns about this failing prison system to staff I got told I was insinuating a riot & it'd be best I stop before I go to Segregation. "Seg" is jail within jail. There's zero privileges given. A paper and pencil aren't even allowed in your cell - unless that is if your snitching, writing a statement. It's not a good idea to do that either. They say, "the truth set you free" but not while in prison.

One day I will revisit YCI to tell my story to those who could benefit. Hearing a former prisoner's experience, strength & hope may encourage the ladies to change their life. No matter the negativity around me I chose to be positive and better myself. It's not about the journey it's about the destination... -ESR