

## My Personal Experience

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I am serving a twenty-year sentence in federal custody. I started my sentence at a medium-level security prison in West Virginia. At this level I had to deal with politics, gangs and heightened security. While I was doing time at this level of security, I witnessed many fights, inmates getting stabbed, and inmates getting hit with locks in a sock. I also seen inmates riot and punch staff members. At this level of security inmates are locked in thier cells, around 8 p.m. daily, until around 6 a.m. the next morning.

For security reasons inmates are only allowed to move from one area of the compound to another area, by controlled movement. These movements consist of a five minute move from the area, inmate was presently, back to the housing unit. Then there was a five minute move from housing unit to another area of the compound. At this level of security there were many programs and ativities to participate in.

Any time there was a serious incident that affected the security of the institution, inmates were locked down in thier cells, sometimes weeks at a time. Any time there was a fight or medical emergency, a correctional officer would hit a button on his two-way radio, "called ducces," which informed other officers that there was a incident taking place. When a incident took place, inmates were expected to lay face down, rain, snow, or sunshine, inmates usually got by with kneeling on thier knees.

The only reason I was sent to a medium security prison was the twenty year sentence I recieved. Inmates cannot go to a low-level security prison with twenty years left on his sentence. I was designated to Beckley, W.V, because I had a twenty year sentence. Once there, I got my good time, which put me below twenty-years, therefore, I was able to transfer to a low-level security prison. I was only at Beckley for about seven months.

When inmates are eligible for a transfer, they can usually pick two prisons, in which they would like to transfer to. The designation center in Grand Prairie, Texas has the final say. I chose Lexington Ky or Ashland, Ky. Lexington was around one hour and fifteen minutes from family. Ashland was around three and a half hours from family. The designation center designated me to Ashland, the furthest prison from home.

I left Beckley on a prison bus, went to an airport in West Virginia. There was prison buses waiting there. One of the buses was a bus from Ashland. Instead of putting me on the Ashland bus, they put me on an airplane, which took me to Oklahoma for appx. two and a half months. From there I went to Atlanta, by airplane, for appx three weeks. Then I made a twelve hour trip from Atlanta to Ashland by bus. It took me appx. three months to get from Beckley, West Virginia to Ashland, Kentucky, when I could have got on the Ashland bus at airport, and made it to Ashland in appx. three hours. Majority of inmates transferring goes through this process.

I served appx. eight years at Ashland FCI. This facility was totally different from Beckley. Ashland has a population of around 1000 inmates. There are no air conditioning in the units, except in the officers stations. I was housed in one of the four units known as the "Barns". Rumor has it that they use to house animals, before being used as housing units for inmates. There was no cells in these units, they only had cubes, with walls around four and a half feet high.

The controlled movement at Ashland was a ten minute move either way, back to the housing unit, or from the housing unit to another location on the compound. Whatever location the inmate moved to, he was stuck there, for an hour, until the next move.

There were fewer politics, gangs, and lessened security at Ashland. There were lots of programming, when I first got to Ashland, such as: auto body, car care, H-VAC, computer classes, certified welding, and all kinds of educational classes. When I left Ashland, there was no auto body, car care, or computer classes.

I was at Ashland for over eight years, I probably seen six fight and heard about ten more during this time. Ashland was like a college campus that I could never leave. There was no fear, nor did I feel like I was being punished for my crime. All the justice system was doing was keeping me from my family, my family and kids were the ones being punished. I was comfortable and at peace. I had practically abandoned my family and kids, before my incarceration, so I wasn't feeling the loss like they were.

I was too far away from family for visits. I had approx. 5 visits in the over eight years I was at Ashland, and they were in the first three years there.

As mentioned above, at this level of security, the violence and fear was none existent. I had the same routine on a daily basis. I would get up Monday thru Friday at 6 am, go to breakfast, from there I would go to my designated work area. I would work until 10:30 am, go to lunch for 30 minutes, go back to work until 3 pm, stand for count at 4 pm, go to dinner at 4:30 pm, come back to housing unit, take a shower, take an hour nap, wake up and read for an hour or so, stand up for 9 pm count. Watch T.V. until bedtime usually around 11 pm, get up the next day start all over again.

On weekends and holidays I would usually sleep until the 10 am count, go to brunch at 10:30 am, come back to housing unit, read for two or three hours, watch a little T.V., stand for 4 pm. count, go to eat at 4:30 pm, come back to housing unit, watch a Nascar race, football, basketball, or baseball, depend on the season. Stand for

9 pm. count, take a shower, lay down and read or listen to MP3 player until I went to sleep.

I can honestly say that during my whole incarceration I have never used no type of drug, except prescription drugs, nor have I used a cell phone. I will admit to smoking cigarettes occasionally. At this level of security, drugs, cell phones, and tobacco are common. Synthetic marijuana or K-2 got so bad that staff were taking inmates to the hospital on a nightly basis. Sometimes two or three inmates a night. Rumor is a few have died from its use. I have seen inmates smoke K-2, then run through the unit, naked, screaming at the top of their lungs, or crawl on their hands and knees barking like dogs, or they would smoke the K-2 and freeze up, and another inmate would have to lead them back to their bunks, and lay them down. Inmates having sex was very common. I have went to the bathroom during the night, and see two inmates in the floor of their cell or cube having sex. I have walked into the mop closet, one inmate would be on his knees.

There are instances were inmates would strung arm other inmates, take their watches and other personal property. A couple of times I have seen first time inmates come in, and another inmate would extort the first time inmate, by telling the inmate he would protect him for a weekly sum of money. Sex offenders and child molesters have a very hard time at any level of security.

As far as interaction with staff I have never had any trouble with a staff member. I have always shown them respect and I got respect in return.

After doing 8 years at a low level security prison, I was eligible to transfer to the next lower level of security, which is minimum security or out custody, called a Camp. At this level of security, you must have less

than 10 years to serve, and your point score has to be 11 or less.

I have been at a Camp for over one year and a half. There are very few programs at this level. Inmates walk out the front door everyday going to work, in the community or around the other prison, doing upkeep on the grounds.

At this level, there is easy access to contraband, such as cigarettes, tobacco, cell phones, alcohol, drugs, street clothing, and street food. At this level of incarceration, it's basically a place to party. It's basically a college campus, without programming. All the above mentioned contraband is common.

Camps are a waste of tax payers money, for example, during my 7 months at the medium security, nine years ago, I took plumbing classes, CDL classes and Ace classes. I took personal finance class, real estate class, agriculture class, financial responsibility class, drug classes, computer classes, history classes, and several more programs during the eight years I was at low security. I also gained experience in painting, masonry, carpentry, and landscaping, after doing my remaining eight years, I will have forgotten a lot of the experience I gained at the other levels of security, due to the lack of programming at minimum security level.

At the minimum level of security, all the government and the Bureau of Prisons are doing, is keeping inmates away from their families, giving the inmates the opportunity to start using drugs again, before ever leaving the system.

My experience, since leaving the medium security level, all the government has done is kept me from my kids, family, and loved ones. It's been one big party. There is very little punishment or rehabilitation, besides the programs taught by inmates. Most of the time inmates sign the sign-in sheet and leave, or sleep through the class.

All the staff members do is make sure inmates show up for class, follow the rules, and schedule the classes. Myself, I have learned a trade for when I enter society again. I have also asked God into my life and stayed

focused on God's word. It has been hard, with all the drugs and contraband that comes through the prison system. It's going to be even harder, during the remainder of my time at the Camp. It is unbelievable the amount of contraband I have seen, since I arrived at the Camp.

In closing, I have been gone from society so long that I am at peace. I get three meals a day, take a shower any time I want, roof over my head, excellent dental and medical services. I don't have to worry about getting shot or killed while walking down the street. I work for a small monthly pay to get my hygienes and other needs.

It has been my experience that the Bureau of Prisons is a waste of money, the Correctional offices do nothing but watch the inmates, and unlock doors on the hourly moves, for a unbelievable yearly salary and benefits. The Bureau of Prisons is a business that is failing to rehabilitate inmates, due to overcrowding of the prisons, there is not enough programs for the inmates due to lack of space for classes.

The Camps are the biggest waste of money. The inmates walk out into the community everyday. We are considered no threat to the community or society, yet the Bureau of Prisons make over \$35,000 a year, per inmate. We could be in the community again paying our own way, taking care of our kids and family.

For instance, I have 7 years left on my sentence costing the tax payers around \$245,000 to house me the remainder of my sentence, even though I have been designated as out custody. There are around 180 inmates here at the Camp. designated as out custody, costing tax payers around \$6,500,000 dollars a year to house us not counting medical expenses and the salary of the staff members. The Bureau of Prisons could contract the upkeep of the prison next door for a small fraction of this amount.

There are thousands of inmates and staff throughout the Bureau of Prison Camps, costing the tax payers millions, possibly a billion dollars a year, even though the inmates are considered out custody. The inmates go out into the community on a daily basis, for instance, inmates needing medical care at community hospitals are driven to the hospital or other medical buildings by another inmate, that inmate usually waits on the sick inmates until they are finished with their medical care.

Inmates working in the community and around the Camp are not supervised by guards with eyes on the inmates. The inmates can sneak off for hours at a time, without anyone knowing the inmate is gone. Inmates at the Camp will call the inmate gone if there is a emergency count or a recall back to the Camp. Inmates entering Camps have been rehabilitated as much as their going to be, due to the lack of programs and all the contra band entering the Camps.

Camps should be closed or made into half-way houses, so that inmates leaving higher security prisons can transition back into society by getting jobs in the community, earning money to start their reentry back into society, so they don't have to consider illegal activity upon their release. Inmates could pay a percentage of their weekly pay to help run the half way houses.

Inmates violating the policy or rules of the half-way houses can be sent back behind the fence at a higher level security. The threat of going back to a higher level security would deter most inmates from violating rules of the half-way houses, not all inmates but the majority of the inmates.

Inmates transferring from other Camps to this Camp say that the other Camps are two to three times worse for contra band. There should be a discussion on closing the Camps and the saving of millions even billions of dollars per year.

The End