

The Pandemic Journals

(Day 91: Sorrow)

My name is Frederick Mason, currently an inmate at USP Tucson. I've written over 2000 pages on experiences in prison, but wanted to do a separate project, chronicling my experiences in prison, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Let's jump into this, and as I normally do on my regular journal essays, I'll "pause" to fill in a detail or two:

June 14th, 2020: Day 91, Sunday, 2:10 on a somber afternoon. JB came by, in tears, to tell us that his grandmother passed away - Tuesday. He found out today.

(PAUSE: Guys, this is a tough one to write, tears are coming out, making it difficult to see. But, I need to set the stage: my dorm houses 64 cells - 32 on top, 32 on bottom. During the "Stay In Place" initiative by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, they limit inmate movement to 22 hours in the cell, 2 out. That gives us time to call family, get a shower, and other things. But they only open ~~16~~ (sixteen) cells at a time, to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

But no inmate can contract the virus unless staff or officers bring it in - they have a greater responsibility to adhere to the policy, but I can write volumes of how they blow it - but not here.

JB is a guy I've known for years, who's tight with my cellmate, or "cellie". On this very sad day, he found out his grandmother died. It tears me up, remembering how he hung his head on the door of our cell, in tears, saying, "I don't know what to do". It was more frustrating that his wing was out, and we were not. (Let's continue.)

He said they discharged her from the hospital Monday, the day before she died. Naturally, he's taking it hard. I called Mack and asked him to talk to a CO, to see if he could get a special phonecall to his family. I then told Law about it, that JB has two guys on his range that could give him moral support, since Richard and I are locked in our cell.

Gosh, it hurts when you see the pain that people go through, and are powerless to do anything. I said a prayer for God to comfort JB, and it helped that Mack and Law could sympathize with JB. Mack lost his mom here, I lost grandma, Sheri →

and a couple others. I'll have to pray more for JB, he's got a few hard weeks ahead of him.
(End of entry).

We all know how devastating a death affects us. In prison, you don't have many venues to grieve, because the administration here at USP Tucson show very little compassion.

The names I mentioned, "Mack" and "Law" are two guys that are on the same wing as JB, and could be able to talk to JB, when the rest of us are still behind a steel door. They helped out, since we're all human, something prisons forget...

And if you don't mind, let me bear fangs against USP Tucson: what demonic thought from the putrid cesspool of Hades possessed these idiots, to show no remorse to a man, in tears, who lost his grandmother? The prison, knowing his condition, refused to allow him an opportunity to use the courtesy phone to call his people! They might as well said to JB, "So what inmate? She's dead. Get over it!"

Like Shakespeare said, "Hell is empty, all the devils are here."

Yet, there was two dorm officers with compassion. They tried, understanding what JB was going through, to give him a little extra time out the cell, to grieve. Dorm officers understand far more about what inmates go through, since they spend 8 hours a day around them. The administration (Warden, Associate Wardens, Captains, Lieutenants and others) show and have little compassion for inmate issues, even a death in the family.

Must be hard getting into their vehicles with horns so big...

Anyway, that was one of, as of August 2nd, 2020, one of the 136 days - and counting of my experiences during the pandemic - hope to share more soon —