

ONE VETERAN'S PERSPECTIVE FROM 8/15/20  
THE WRONG SIDE OF THE BARS. 1/16

I DON'T THINK ANYONE CAN TRULY UNDERSTAND A SOCIETY

UNTIL THEY'VE SPENT TIME ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BARS.

A FEW YEARS BACK, I SERVED MY COUNTRY BY WORKING

IN A PRISON IN AFGHANISTAN. THE MILITARY LIKED TO

CALL IT A "DETENTION CENTER," BUT FOR ALL INTENTS

AND PURPOSES IT WAS A PRISON. ESPECIALLY WHEN

AN AFGHANISTAN JUDGE CAME TO PASS SENTENCES.

THE THOUGHT HAD CROSSED MY MIND THAT OPERATION

ENDURING FREEDOM WAS MORE OF A KNOCK-JERK

REACTION TO THE 9/11 ATTACKS THAN IT WAS

TO ENSURE LASTING FREEDOM AND PROTECTION

FOR ALL AMERICANS. HELL, EVEN I WANTED

SOME RETRIBUTION, AND I HAD NOT EVEN LOST

A FAMILY MEMBER OR A FRIEND IN THAT ATTACK.



I REMEMBER WATCHING THOSE TALIBAN MEMBERS AND THINKING, "IF I WERE A MEMBER OF THE TALIBAN I PROBABLY WOULD ALSO FIGHT THE AMERICANS IF THEY WERE OCCUPYING MY COUNTRY." PRIOR,

THOSE 9/11 TERRORISTIC ACTIONS HAD MADE IT EASY FOR ME TO CHOOSE TO DEFEND AMERICA AS A SOLDIER.

I WAS A NATIVE AMERICAN WARRIOR SO THE

TRANSITION TO SOLDIER WAS AN EASY ONE FOR

ME. SO I WATCHED THOSE "TALIBS" AND I THOUGHT,

"THEY GOT OFF EASY." I KNEW IF SOMEONE HAD

BUILT A BOMB OR PARTICIPATED IN KILLING AN AMERICAN SOLDIER OR CIVILIAN <sup>IN AMERICA</sup> THEY MOST

DEFINITELY WOULD NOT HAVE ONLY RECEIVED A

SENTENCE OF (7 to 15) YEARS. I ALSO KNEW

THAT MOST TALIBS WERE ONLY KEPT IN "DETENTION"



FOR ONE TO THREE YEARS AND WERE THEN  
RELEASED TO THE CONTROL OF THEIR VILLAGE  
ELDER. I WAS AND AM A STRONG SUPPORTER  
OF THE MILITARY, BUT IT MADE ME WONDER IF  
THE FAMILIES OF THOSE AMERICAN SOLDIERS'  
KILLED IN THE WARZONE, KNEW HOW CHEAPLY  
THEIR LOVED ONE'S LIVES HAD BEEN TRADED.

THEN, I HAD BEEN SUBTLY THREATENED BY  
MORE THAN ONE TALIB THAT THIS CONFLICT WOULD  
NOT LAST FOREVER AND THERE WAS A CHANCE  
THEY WOULD SEE ME IN AMERICA. I USED TO  
KEEP A TACTICAL .45 CALIBER PISTOL IN MY  
HEAD BOARD AT HOME. NOW, THE SAD REALITY  
IS THAT I'M MORE IN PHYSICAL DANGER FROM



SOME IGNORANT AMERICAN THAN I EVER WAS FROM A TALIB, SO I WORKED OFF DILIGENTLY, DAY-IN DAY-OUT IN THAT PRISON WATCHING THOSE TALIB MEMBERS, AND NOT KNOWING THAT IN JUST A FEW YEARS I WOULD BE THE ONE SITTING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BARS. EXCEPT, THESE BARS ARE AT A MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON IN TEXAS.

COMING TO PRISON I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT, ALTHOUGH, I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS GOING TO BE A VACATION. I WAS A CAREER SOLDIER SO THAT WAS THE EXTENT OF MY EXPERIENCE. WHAT I DIDN'T EXPECT WAS THE DISRESPECT AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE FROM THE OFFICERS!



I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED IN, "TREAT OTHERS  
THE WAY YOU WANT TO BE TREATED." I GUESS  
SOMEONE FORGOT TO TELL THE OFFICERS THAT.  
I KNOW IT WASN'T TOO MANY YEARS AGO  
WHERE OFFICERS GOT AWAY WITH BEATING OR  
EVEN KILLING PRISONERS, BUT I'M GLAD THAT  
THE JUSTICE SYSTEM SAW FIT TO MAKE A FEW  
CHANGES. I STILL THINK THERE ARE QUITE A  
FEW CHANGES THAT NEED TO BE MADE. I AM  
SAIDING THIS AS I TRY NOT TO PANIC AND DRIP  
SWEAT ONTO THIS PAPER. HAVE YOU EVER GONNE  
INTO A SAUNA ROOM AND THEN FOUND OUT YOU  
COULD NOT LEAVE? THAT IS WHAT IT IS LIKE  
BEING CONFINED TO A CELL IN THIS TEXAS



HEAT. YESTERDAY, OFFICER DAVIS PASSED OUT ON THE THREE ROW RUND MOST LIKELY DUE TO A HEAT INJURY. I CHECKED TO SEE IF THE OFFICER WAS STILL BREATHING THEN I OFFERED MY SERVICE AS A FORMER EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN TO THE SERGEANT WHO CAME RUNNING UP. THE SGT. TOLD ME TO MOVE AWAY SO I DID SO. I WATCHED

SEVERAL OFFICERS APPROACH THE FALLEN OFFICER AND IT WAS OBVIOUS THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THEY WERE DOING, THEY DIDN'T TREAT FOR <sup>SHOCK</sup> ~~SHOCK~~ OR LIKELY HEAT INJURY. I FIND IT SAD THAT THESE CONNECTION OFFICERS WOULD NOT USE MY EXPERIENCE. I ALSO KNEW THAT HAD I TOUCHED THE FALLEN OFFICER, THE



GOOD STATE OF TEXAS MAY HAVE CHARGED  
ME WITH ASSAULT ON AN OFFICER.

I WOULD GLADLY TRADE-IN MY BRONZE  
STAR FOR A SUMMER OF RESPIRE FROM  
THIS HEAT, BECAUSE IT IS NOT WORTH ANYTHING  
TO ME BEING IN PRISON.

DID YOU KNOW SLAVERY IS STILL LEGAL?  
SLAVERY FOR PRISONERS IS THE ONLY  
EXCEPTION TO THE 13<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT  
OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS. YOU WOULDN'T  
KNOW THAT UNTIL YOU ARE ON A HOE  
SQUAD TURNING SOIL IN THE TEXAS HEAT



WITH AN ARMED OFFICER ON A HORSE  
AND STETSON LOOMING OVER YOU. THE  
ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THEY NO LONGER USE  
A WHIP OR BAT ON PRISONERS. DUE TO  
THE MEDICATION I TAKE I WORK IN THE  
KITCHEN. DURING THIS LOCK-DOWN ON  
OTHER CERTAIN DAYS ONE COULD EXPECT  
TO WORK 12 OR MORE HOURS A DAY.  
THE OTHER DAY I WAS SUFFERING FROM  
A HEADACHE AND DIZZINESS DUE TO THE  
HEAT AND I CHOSE TO LEAVE WORK  
AFTER 8-HOURS. I BELIEVED I



WAS RECEIVING A DISCIPLINARY CASE FROM THE KITCHEN CAPTAIN FOR REFUSING TO WORK. I'M STILL WAITING TO SEE IF THE CASE WENT THROUGH, BECAUSE I HAD VOLUNTEERED TO WORK ON MY DAY-OFF THAT DAY. A CASE DURING A LOCK-DOWN AUTOMATICALLY TURNS INTO A MAJOR CASE. SEEM UNFAIR? THATS PAIN FOR THE COURSE IN PRISON. BY THE WAY, I DONT GET WORK TIME OR GOOD TIME. SO, I CAN BE A MODEL PRISONER AND NOT BE ABLE TO GET OUT ANY SOONER. BECAUSE THE TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE



CONSIDERS MY CRIME TO BE AGGRAVATED  
EVEN THOUGH IT WAS NOT. NO-ONE WAS  
HURT OR KILLED DURING THE COMMISSION  
OF MY CRIME. MOST PEOPLE HAVE COMMITTED  
A CRIME IN THE UNITED STATES, BUT HAVE  
NOT BEEN CAUGHT. THAT MAKES THEM NO  
DIFFERENT THAN ME. IT MAY SOUND  
AS IF I'M TRYING TO JUSTIFY MY CRIME,  
BUT I AM NOT. I AM GUILTY AND  
DESERVE TO BE IN PRISON. I JUST DON'T  
THINK I SHOULD BE PUNISHED FOR THE REST  
OF MY LIFE. I ALSO DON'T REMEMBER



THE JUDGE SENTENCING ME TO HARD LABOR OR A LIFE

~~OF ABUSE~~

OF ABUSE. THERE IS A GRIEVANCE SYSTEM, BUT I THINK

IT IS AS USEFUL AS FEET ON A BULL. THE GRIEVANCE

OFFICIAL ALWAYS TAKES THE SIDE OF THE OFFICERS, AND

CLAIM THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE ACCUSATION.

SOMETIMES, PRISONERS DON'T GET A RESPONSE BACK

SO MAYBE IT WAS LOST IF THERE WAS EVIDENCE

AGAINST AN OFFICER. WHO LENDS?

REHABILITATION IS SOMETHING I DON'T SEE. TDCJ

ONLY FOCUS ON A TREATMENT PLAN FOR PRISONERS

WITHIN A YEAR OR TWO OF RELEASE. THE GENÈVA

CONVENTION LAWS AKA NELSON MANDELA LAWS

REQUIRES BASIC RIGHTS FOR PRISONERS. AMERICAN

SOLDIERS ARE HELD TO THESE LAWS AND ARE INSPECTED

BY THE RED CROSS AND OTHERS FOR COMPLIANCE.



PRISONERS IN AMERICA ARE SUPPOSED TO HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS, BUT THESE RIGHTS ARE VIOLATED ON A CONSTANT BASIS BY THE OFFICERS. YOU MAY THINK I EXAGGERATE, BUT I HAVE NO REASON TO DO SO. I CLAIM THAT, IF ALL THE WALLS FALL DOWN, THE RAZOR WIRE FENCES FALL DOWN, AND ALL THE OFFICERS WANT HOME, I WOULD STILL NOT RUN AWAY.

HAS IT EVER CROSSED YOUR MIND, "HOW MANY PRIOR-SERVICE, SERVICE MEMBERS ARE INCARCERATED IN PRISON?" I CAN TELL YOU IT IS OVER 10%. THERE ARE OVER 300 VETERANS AT THIS PRISON OUT OF 3,000 PRISONERS. YOU MIGHT ASK YOURSELF WHY?

IT IS BECAUSE WE VETERANS MAKE MISTAKES



AND WE ARE HUMAN. MANY SUFFER FROM POST-  
TRAUMATIC-STRESS DISORDER (PTSD) LIKE MYSELF.

WHEN THE WOMAN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATHS  
OF THREE OF MY DAUGHTERS, I DID NOT SEEK  
RETRIBUTION, BECAUSE I KNOW SHE MADE A MISTAKE  
AND SHE IS HUMAN. WE ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN  
THE VIETNAM VETERANS WHO DIED IN PRISON AND  
FROM ALCOHOLISM AFTER THE WAR. LIKE THOSE  
VETERANS WE ALSO DO NOT GET TREATMENT  
FOR PTSD, BECAUSE WE ARE PRISONERS. WE DO  
NOT GET TREATMENT FOR HEALTH PROBLEMS, BECAUSE  
THE HEALTH CARE IN PRISON IS SUBSTANDARD.

WE HAVE MANY GERIATRIC PRISONERS HERE AT THIS  
MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON. WE ARE LOSING A FEW  
TO THE CORONA VIRUS, ESSENTIALLY, THEIR SENTENCE  
TURNED INTO A DEATH SENTENCE. GOD KEEP THEIR SOULS!



DON'T YOU BELIEVE THE BLACK LIVES MATTER (BLM)<sup>14</sup>

PROTESTS ARE OUT OF CONTROL? I BELIEVE THEY HAVE

A RIGHT TO PROTEST, BUT I DO NOT CONDONE THE

LOOTING AND THE VIOLENCE. THE RADICAL LEFT WILL

RUIN IT FOR ALL GUN OWNERS IN THE UNITED

STATES IF THEY KEEP IT UP. DON'T YOU THINK

BROWN LIVES MATTER? NATIVE AMERICANS HAVE

THE MOST OF ALL GRIEVANCES YOU KNOW WITH

BEING SUBJECT TO NEAR GENOCIDE AND MOST OF

THEIR LAND BEING TAKEN AWAY. WHAT I LIKE EVEN

BETTER IS THE SLOGAN, "ALL LIVES MATTER."

I THINK THE FAMILIES OF PRISONERS DEFINITELY

THINK PRISONERS' LIVES MATTER. FAMILY MEMBERS

OF PRISONERS ARE PUNISHED TOO WITH A SENTENCE

PASSED DOWN TO PRISONERS. I HAVE SACRIFICED



MUCH IN MY 17 YEARS IN THE MILITARY. DO YOU  
THINK I COULD USE A SECOND CHANCE? A CHANCE  
FOR HEALING FROM THE BROKENNESS AND NOT FOR  
PUNISHMENT? SUPPOSE WE ARE NEITHER COMPLETELY  
GUILTY OR INNOCENT? SUPPOSE WE HAVE DONE SOMETHING  
WRONG, BUT MIGHT <sup>NOT</sup> BE WHAT WE ARE SENTENCED FOR?  
MIGHT NOT BE WHAT WE ARE PUNISHED FOR. IN THE  
END, SOCIETY WOULD ALL ACCEPT THE INJUSTICE



AND PROVIDE A RATIONALE FOR IT. DOES IT SEEM  
TOO MUCH TO THINK THE JUSTICE SYSTEM IS  
UNJUST? AFTER ALL, TEXAS DOESN'T SEEM TO  
HAVE A PROBLEM CONVICTING PEOPLE WITHOUT  
ANY EVIDENCE AT ALL. IF A SOCIETY CAN BE  
JUDGED ON ITS FAIRNESS BY LOOKING AT HOW  
IT TREATS ITS PRISONERS, THEN HAVE  
YOU LOOKED AT HOW AMERICA DOES, LATELY?

By Duke Duane