

Dear Public,

July 8, 2020

This letter is to inform you about the systemic racism at Avery Mitchell Correctional Institution (AMCI) and the North Carolina Department of Public Safety Division of Adult Correction (NCDPS-DAC) system. I arrived at AMCI on March 10, 2020, and rumor had it that this is one of the most racist in NC. It is 2020, so I could not believe that. Soon after arrival I was disabused of that belief.

An officer in medical called me "boy" and I left it alone knowing it was a lose-lose situation, but I noted it. That week I went to orientation and was notified that all new arrivals must be here for 90 days infraction free, no matter previous status, to get a job. This struck me as odd, so I asked around. Several white Warehouse workers I asked said they got the job within 30 days of arrival, sometimes as low as 1 week. They suggested I ask the Warehouse staff about it. I asked them and they said no, because the 90 day requirement. I wrote Mr. Buchanan, Inmate Work Supervisor, he said the same thing. I spoke with my case manager, Ms. Taylor, and she said the same thing.

Some background about me, I was 2 years infraction free and had a Library Clerk job in Close custody at

Maury Correctional Institution (MCI). I was promoted to Medium custody and transferred to AMCI, because I was designated Mental Health level 3 for taking anti-anxiety medicine.

I took that information and analyzed it along with other factors. When confronted with the above disparity job placement staff use the excuse of experience. Contradictory to that is the fact, when an African American (Black) prisoner of the same or greater experience arrives they refuse to hire them. Tokens do not count, because if staff had it their way no Black prisoner would have a job here, besides low-level Dorm Janitors, Kitchen Janitors, or Dishwashers. This is proven in the staff working here. There is one, skin tone wise, Black person Sgt. Tate. When asked he adamantly denies Black ancestry or refuses to comment. I assume he is some other ancestry...

There are no Black administrative staff. I have heard there was one or two in the past few years, but they left. Further reinforcing that there is racism here that is well hidden.

Staff here require prisoners to turn in grievances to both officers, to be forwarded to the Sergeant on duty. This tactic is a ~~ploy~~ ploy to deter prisoners from turning in grievances. Black prisoners here with

legitimate grievances or who accuse racism against them by staff, are thrown away. If put ~~in~~ in the mailbox, like other prisons require, the unit administrators throw it away.

The following are a few staff, that cause me and other Black prisoners here to sincerely believe they are racist. Daniel Colvin, white male Unit Manager for Avery Unit, will throw away legitimate grievances and claim they were not received. If they are turned in by Black prisoners. Sgt. Jones, white female, ridicules Black prisoners who seek mental health treatment, I requested to cease anxiety medicine because of it. Officer Porshia, white male, calls Black prisoners "boy" with malicious intent, and dares guys to do something so he can spray them or take them to the Multi-Purpose room (blindspot) with some buddies to "rough" them up. Then take them to segregation to cover it up. Officer Renfro calls Black prisoners "boy". Every staff member named above deals favorably with white supremacists here.

Officer Dellinger is "cool" among Black prisoners, even though he is white. He gave me a veiled warning about retaliation saying, "You need to quit making those people mad or they will send you back to Close custody." I said, "I wouldn't mind that." He said, "Well you know you'll be in seg. 2-4 months, awaiting transfer." I said,

"If they kill me my daughter will be paid." He said
"They aren't going to kill you." Then he walked off.

I have asked Latino prisoners about this and they experience the same problems. I emphasize Black prisoners because I am Black and cannot speak as if I am in their shoes. Although I will add them with us in this letter.

The staff here do not promote Black or Latino prisoners to Minimum custody even though they meet the requirements. Staff claim everybody needs "Thinking for a Change" class, but when it is available they pick and choose who gets in the class. They already show preference in white prisoners in everything else and there is no exception with this situation. The class is only offered once a year, in the best case. Black and Latino prisoners with short time can't get promoted, because of this excuse.

NCDCS-DAC has formulated a visitation policy that says there may be an exception made for immediate family members with records, by Warden discretion. To compound that hurdle, it also requires that only approved visitors can send prisoners money. A sad problem amongst Black prisoners is a lot of us have family members with records. Prisons like this one deny Black family members with records at, most

likely, a higher rate than white family members with records. Staff at AMCI and MCI denied my Dad because he has a record and is on parole. I have written several grievances to no avail.

AMCI refuses to give prisoners gain time without assignment. As stated, it is very difficult to get an assignment as a Black person without supplicating staff. NCDPS-DAC uses the warehousing of prisoners to receive funding and implements the easiest and/or cheapest means of operation. It refuses to give prisoners with a long time meaningful education even if we show initiative in its pursuit. So we end up stagnated.

To compound those facts NCDPS-DAC encourages group punishment amongst its Wardens. For example, Polk Correctional Institution (PCI) staff strip searched us on night shift several times, in March 2019, because they felt legitimate questions were a problem. Then they threw away our grievances. When we asked all the Captains about it they said get over it.

NCDPS-DAC refuses to hear grievances about systemic racism even with overwhelming evidence, unless it is a blatant racial slur. It is 2020, almost no one pursuing a correctional career will say those words because it would be ill-advised, to say the least. The racism at AMCI is perpetrated on a much subtler level, as

required by the times.

On a personal note, when I finally got an accurate picture of the racism at AMCI, I immediately requested a transfer in May. Their way to prevent escape from their racist ways is to require 6 months infraction free here. Which is difficult in light of the mentioned factors, but to make it even worse most white prisoners here are white supremacists. Their tattoos include swastikas, four leaf clovers, iron crosses, and confederate flags. That is message enough.

I hope the public can hear us at AMCI. Most Black and Latino prisoners here are stuck in fear and hopelessness. This environment drains the life out of them. It enflames me and a few others. Retaliation scares almost all of those few, but I am taking action peacefully to change this system here. That is why I rescinded my request to transfer. Yes, I've made mistakes in the past and I comprehend why some punishment is required, but I DO NOT accept or condone the dehumanizing treatment I receive here and in NCDPS-DAC as a whole.

In closing, I appreciate you reading and considering this exposé, especially during these dire times. I hope all of you are doing your best to stay healthy and safe. All Black Lives Matter!

In Solidarity,

Gregory A. Taylor #1258694

7-8-20 Gregory Taylor

600 Amity Park Rd.
Spruce Pine, NC 28777

cc: Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Defense Center (HRDC)

Maoist Internationalist Ministry of Prisons (MIM Prisons)

Critical Resistance

ACLU Prison Project

National Lawyers Guild (NLG)

The Sun

Antonette Livingston (friend)

Richard Berry (Dad)

Koren Taylor (Mom)

NC-CURE

Floodgates

Coalition for Prisoners Right (CPR)

Prison Book Collective

Personal Records