

Can't We All Just Get Along

An essay on causes of violence in F.D.C.

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In the following short pages I hope to inform you of the causes of violence in F.D.C. There is not a single cause of violence but a multitude. I will bring to you four main causes, I believe contribute to violence and they are: Excessive heat, Overcrowding, Gang Activity, and too much misdirected energy.

I am an inmate in the F.D.C. and I have been incarcerated for thirteen consecutive years with twenty-two years remaining to complete my sentence. It is the blustering month of June as well as the third day of summer. This is one of the three months out of the year, with excessive heat. Excessive is not an exaggeration. Laying down to sleep at night will be a companion with a wet vinyl covered pillow, pillow case and bed linen in the morning; soaked by my own sweat. The daytime hours become irritatingly hot. This is when most with violent tendencies and armed with a crafted knife or shank² choose to vent off this irritation by stabbing someone for no better reason than the victim has done something the perpetrator doesn't like (i.e. general disrespect, violation of personal space, resistance to extortion or uncanny drug or gambling debts.) I truly believe heat is a cause because in thirteen years I have observed violence reduce greatly during winter and spring seasons, when the air is balmy. It is also worth stating that it is rare, in comparison, to witness violence

- 1 The Florida Department of Corrections
- 2 A large peice of steel broken off from a larger peice sharpened to a point or keen edge and adorn with a cloth handle.

(2)

during the evening hours. Some housing units³, I have been housed in, are equipt with a water cooling system that blows cool circulated air into the inmate's environment. I have witness the explosive violence, during the hottest part of the year, taper off to a point where there is no noticeable effect from the climate, on inmate behavior. This balmy environment °15 or lower than my current one does reduce violence in F.D.C.

With excessive heat and humidity and men that will never be free again add a crowded environment. All F.D.C. institutions keep an inmate population at or above 85% of its designed capacity. That doesn't seem bad of a number until I was incarcerated. To picture in words I must imagine a space no larger than a standard bedroom with everything removed but the bed. This room would have four bumping, farting and sweating grown men within. This would correctly represent the personal space I will have if I were one of those men. It is quite common to bump or step on something or someone. It is also common to wait to sit down on a toilet, shower naked next to another man, after waiting hours to get in there, and waiting up to a week or more for open air⁴ or library access. Fresh air is needed for these crowded smelly men. This air is drawn into the housing unit through 1 sq. ft. wire screens in each window; drawn by one to three ventalation fans; I have two in this housing unit. In addition fans, similar to standard ceiling fans circulate this air within the unit. It's still hot air but I would not want to be without any of them for an extended period of time.

³ A housing unit has two to four sections to hold inmates in a secured manner either in a open bay style or two mancells.

Because of this overcrowding open air⁴ is not readily available. A wait of seven days or more is common to sustain an hour of open air. There are 86 men in this section that require time apart to breath fresh air or mentally decompress, with all the sections added together this roughly places the inmate population at or around 1200 within a half a mile radius. Too many men in too little space creates a lot of problems.

Thirdly, Gang activity (i.e. extortion, disrespect, controlling the environment and beat ins or beat outs). I do not participate in any gang activity but I do wear a five inch scar, on my neck, for resisting an extortion attempt in 2014. The weapon had to be surgically removed.

Lastly and I believe the cause that carries the most weight - too much misdirected energy. Simply explained there is nothing to do. A majority of inmates, including me, must sit inside all day with exceptions being three meals a day, a written or verbal order to report to an area at a designated time, or open air. I have thankfully found a passion for writing while others don't have and/or don't want to write even if they had the ability. Studies of a legal nature are available but that too requires me to wait seven days or more for a single two hour time slot. Others and myself are subjected to thinking about things we can not change, which can be very stressful, angering and lead to behavioral issues, including violence.

In conclusion, in a limited environment as this, I

⁴ An environment that is without walls or roof, also is open in a grassy area, with a double chain link fence, for exercise.

(4)

too have become part of the problem, resorting to violence when my personal safety is under threat or my personal property. Besides that I do not allow my environment to dictate my behavior while others allow excessive heat, overcrowding, gang activity, and too much misdirected energy to influence behavior that boils the caldron of violence into a bloody froth that spills over and into my lap.

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