

May 5, 2016

Subject: How to Fold a Shirt During a Gang War - From Tony Vick

Dear Friends,

Have you ever dropped a contact lens on the floor and tried to find it? It's a difficult task because to find that slippery booger you must refocus your eyes to more clearly see what is usually overlooked. With your eyes refocused, you can see that dust bunny that formed since the last sweeping and perhaps that pill you dropped last week. So why am I thinking about such an offbeat topic? Because I've been trying to understand why prison officials are looking so intensely at some things and ignoring others. The problem is that the "other things" they are ignoring are the important ones – matters of life and death.

Today, like every day at 9 a.m., I stood outside my cell door at attention, shirt tucked in, hands by my side, not talking, my room clean, bed made to specification, clothes folded and placed on the shelves per diagram, my one bowl and cup sitting on the table precisely as instructed. Each day, prison officers walk down the line, inspecting each cell and person to ensure that everything meets their rigid military-like standards. The inspectors are trained to find a shirt folded incorrectly or to notice if a bed is not tucked tightly with sheet folded down six inches over the blanket.

Today, both before 9 a.m. and immediately after inspection, the unit was buzzing with "normal" activity - at least normal activity these days in Tennessee prisons. I saw rival gangs grouped in opposing corners, plotting an imminent knife fight. I observed the gangs running shower security, announcing loudly to everyone in the unit to make way and clear a path for each fellow gang member and his gang guards to go to and from the shower. Any person violating their space is subject to immediate physical retaliation or a "charge" that requires the offender to pay up with commissary items or money. I noticed a hit taking place against someone who didn't pay up and prayed that his injuries wouldn't be fatal. I saw gangs running their drug business and using fear, intimidation, and physical injury to control all manner of other unit activity, including even microwave and telephone use. I was especially aware of gang members robbing and charging the weak and older inmates. It amazes me that, outside of the intense focusing during inspection period, prison officers seem unable, untrained, or perhaps even unwilling to focus on these much more urgent matters that can literally mean life or death.

One might think that such criminal activity would be hidden under the table, not in plain sight for prison officials to monitor – but that would not be correct. All of these activities are continually done in front of prison staff who appear too frightened to confront gang members. Why? Because these gang terrorists have the names of prison staff and internet availability. They can easily get addresses and family information needed to retaliate against any officer who calls them out for their illegal actions. Is it because prison officials just don't know what to do about the rampant gang problem that they focus on insignificant things they do know how to do, like folding shirts?

People – we are not in a department store where folded shirts are important! We are in prison, getting stabbed, robbed, raped, terrorized, and traumatized by the gangs!

SOS

Save Our Souls

The prison terrorists are taking over!