

Killing Us Softly

There's a classic R&B song titled "Killing Me Softly" that was originally done by Roberta Flack, but covered by others like The Fugees and Al B. Sure. Some of the lyrics go: (If I can remember)

"Strumming my hair with his fingers,
Singing my life with his word,
Killing me softly with his song, killing me softly
With his song, telling my whole life
With his song, killing me softly ..."

My essay is directed at staff at USP Tucson, who are killing us softly by maliciously prohibiting us from phonecalls and commissary for over 90 days.

Since October 21st, those in this dorm have passed every COVID-19 test; we represent the last 10% of the 1300 inmates who still have not tested positive. Yet, USP Tucson has specifically prohibited us from the same rights other inmates who did test positive have.

It is demonically evil to, as staff is guilty of, watch inmates suffer in cells they've spent 99.5% of the time in, over the last 90+ days, and ask staff why we can't call our loved ones.

"I don't know" they say, lying to us.

Guys here have sick family members, and desperately need to call them, to hear a familiar voice. USP Tucson refuses.

They're killing us - literally.

Guys ask why we can't get canteen - stamps, hygiene, medicine, coffee - when the rest of the compound actually gets to leave the unit, go outside and return with full bags of snacks, hygiene and other items. We ask the Lieutenant...

"I don't know" they say, lying to us.

We ask other staff members, who are forced to confess that what we're going through isn't right - our oppression is far harsher and discriminatory than anyone else.

They're killing us - literally.

The death of us is slow, painful and as cold as an icy wind on a naked body.

Every staff member here is fully aware of this oppression, yet all lack the courage to do the humane thing.

We're like bound victims on the noose, gasping for air.

We're like drowning wretches, sinking slowly into the depths.

From a safe distance, we're told "hold on, we'll save you tomorrow".

But by then, we're dead.

But they watch, observing our misery, even making light of it. After all, it's not them who is dying - it's us.

To kill softly, to murder gently, is truly a misnomer, for to kill, or murder, implies a sense of malice; to do it softly or gently implies the enjoyment of the act.

If so, it fits the staff to take joy at our unique misery. For months, we have been treated in a punitive measure no other inmate in USP Tucson has ever been treated, outside of the physical beatings and forced rape in the Special Housing Units. But the mentality is the same.

No different from gassing Jews in a Concentration Camp.

No different from hanging slaves at a plantation.

All the while those in authority watched - and did nothing.

The song "Killing Me Softly" is a somber piece, touching the deepest parts of the heart. The reality here of the staff killing us softly rejects Godly compassion and mercy, embracing the demonic act of cruelty to human beings.

Who will lament if we are slain - who will care?

USP Tucson won't.