

Eastham Flu Shots  
An Inmate Incentive Program

On October 7, 2020 our Masters setup an inoculation station in the North Chapel. The night prior, a large number of the state's slaves at the facility had been given a summons demanding they report there at the appointed time. Upon reporting to the chapel we were moved through the process methodically and efficiently (for the prison, that is). Nothing appeared out of the ordinary. There was one line for accepting the "flu shot," and another for declining it.

Notice that above I said a large number; not all. A number—possibly a large number—of prisoners were neither summoned nor were they given the opportunity to take the "flu shot." The precise reason for this remains a mystery to me, but information gleaned from my investigations seems to suggest that the principal target audience of the inoculation effort was the elderly, the infirm, and those suffering from medical conditions (diabetes, coronary disease, etc.) that place them at a high risk of contracting pathogens.

Now, let us roll the clock forward five days...

It is now October 12, and those who accepted the "flu shot" are being called to Commissary to also accept \$1.00 in free product. The header on the Commissary receipt reads, "Commissary Purchase Receipt: Offender Incentive Program."

Now I ask, since when does TDCJ-CID incentivize flu shots? Further, no one was informed of any incentive before the fact. Can this be legitimate? How can an "incentive program" be legitimate when its participants know not that they are participating in a special program, and are unaware of any incentive being offered for their participation? An incentive that is gifted after the fact, and unannounced before the fact, is no incentive at all. Perhaps this program could be more accurately labeled an "Offender Compensation Program." After all, who is going to speak against a party who is giving them money?

At this point it might be prudent to question the composition of the inoculant which was introduced to a large number of prisoners on that October morning, and which is now openly being referred to as "the flu shot."

There are valuable lessons here: There are dangers lying at the roots of assumption, and more lying at the roots of deception. Our captors appear to have used the approaching flu season to enshroud a far-reaching deception. They would have well understood the nature of their captives' natural assumptions. Because the prisoners assumed this was nothing more than the seasonal flu shot, those who were so inclined accepted it without question, seeking no affirmation; those who were not declined it. Our warders, in turn, having not been asked, offered neither affirmation nor denial of the prisoners' assumptions. In this way, the prison administrators maintain some measure of deniability of wrongdoing. They can truthfully proclaim, "We did not lie to the program participants," and lay any fault at the feet of the prisoners by saying, "They did not ask."

Two more days pass. It is now October 14. A notice advertising the "Flu Shot" is posted in the dayroom for all to see. Could it be that Eastham is, in fact, innocent of intrigue and debauchery, and is simply acting from a position behind the eight-ball; doing everything after the fact? Could the management of this farm truly be so incompetent? Or could it be that something more sinister is going on here?

There remains yet another twist to be considered. A resident of our dorm, who was given neither a summons nor an opportunity to take the "flu shot," having learned about the incentive, submitted a request to medical requesting to participate and to be given a "flu shot." His request was returned to him, stating, "You are ineligible."

So here we have an incentive program that is rejecting would-be participants, who know, prior to participating, that they will be participating in a program for which participation has been incentivised. From here, the developing questions pile one atop another and are too numerous to ask and answer here, but one question should be considered as a starting point: How can any state-prisoner be declared ineligible to receive a seasonal flu shot?

What have we here? Is it speculation and conjecture? Yes, absolutely. Hard evidence seldom finds its way into the hands of prisoners. Prisoners must rely on the interest, resources, and information gathering abilities of those persons and organizations in a position to advocate for them. Is the substance of this treatise paranoid prisoner conspiracy theory? Perhaps, but perhaps not.

Note what Dr. Garth L. Nicolson from the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center had to say in a letter to a Texas prisoner, dated March 22, 1966:

Most of our work has been with the inmates and guards at the Walls Unit in Huntsville where we have identified mycoplasmal infections associated with a vaccine development program supported by the U.S. Army and conducted by Tanox Biosystems of Houston, a spin-off company of Baylor College of Medicine. We strongly suspect that Biological Warfare agents (weaponized mycoplasmas) were being illegally tested in the Walls Unit, but the evidence is circumstantial.

We have heard that other units were also involved in these tests, but we do not have any direct information on this. Our primary data comes from a TDCJ CFIDS support group that has an unusual frequency of mycoplasma that may have been engineered to make it more pathogenic and dangerous. Please be aware that there is a chance that you and your colleagues may be asked or coerced into a vaccine program. If this happens, it is my recommendation that you do not take part in any such program.

As you can see, this is not the first time that TDCJ has been under scrutiny for conducting programs such as the current one.

"What happens when educated, powerful people withhold sympathy and compassion from those without power? What happens when individuals set aside...morality and adopt a philosophy that the end justifies the means? Answer: despicable events occur, events like those described in Against Their Will— a difficult and frankly frightening book by Allen M. Hornblum, who has written extensively on medical experimentation on prisoners."

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