

Re: News From The Inside  
Sub: Corruption in Phoenix, AZ Jails

For years I have read the hardhitting articles of American prisoners lamenting on the corruption of their captors. Stories of horrible conditions of confinement and brutal assaults by writers like Kevin "Rashid" Johnson and others constantly remind me of déjà vu, as if I'm reading my own life's stories. So many of the stories mirror my own circumstances, and likely many other U.S. prisoners. The similarities are so numerous that I'm convinced I need to write this piece.

I was transferred from AZ DOC's Eyman Complex / Special Management Unit to Maricopa County Sheriff's Office on 11-14-2019, and have been here since. (<https://inmatedatasearch.azcorrections.gov/PrintInmate.aspx?ID=212608>; [www.mcso.org](http://www.mcso.org), booking #TS97560) I was immediately housed in the Special Management Unit (SMU) of MCSO's Fourth Avenue Jail, in downtown Phoenix, AZ. Upon entering my new cell my first thought was, "This looks like a cell they'd keep an ISIS terrorist. I am behind double-doors. Enter the first, connected to the SMU hallway, and you are standing in what's called the "dayroom," a 5' X 7" room with a desk and stool mounted to the wall and floor, and a payphone-style phone above the desk. About 12' up in a corner of the ceiling is mounted a bubble camera.

Enter the second door and you are in the cell. The cell front is mostly glass, making you feel like a fish in an aquarium or a zoo animal on display. There is another desk in the front of the cell, which is 11' 8" deep and 6' 5" wide, with a ceiling of about 12'. There are no windows, save for a 11 X 3" glass viewport in the back wall that looks into a dark plumbing chase hallway. To the left of that is a steel toilet sink, and to the right is the shower. Surprisingly, the showers are inside the cells in SMU. A 3" ratty mattress rests on a 7' long concrete slab that rises off the floor 1'. A 5' long light fixture on the ceiling illuminates the cell 24/7, with super-bright light 17 hours a day that becomes a few degrees less bright from 11 PM to 6 AM. A third door is between the double-doors, and opens to a "rec" area that is about 17' X 7' and serves as the rec area for my cell and my neighbors, whom I have no contact with except when one of us goes to rec. The rec pen is empty, with a drain at the back, steel bars above that look onto thick, blurred glass that blocks most sunlight from entering and distorts the image of the sky. (The rec ceiling is concrete, and the blurred glass is in the back wall about 20' up.) There are no mirrors, to help inflict sensory deprivation.

Since my arrival there has been absolutely no due process concerning my classification, no hearings, and no chance whatsoever to be housed anywhere but within the solitary confines of SMU.

The vast majority of detainees here are people of color, with SMU being staffed at nearly all supervisory levels by white males. In my two years here I've seen a total of about only 5 white inmates housed in SMU's 72 cells. We are nearly all Brown, Black and Natives. SMU is ripe with white supremacist racism by its staff, who antagonize and provoke seriously mental ill inmates in their pursuit of forcing a cell extraction as a ruse to assault inmates. Staff (D.O.s) routinely steal and destroy inmates' property. For example, on 10-21-21, while I was at court explaining the jail's corruption to the judge, D.O. Mr. Gardea ransacked my cell, leaving numerous items that could easily be confiscated as "contraband," and taking my anti-police art.

MCSO has a system set up whereby they can prevent prisoners from filing grievance complaints, effectively giving themselves immunity for misconduct and crimes. This system is called "grievance protocol," and I have been on it since Feb., 2020, simply for filing a complaint on every one of SMU's constitutional violations. This façade is used as a tool by MCSO to keep the lid tight on their racism and misconduct, and violates our First Amendment Redress of Grievances rights.

MCSO, under the reign of infamous Sheriff Joe Arpaio and his replacement, Paul Penzone, has long had a policy of making male inmates wear pink underwear in an effort to humiliate and emasculate, though we could care less of the color of our socks, boxers and sheets. But what is controversial is their line of thought on anti-LGBTQ and anti-women, because MCSO is effectively saying that, as a punishment for being arrested and accused, we are "forced" to wear underwear typically associated with women and the queer community. This is pure bigotry, as MCSO obviously believes women and LGBTQ people are less than; as if to identify as a woman or LGBTQ is something to be embarrassed about. In fact Penzone promised to end this policy in his 2016 campaign, then reneged, just as he reneged on his promise to quit working with federal immigration officials, to help deport immigrants.

I mention Penzone because he is ultimately responsible for what goes on in his jails. Jail Commander Jesse Spurgin is similarly responsible. That they bury their heads in the sand is no excuse

for the ongoing rampant corruption at the Fourth Ave Jail's SMU. Inmates linger in SMU for months, sometimes years, as is the case with a 23 year old young man caged here since he was only 15. The mentally ill become severely mentally ill. Peoples' minds deteriorate. Cut off from society and treated inhumanely by our captors, many are forced into draconian plea agreements in an effort to leave these torture chambers, even when that final destination is prison (DOC). There is no oversight for the destruction of our mail, for the physical and psychological abuses carried out by SMU staff, for being isolated for years in concrete and steel solitary confinement tombs, nor for any of SMU's number of illegal machinations.

In the fifth largest city in America, you'd think news from inside this corrupt facility would reach, and incite, the Arizona community. But Penzone and SMU staff are experts at silencing opposition, at retaliation for whistle-blowing, and at sweeping corruption under the rug. We are in here, hoping that our community will take action once they learn of the abuses. And though the corruption explained above is but the tip of the iceberg, now you know. Will you stand against racism? Will you denounce government corruption? If so, please contact the below people and make complaints.

In Solidarity,  
Adrien J. Espinoza  
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- Capt. Jesse Spurgin, Jail Cmdr., 602-876-9101 (direct)
- Kim Thompson, Legal Liaison Section Cmdr, LLSadmin@mcsd.maricopa.gov
- Sgt. Priscilla Santiago, Professional Standards Bureau/Internal Affairs, 602-876-5999, 602-688-0624 (cell), p.santiago@mcsd.maricopa.gov
- Correctional Health Services, 602-876-9168
- [www.MCSD.org](http://www.MCSD.org)

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Please donate to: [GiveButter.com/HelpAdrien](http://GiveButter.com/HelpAdrien)

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