

How K-2 Killed Tablets At A North Carolina Facility

Due primarily to addiction and unaddressed emotional issues beginning at a young age, and consequential legal problems, I have spent a shameful amount of my life incarcerated: First in civilized Missouri, then raw Georgia, and since 2011 primitive and deviant North Carolina, where I've often done little more than maintain a heartbeat. Existence in a prison system such as NC is quite meaningless if serving a life sentence and without family or friends nearby to visit occasionally. Visitation, among other more obvious benefits, serves as a needed reminder that there is much more to life than what's observed daily within these mind-deteriorating walls. Visitation provides perspective. Having not touched another person in over three years, excepting only the occasions of a few fights, deprives a person of some innate human component that I am incapable of explaining well but know exists. Simply put, it's dehumanizing.

Most other prison systems offer positive outlets that serve a host of beneficial purposes, including reducing internal violence, recidivism, alleviating both physical and mental health problems, and creating programs conducive to healthy communication between prisoners and his or her family and friends. The NC prison system scores extraordinarily low on all of the above, although efforts have been made recently to improve the latter via "tablets." The NC system functions as an exclusively punitive one, rejecting programs and privileges proven successful in other states as both tools and pacifiers. An interested citizen can go online and likely discover seemingly beneficial programs available to prisoners serving time in NC, but in reality most of the information presented for public consumption is bullshit—absolute fabrications intended to deceive. On occasion a facility with a conscientious warden may establish a genuinely good program—the "Leash On Life" dog training program comes to mind, the only example I can recall that is both good and honorable and doesn't involve the prisoners' "voluntary" virtual slave labor in order to participate—but due to the individuality of each facility as

provided by the Director of Prisons and the resulting nonexistence of state-wide uniformity or meaningful regulation, each and every "Facility Head" is free to govern however reasonably or maliciously they choose, and most opt for exclusively punitive measures — particularly in close custody¹, which this story pertains to.

After being one of five most confirmably antiquated prison systems² in the US for at least three decades — rivaling prisons in less civilized countries — in August 2021 all except one or two close custody facilities finally did something beneficial and began offering tablets to prisoners. Although pricey to use if electing to access options such as texting, movies, TV shows, news feeds, and others, they are really neat. A nifty privilege, particularly since the communication mediums it offers serves to somewhat counterbalance an extraordinarily invasive, oppressive and flawed Mail Policy established in NC in October 2021. Prisoners spending time complaining about them — excepting maybe the cost issue, despite some options being free — are prisoners incapable of being satisfied. Tablets have changed the quality of life of those of us who use and appreciate them.

Having no family or friends in NC and COVID restrictions resulting in family not being able to visit since 2019, my family and I have been delighted about the near-immediate communication capabilities the tablet creates; and as a political news junkie I could only be happier if the tenfold-increased availability of news included less-liberal apps such as FOX News or maybe Breitbart to provide a needed alternative to the unwatchable CNN. Okay, so a little complaining is warranted.

In any event, NC prison officials did make an effort to do something positive and nice

¹ Although my current facility has a library with a reasonable inventory, and administrative staff will inevitably either lie or make inaccurate excuses if questioned, close custody prisoners are prohibited from visiting the library or accessing a bookcart — a common trait in close custody.

² For example, prisoners are not permitted to participate in educational correspondence courses →

for a change, which can almost certainly be attributed to Director Todd Ishee, who is rumored to have formerly been a prison administrator in another state and as such surely knows from experience that the historically ignorant, redneck-minded policies of past directors in NC have proven ineffective and not efficient, and in no way beneficial to prisoners being released back into the community or the community itself. So hats off to Ishee.

Now, only a few months after the tablets were introduced, the yokel-idiots who are my "peers" have shamelessly and in some cases proudly managed to spoil a good thing, as I anxiously feared from the outset they would. Since being incarcerated in NC I've frequently been both fascinated and disgusted at how shockingly-imbecilic prisoners in this state are, nearly as a rule: An inexcusable stupidity whereby they possess no noticeable desire to improve or educate themselves. I use to often think that the public school system in NC should be severely ashamed of its collective self, and perhaps it should, but the ignorance exhibited as a matter of course is more of an inherent nature. I am plenty qualified to opine regarding "ignorance", for anyone who knows me can confirm that the first thirty years of my life were filled with repeated bad decisions and consequently endless regret; I'm definitely not suggesting that my existence, preconfined or confined, has been free of stupid errors, but it has been free of K-2.

The reason why the tablet program is being spoiled progressively is K-2. Prisoners in NC now care only about smoking and/or dealing/smoking K-2. K-2 has steadily taken over the prison system. I first heard about it then seen it in 2015, and now nearly everyone of all ages are daily users: At least eighty percent. That figure may actually be low. There's never been anything like it. It's incredible and passes belief: The number

² continued... unless satisfying a host of irrelevant criteria such as being infraction-free, for example, unless Bible-based.

of people who do it and the things they do when under its influence or craving to be under its influence again, which leads to the premise of this story.

For many years NC prison administrators have publicly claimed that prisoners primary source for receiving drugs and other contraband was via mail and visitation—detestably projecting blame onto prisoners' often innocent family and friends while unaccountably rejecting the reality of employee involvement—and in October 2021 established a new mail policy whereby all personal mail from family and friends must be sent to a mail processing company in Phoenix, Maryland, who scans the mail item then forwards a copy to the prison mailrooms for printing then distribution to the intended prisoner-recipient. At my current facility it has been a delay-and-flaw-filled failure, justifying litigation and for the first time in over one-hundred years has effectively invalidated "mail" as being an efficient medium of communication. It has proven very demoralizing to many of us older guys to whom the receipt of letters from loved ones is what assists in providing a meaningful reason for living and often keeping our heads above water: a crucial link to those and that which are so important.

Gone.

Revoked with minimal warning, allegedly to greatly alleviate the introduction of drugs and other contraband into the facilities. (I've been the excited recipient of hundreds of letters in my life, both free and confined, and cannot imagine how tobacco or cell phones, for example, could possibly be concealed within. But that's their position.)

Presuming the publicized claims of NC prison administrators to be true and accurate, a reasonable mind would infer that all drug and other contraband activity would have ceased to exist following the imposition of the new mail policy and suspension of visitation due to COVID, but in fact that is NOT the case at all. Far from it. Mail and visitation never were the primary sources of drug introduction, and demonstrable proof is the current state of drug

activity and organized crime at my current facility.

Clearly, at some point preceding my arrival a very diligent effort to recruit "mules" transpired—undoubtedly spearheaded by the different organizations, led by the Bloods—resulting in an unprecedented availability of contraband, primarily K-2, introduced exclusively by correctional staff. Typically every facility will have a couple corrupt C.O.'s, but they are by far the exception and viewed unfavorably by other staff; at my current facility they appear the majority. It has created a bizarre dynamic among prisoners and staff, a familial-type connection among all involved, further creating a cultural "neighborhood" vibe whereby there exists no professionalism whatsoever and a staff-sanctioned dislike and sometimes hatred of white people. Bad conduct prohibited by policy and damaging in an environment such as this is normalized by staff. For a guy like me, who spent nearly his entire free life in semi-rural, middle-class, suburbia-Missouri, it's the most unpleasant culture shock, and offensive in that I am still required to follow extremely petty rules.

In my dorm of forty-eight, easily forty-five are addicted. Evidently K-2 is a highly addictive substance, for I have never before seen anything cause such fixation, or grip people so thoroughly and injuriously as K-2 invariably does, and I am a former meth and crack cocaine addict. (Frankly, it's a blessing I am not partial to a marijuana-type high, for if I was it is possible K-2 would control me, too, having an addictive personality and often finding it difficult to refrain.) I've frequently witnessed guys "twank-out", whereby they get too high and enter into an unknowing state, emitting a wide range of strange sounds and sometimes visibly terrified, vomiting violently and often rolling around in it. Upon the conclusion of just such an episode—I awoke suddenly on Christmas morning, horrified, to one occurring right outside my cell—the affected party, apparently unaffected, rinses and repeats without hesitation. It was quite possibly the most degenerate behavior I have ever personally witnessed.

K-2 is normally smoked in "stick" form—resembling a pin joint—or via "bowl," which results in a higher probability of uncontrollable twinking. Since lighters or matches are not sold via commissary services like they are in many states, flames are created using batteries, material such as Ramen flavor packs cut into thin strips, and a piece of tissue to catch the flame. It has never been a problem in the past; they are used for multiple reasons, including soldering headphone wires in need of repair or maybe fixing a fraying shoestring.

Then in December 2021 an unfortunate event occurred with extraordinary and damaging ripple effects: Commissary staff at my facility allowed the battery inventory to deplete. Nearly overnight the value of a AA battery increased from thirteen cents (.13¢) to ten-dollars (\$10.00) or more. The more intelligent albeit criminal-minded prisoners, junkies themselves, quickly realized that the tablets could be invaded and their batteries harvested in order to create a flame, thereby destroying them—if not the first time or two, eventually. Now, maybe half the cells at my current facility have operational tablets. Since C.O.'s here and unit management are either corrupt, inexcusably indolent, or in a few instances scared of the menacing gangs, the distribution of tablets was never properly monitored or in any way governed, whereby personal prisoner responsibility would issue or be triggered by tablet abuse, and as such gangs and other bad actors have been free to control the many facets of tablet operations³. Since these gangs and other bad actors are actually quite childlike in many ways and have IQ's similar to those of goldfish, their "control" has quickly resulted in the tablet program being absolutely ruined. The only good thing available

³ Gang member "JT's" (i.e. unit trustees) distribute, pick-up, charge and label the tablets freely, resulting in every manner of abuse and manipulation, including deceptively erasing cell designations and relabeling to reflect the cell of their homeboy who destroyed his own device per misuse.

in close custody—a meaningful privilege many prisoners and our families were very grateful to finally have and enjoy—was destroyed by irredeemable parasites; because they were effectively permitted to do so by negligent staff who were either bent themselves or just didn't care. In some instances, especially scumbag prisoners expressed demerited satisfaction in ruining a tablet since they possessed a superior cell phone and to them the tablet represented only harvested batteries.

It is utterly disheartening, for my only remaining interest in life is communicating with family and friends—something they value as well—and our ability to enjoy that pure pleasure is affected substantially by others. As an unaffiliated white guy, alone, I have no ability to discourage the uncouth behavior of those who are improperly motivated. Unlike my bro's back home, frankly, white prisoners in NC tend to be soft-brained, weak, scary-types who harbor an innate fear of minorities. Whether accurate or not I am uncertain, but I've been informed by prisoners transferring-in that staff at other close custody facilities better control tablet operations, which is possible since my current facility is known for being the most "cutthroat", and employing the most desensitized, brutal and corrupt staff.

I have read court opinions over the years whereby federal judges stated that prison administrators at a facility in _____ should not be required to _____ since prison systems tend to be fundamentally different, regionally speaking, and as such require disparate management methods, and consequentially courts deferred to the "expertise" of prison officials. I use to consider such a position absolute bullshit: Courts injuriously granting maliciously motivated correctional staff an effective "free pass" to be abusive and impose unnecessarily harsh conditions of confinement just to satisfy their weirdo natures and deviant lust for human oppression. Clearly that is the case sometimes.

However, I now realize that prison populations in different regions do tend to be

fundamentally different. When Director Todd Ishee issued the green light for tablet distribution in NC it's safe to presume he did not anticipate what is described herein, partially because prisoners where he came from—Ohio, is the unconfirmed rumor—did not engage in such unbridled ignorance, since if they had he would have known of the great need for a mandatory directive to correctional staff state-wide to diligently monitor tablet operations. Ishee was obviously unaware of the prevalent corruption and incredible indolence of staff at my current facility. Furthermore, I am fully confident that prisoners where I am from in the Midwest would ^{never} do such mindless shit.

After serving over a decade in the NC prison system one thing is certain: These prisoners are where they belong. They have nothing to contribute to society except perversity and destruction. They're much too inherently flawed to ever be productive or not be a burden. It goes way beyond drug use and addiction. They lack the common decency that people in civilized societies need in order to be an admitted component. In other places it is quite common to meet prisoners who consistently demonstrate character-defining behavior that causes others to know they are in prison due primarily to unaddressed emotional or addiction issues, and if only provided an opportunity would not take it for granted or reoffend; for many years or the remainder of their lives they will be judged for and affected by the indisputably worst few minutes or moments of their life.

I never get that feeling about prisoners in this state, and I've spent plenty of time in medium custody, too. It should disturb the free citizens of NC that these antisocial individuals, most of them, will in the future be released back into society to destroy things of value, moreso than tablets. There is something undeniably and uniquely degenerate about prisoners here, which must apply to me too since here I miserably am.

Sadly, prison administrators are unlikely to repair the destroyed tablets at this facility, only for it to recur. I wonder how GTL feels about the thousands of dollars

of damage to their devices; roughly half of those issued to one facility? I keep returning to a repetitive thought: It is a terrible pity that the corrupt staff, who day after day surreptitiously concealed and smuggled in supplies of illegal drugs and phones galore and pounds of tobacco, did not discover a way to circumvent the metal detector and smuggle-in batteries.

Date: 17 February 2022

Cobey LaKemper 0767480
Bertie Correctional Institution
P.O. Box 247
Phoenix, MD 21131

(↑ Mailing Address Only)