

# AMERICAN PRISON WRITING ARCHIVE

## WRITING SUBMISSION

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THE notion that criminals are rehabilitated and corrected in Federal Correctional Institutions (FCI) is a giant lie. I have been at FCI Fort Dix, a Federal prison, for 11 months, and it is simply a place where humans are treated like chattle. We are not starved (completely) or tortured physically, but most of our caretakers are current or ex-military personnel who mentally abuse us in how we are treated and mis-treated. The abuse is often subtle, but it is still abuse. This entire system from the police on the street to the guards in prison is designed to enslave people who grew up with unfortunate circumstances and/or poverty and ensure they will remain imprisoned for as long as possible. Prison does not correct, rehabilitate or protect the public. It simply damages us further. My circumstances were being raped at 8 years old and being triggered by a reminder which led me to break the law. I will continue to pay for being a rape survivor for the rest of my life.

I do not feel safe in prison. I had PTSD from being raped, and again when the FBI stormed my home with an assault team. Being in

Prison is like being on a hair-trigger alert 24/7. Just saying the wrong words or standing in the wrong spot can trigger people to act violently or paint a target on someone they don't like. Being a sex offender makes it worse. Everyone loves to target a sex offender and assume their crime was the worst case scenario without knowing any details. Sex offender haters hide their own "offensive" behavior. In prison, most men are sexually offensive such as a cell mate in my room who would hide behind a curtain in his bed, video chat with his girlfriend (and he was married) while masturbating. That's utterly disgusting.

Prison is a place where racism and segregation is alive and well. We have segregated TV rooms, dorm rooms, lunch tables and spaces outside. Prison staff is aware of this and does nothing about it.

Since Covid began, there has been minimal programming like educational classes and rehabilitative programs. Indoor and outdoor exercise and recreation have been greatly curtailed. Despite being a low security prison, this compound operates like a medium security facility with inmates being kept on lockdown for most of the day.

When it comes to nutrition and diet, we are fed a continual diet of high sodium foods and nutritionally worthless meals. We have no access to citrus fruits or berries. The only fruits we get are apples and bananas allegedly because oranges are used to ferment alcohol, which is untrue because the inmates are already brewing their choice drinks and the police do little to curtail it. The vegetables we are fed are boiled to a pulp and have zero nutritional value. When we come into the mess hall we are greeted by guards who continuously shout "take your hats off" and "masks on", while most of them do not wear masks. After 10 minutes of sitting with our meal, the guards start barking a countdown for us to leave, followed by a "trays up!" command for us to leave. We are not permitted to bring food back to the dorm at certain meals and are often subject to pat-down searches as we leave the mess hall to see if we're smuggling milk, apples, bananas or bread back to our dorms. If we are lucky, our dinner tray will have at least 3 of the compartments filled with food. Some meals like shredded BBQ chicken resemble cat food. Sometimes we are fed expired food, rotten fruit and spoiled milk. The guards say "Suck it up buttercup".

We get the same treatment from our "Unit Team" who is supposed to prepare us for re-entry. Instead of helping us, Unit Team (a counselor, case manager and unit manager) are obstacles. They often block us from things like family visits, attorney visits, access to jobs and printouts of our prison records. My case manager once told me "I'm not here for you, I'm here for MY paycheck".

The atmosphere here is poisonous. All day and night we hear screaming calls of lookouts for inmates with cell phones when the guards do their rounds. When the warning is called, inmates scramble like rats to hide their phones. The air and water here is poisoned by the neighboring Air Force base. The EPA deemed the water here hazardous, so there are water filters on every tap, except they are never changed.

This place and my sentence make me angry at myself and at the government, and very depressed. I feel on edge all day and night being triggered by PTSD through things people say or do. I am very uncomfortable being around sex offenders, especially child molesters. Somehow, I will survive the next 4 years of this torture because I have a wife, children and a home waiting for me. That, they will not take away.