

## I'm Doing Good... Let Me Out!

Greetings from the belly of the beast that is prison, from the bowel of this beast which is solitary. As I sit in this cell which is the size of a standard parking space for the better part of 23 hours a day, I cannot help but contemplate how I landed here. In my defense, it is already known that I only spoke out about the inhumane treatment of inmates in a fleeting email, nothing more or less, but I will be politically correct for the sake of this piece.

In hindsight, I guess it would be a reflection of my negative behavior and bad decisions that I should think about and work on for the next 18 months of solitude, but who's keeping a record of the positive progress I'm making? Besides myself and my higher power, as well as those who support me on the "outside," no one "inside" is taking notice or keeping track. Oh sure, let me be disrespectful or become a nuisance and watch how they quickly come in my cell and put me on "strip" for 72 hours taking everything (property, linen, clothes) and leaving me in nothing but boxers the whole time. I mean, they will even put you on strip for talking too loud to the cell next door, as you try to reach out for some social interaction. Boredom and loneliness are our constant companions on solitary, so what do they expect? Don't let me cause a major disturbance like kicking the door, holding the flap, or refusing direct orders, and I will get "all" the notice I want... Ten to fifteen officers aggressively trained, in full riot gear ready to extract you violently from your cell and/or spray you with Black Jesus! We call it that because it is the biggest and most potent black canister of tear gas on deck that will have you crying and screaming for Him if you get hit with it. They have to directly jet stream spray your face and body with a hose and then you "still" have to take a prolonged ice cold shower just to alleviate some of the effects. It's something serious and has been medically proven to cause long-term respiratory problems. It's still in use though. Most of the time, this is in tandem with the physical injuries you may have suffered from the cell extraction itself.

Yet the question again is... who is taking notice of good behavior and positive progress being made? The only people remotely doing so are the mental health staff, and they're really just keeping tabs on you to be sure you're not on the brink of insanity due to the adverse conditions solitary places on the psyche. Besides that, no one else wants to give credit, good credit, where credit is due. Not the guards. Not the shift supervisors. Not classification. Not even the higher ups who review your status will give you accolades. They're "all" just looking to keep you on lock down... Not what you've done "right" to be let out. Of course, they have to let go of you if you've done the latter plus all of your time. But still, during our seclusion, most of us are subject to the same repercussions as those causing trouble. From losing property due to undeserved cell searches, to being randomly harassed as examples to everyone - one bad apple spoils the bunch. They have observation sheets on our door and other record keeping duties to monitor supplies handed out, us leaving the cell for showers and haircuts, medical and interdepartmental visits and yes... negative behavior and consequences.

How about a check box for the positive stuff we do back here in solitary and close management status? For example...

- 1) Follows all rules & regulations. CHECK!
- 2) Is not a nuisance. CHECK!
- 3) Does not cause disturbances. CHECK!
- 4) Respects all authority & property. CHECK!
- 5) Does not disrespect female staff by any means, especially "Gunning" (masturbating). CHECK!

6) Does not destroy state property such as breaking the sprinkler or toilets to flood the cells, or rip up sheets to make fishing lines to reach other cells for books, soap, food (and yes,... the occasional exclusive contraband item). CHECK!

7) Always has his cell in order – property neatly stored, inmate dressed appropriately, and bed made to institutional standards with no wrinkles, hospital corners, and a six-inch collar twelve inches from the head of their bed. CHECK!

8) All of this while “officials” are on or off the wing... CHECK! CHECK! CHECK! CHECK! CHECK!

You get the picture, and if not – turn your flash on! It would be nice to see more people released early from solitary for doing all the right things than being extended for all the wrong. Basically, we’re “all” damned if we do, and damned if we don’t!

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