

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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close

Search

close

close

by [Voices from Solitary](#) | January 15, 2012

Editors Note: Tewhan Butler, a leader of the Bloods in New Jersey, is five years into a 30-year in federal prison sentence. His writing appears, along with that of other former gang members now serving time, on the website [Live from LockDown](#), a project of RaiseUP! Media. On Live from Lockdown, he describes his situation this way: Having been prosecuted by then-US Attorney and New Jersey's current Governor, Christopher J. Christie Tewhan Massacre Butler is currently serving his 30-year sentence in the Special Management Unit of a United States Penitentiary under the Federal jurisdiction of the US Bureau of Prisons. The Special Management Unit is beyond maximum security and is for inmates deemed by the Bureau of Prisons to need extraordinary levels of supervision. Butler is confined 23 hours or more each day, allowed only one phone call a month and one family visit by teleconference per month. Live from LockDown is meant to illustrate this harsh reality for those still in the streets.

Last month, Tewhan Butler received word that he had earned his way to a transfer from USP Lewisburg in Pennsylvania to USP Pollock in rural central Louisiana, a high-security prison where he may nonetheless be somewhat less restricted than he has been in Lewisburg's Special Management Unit. In the following post, titled [The Process](#), he describes his long route from prison to prison. (Ironically, shortly after Butler's arrival, [Pollock went on lockdown](#) following a fight among inmates, meaning all prisoners faced round-the-clock confinement to cells with no visit conditions similar to those at the SMU.)

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Again, I find myself in pursuit of the penitentiary's dangers. I am told to pack up. My turn has come. I couldn't fill the plastic bags with my property quick enough. For the past twenty months, I fell in love with my dictionary, thesaurus, world almanac, Book of Morals, and the world's best poets to have ever lived. For a brief moment they are forced to be boxed-up and not heard from again until we reach Level 6 Penitentiary Pollock. Level 6 means violence. Violence. Sleep. Violence. Wake-up. Violence. Only a few escape such violence.

After having my things ready to go my door was unlocked and opened by a unit officer, a stand-in officer and a Lieutenant. There were no intimidating looks and NO cuffs. I, to a certain degree, was free; certainly a long time coming.

In the unit's dayroom I joined nine others who had successfully completed the aches and pains categorized as The Program (S.M.U.). The date was November 29, 2011. The time was 4:45am. Only once a week is the penitentiary's rule of absolute silence ignored, and this day was one of them. The nine of us begin yelling to those we have journeyed with who still have to travel through extreme hardships, Keep your head up, Stay safe and Remain solid. Such words on the inside speak of a man's care for another who struggles. We have those we would want to stand beside and fight with to the end. However, the Federal Bureau Of Prisons (FBOP) understands this and separates comrades by thousands of miles in attempt to block the brotherly love. Our shouts are returned. Then, Let's roll men the Lieutenant ordered.

Personally, I could not wait to roll. With plastic garbage bags in hand, we nine overly-disciplined prisoners followed the footsteps of those in uniform to R & D (Receiving and Discharge). Once inside R & D, we were reminded that we were not free at all. One straight line gentlemen; now strip!

The Process Open your mouth; show me your gums, hands, sack; turn around; bottom of your feet- left, right; bend over; cough. Now put your clothes back on! Humiliation to the tenth power. We are not seen as men but as property.

Following *The Process*, we were thrown into a bullpen to wait for hours. There was nothing to eat with the exception of two stale pieces of bread and two slices of bologna. Hunger pains mixed with anticipations butterflies. Almost there.

In walks three officers. The clanking of chains filling the room with their noise.

One by one we are cuffed, shackled, waist-restrained, and leg-ironed; each with a tightness to numb whatever they touch. Again, my mind tells me that I'm almost there.

The bus ride was painful as the iron dug into my skin with each bump in the road. How refreshing were the sights. One never knew when

would be the next time the free world would be seen. I cherished each passing car, pedestrian, building, and home. The small things removed from my life for years, I stare out the bus window wishing I had understood then the importance of freedom. It was mine to lose, and I lost it. Before I knew it, we were pulling up along side maybe a dozen or so Greyhound buses with escape-proof tinted windows- interior fitted with bars and gates. The all white Federal plane lands moments later and out comes United States Marshals with shotguns and automatic rifles in hand. The perimeter is heavily secured. We were at Harrisburg Airport but far away from the fancy airplane services you know

The name calling begins. So and so, what's your number? Your number? 26852-050. I step off the bus and take my place amongst the other men and women dressed in pumpkin seeds, paper pants, dingy t-shirts, and shackles. The sight before me is one I could have never imagined. I'm almost there

We enter the plane. Hundreds of prisoners packed like sardines. Prepare for take off. In case of emergency do not panic. Listen to the Marshals instructions and you'll be fine. A man with his wrists strapped to his waist and his feet chained together could never be fine in the case of emergency

We are in the air. Next stop FTC (Federal Transfer Center) Oklahoma City. One would never know what the outside looks like, as it's located on the fringes of an airport and the plane pulls up directly to the building like they do the terminal at the airport. Upon exiting off the plane, we immediately enter FTC OKC

Corrections Officers line the walls of a corridor which is about half of a football field's length. With bright lights and everything white, it resembled a mental institution. After we all are unshackled, we are handed yet another bag lunch of two slices of bread and two slices of bologna and directed to a bullpen with one toilet, one sink, no tissue, and at minimum 100 inmates. The game is now one of patience

The Process is repeated and after the strip out there's photo, medical and psychological evaluations and back to the bullpen. It all takes hours on top of hours

I reach my cell, their cell, at 11:45pm. Before I am able to situate my bedroll (blanket, sheet, hotel-size toiletries) I am told that I will be leaving in the morning. The morning being 2:45am. Physically drained, I call for sleep. However knowing that I am almost there my body won't rest. I am forced to go through the entire process again, as if I just had not done so hours ago. Prison is not a place of convenience

Back on to the plane we go. Maybe the flight will be short, as Louisiana is not a far distance from Oklahoma City

We take off. Hours later we land in Pittsburgh. The swapping of prisoners begins. Five here. Ten there. Unload. Reload. Fair exchange a body for a body. The automatic rifles are tucked when all is done. The buses roll away and the Federal plane hits the runway

Finally, Alexandria, Louisiana United States Penitentiary Pollock. They say it's a place of rocking and rolling. A non-stop work call. The faint-hearted do not belong here. I enter with a lion's roar. What comes next? We shall wait and see

I shall keep you posted

The Voices from Solitary series publishes dispatches from people surviving the lived experience of solitary confinement.

Accurate information and authentic storytelling can serve as powerful antidotes to ignorance and injustice. We have helped generate public awareness, mainstream media attention, and informed policymaking on what was once an invisible domestic human rights crisis.

Only with your support can we continue this groundbreaking work, shining light into the darkest corners of the U.S. criminal punishment system.

by [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 30, 2022

by [Voices from Solitary](#)

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September 6, 2022

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I just want to say to my brother Mass keep your head up and only the strong survive and I can truly say you have been very strong in all your situation you took everything like a man never once letting them see you sweat I thank you for making this book its very good and touch

As Salaam Alaikum, Warahmatullhi Wabarakatuhu my son is at present facing a substantial amount of time as well, I thank you Tewhan for your input on the realities of what's to come, where he will be, who knows? I will continue to pray for our fallen comrades in hopes that they find some solidarity. Mr. President where are you in all of this mess? We live in troubled times, but NO MAN should be treated like a dog. In-Shaa-Allah to all my sons if I ruled the world you would all be free A Mother's love will never change!!!!

MY son is at Pollock and it is a nightmare. No young boy deserves to go thru the violence that occurs there. He is serving a 7 year sentence and has no violent charges so he does not deserve it at all. It is a place of nothing but violence and death. I would not wish it on my worse enemy.

USP Beaumont is medium security prison so thats better than Pollocks high security.

At least I believe so! Anyway, I never understood how they get around. Just as Mr. Butler my fiance was at Lewisburg, Pa and now is in the Federal Transfer Center in OK. Gosh, I had no clue and to the hardship because he does not explain these things to me. I want to also say to Mr. Butler keep writing and keep a journal. Thanks a lot and stay blessed.

I agree. He should definitely keep a diary and turn it into a book and publish it. This is fascinating.

He is doin fine.

Well Mr Tewhan Hakim Ya Butler didnt last very long at USP Pollock. I wonder if he is enjoying USP Beaumont any better? You will probably see several more movements over the next 17 years.

Only a few escape such violence Wasnt a problem for me! rm

I know I believe in second chances, however no matter how much you learn and regret from this point on, your second chance in the physical world may never come. So, look to God for comfort, for knowledge and for strenght to go on.

Life is

Life is an opportunity, benefit from it.

Life is beauty, admire it.

Life is a dream, realize it.

Life is a challenge, meet it.

Life is a duty, complete it.

Life is a game, play it.

Life is a promise, fulfill it.

Life is sorrow, overcome it.

Life is a song, sing it.

Life is a struggle, accept it.

Life is a tragedy, confront it.

Life is a adventurem dare it.

Life is luck, make it.

Life is too precious, do not destroy it.

Life is life, fight for it.

Author Unknown

i must may i loved the part were he was talking bout how they told them on the plane in case of emergency just follow the marshals instushions and your be fine lol he has a point if your that chained up and you have a wotter landing the inmates on the plane are 9 out of ten are screwed why i like his thing bout if there is one any one that chained up is not ok lol he right sadly lol i feel for those that live like this but do not wish to or that have to deal with that a lot may thare be light in the darknes of justice

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Occupy-The-Prison-Industrial-Complex/291241467590419>

This article was most interesting, I would never in a million years, have thought that anythinglet alone a person could be a level 6but, then what do I know? I am still having a problem adjusting to my son being in State prison, with a level 4: and he was never in a gang; let alone a CEO of a gang. Nevertheless, this narrative is very well written; as a result, I personally, shall be most interested in the further writings from this particular inmate.

Second, I always thought that the solid white airplane belonged to the CIA; again, what do I know: except that the world is not all black and white?

Third, I had no clue as how the federal system operated; as a result, this young man is teaching me a lot about the system from a perspective that had never entered my mind. For instance, I was under the impression that that Federal and States systems operated their institutions pretty-much the same, with this exception, the federal system is suppose to be all about constitutional rights;where-as the state system operates on non-constitutional rights.

It is just my opinion, but I do believe this young man should keep a diary, and later publish that diary, with the diary being dedicated to the wante-to-be gang members, and especially to us mothers who has no knowledge of how this particular system works.

Being a researcher and writer, I have not came across this type of information, on how the Federal system works any-place.

I am still in shock about my lack of knowledge, as it relates to this article. I would like to say to the young man: keep reading, read every book you can get your hands on, because one may be locked up (in reality), but it is the mind that controls how one preceives their situation. For example, one can be incarcerated in body, but not in mind. Education, in and of itself, is an eye-opener. The more one reads and understand that reading, the more educated they become. And yes, this young man definitely has a lot to offer to society.

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