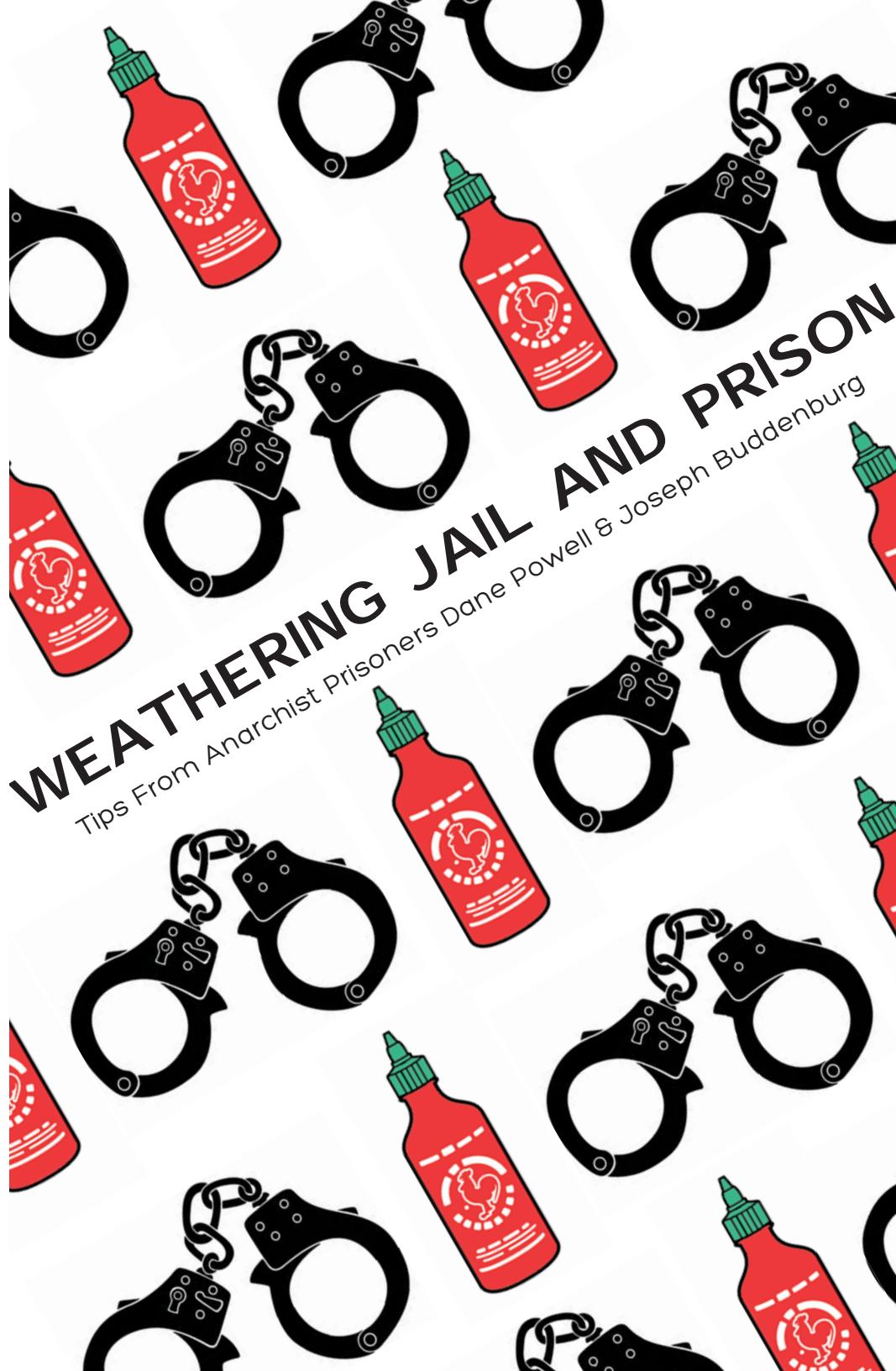




Masked Artwork By
ZOLA



During Trump's inauguration on January 20th, 2017, in downtown DC, 230 people were abducted a few blocks away from the ceremony after a non-permitted march. The dragnet arrest was the precursor for indiscriminate federal rioting charges that would threaten life sentences for each person; medics, journalists, and demonstrators alike. A few people who did not attend the demonstration had homes raided and were also charged for alleged "conspiracy."

Dane Powell, the first of the J20 defendants to be convicted, completed his four-month sentence in November after taking a non-cooperating plea deal in which he pled guilty to two felony charges. During the demonstrations against Trump's inauguration, he was filmed risking his freedom to save a child who was brutally attacked by riot police.

Dane teamed up with Joseph Buddenburg, another political prisoner serving two years for "Conspiracy to Violate the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act," to compose the following guide to surviving jail, prison, and transportation between holding facilities.

Whether you are preparing for the possibility of doing time yourself, getting ready to support someone else through a sentence, or simply curious to learn more about life inside the prison-industrial complex, read on for a wide range of essential tips.

For perspective on how to weather the process leading up to the verdict, read "*How to Survive a Felony Trial: Keeping Your Head up through the Worst of It.*"

*Content originally published by CrimethInc.
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"I saved the best tip for last...



To bring hot sauce into the chow hall, put it in a medicine bottle and your food will be more bearable."

IV. ASSORTED RESOURCES

Below is a list of further materials to help you and your comrades become more familiar with the carceral system, its history, inconsistencies, and essential threads of heros' past to navigate its maze.



"THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM FOR RADICALS":

http://tangledwilderness.org/pdfs/the-criminal-legal-system_letter.pdf

NATIONAL PRISONER RESOURCE DIRECTORY: A comprehensive list composed by the PRISON ACTIVIST RESOURCE CENTER
<https://www.prisonactivist.org/sites/default/files/2017-PARC-directory.pdf>

"THE JAILHOUSE LAWYER'S HANDBOOK":

https://www.nlg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Report_JailHouseLawyersHandbook.pdf

"NLG's KNOW YOUR RIGHTS GUIDE":

<https://www.nlg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/kyrpam-phlet-Eng-May-2015-FINAL.pdf>

RUSTBELT ABOLITION RADIO: An abolitionist media and movement-building project based in Detroit, MI.
<https://rustbeltradio.org/>

"CONTAINING THE CRISIS": A History of Mass Incarceration and Rebellion in the Rustbelt

<https://michiganabolition.org/zine/>

"OPERATION BACKFIRE": A Survival Guide for Environmental and Animal Rights Activists

<https://www.nlg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/OperationBackfire.pdf>

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**"These are things
we agree that we
should have known
before we heard
the first door lock
behind us."**

- Dane Powell

I had issues with the email system that was offered to us. You'll need to add your friend's email address as a contact on the computer system. When you add it, that email address will receive an email for them to set up an account through TRULINCS (the system the BOP uses).

From what I've seen and heard, this process can be confusing. If they get past this and they have an account, they can email you. They need to understand that when a prisoner emails them, they will not get an email notification to their actual email address alerting them of your message. They will have to sign into TRULINCS to see your emails every time. For some reason, a lot of people didn't understand this.



There are also private secondary services out there through which you'll be assigned a phone number and friends can text this number. The company then sends you an email with the text message and you can respond to that email and they text your message to your correspondent. This service costs about \$15 a month and you'll likely need someone on the outside to set it up for you.

Most of the clothing you'll need (like gym shorts, sweats, and shoes) can be bought in your housing unit. The most common forms of currency are stamp books (flats) and packages of mackerels (macks). Prisoners make a job out of fixing up shoes and clothing that was trashed and repurposing them.

You can pick up items for a fraction of what the commissary sells them for; the ones available from commissary are normally made by prisoners at sweatshops in the numerous other facilities the BOP runs.

Most prisoners see right through this, as I did. Turns out, this cellie is in prison for trying to have sex with a fake 9 and 11 year old. I judge good jail praxis by whether the act of retribution gets the person who administers it caught or if they can pull it off without the recipient knowing. Someone had great praxis.

During my time at Coleman, I was welcomed into the native community. Some facilities' native groups allow white people to sweat with them and some do not. If you've done a sweat before, the ones done in prison will likely be different. We would have a pipe ceremony every Saturday and this is where new natives or invites would bring their papers and introduce themselves.

The papers would be checked by all to ensure that no sex offenders or snitches would sweat with us. It was nice knowing those guys could be trusted.

Contacts & Commissary

When coming from a jail, you might be told your mail will be forwarded. It's very unlikely that any jail will forward your mail; you should just assume it won't be. Your funds will be forwarded. For me, it took about 20 days once I got to Coleman to receive my funds from DC.

If where you're sentenced and where you'll be released are different, and you're going to have probation, you'll need to get a transfer. If your probation isn't transferred before you get out, you will have to report to probation in the district you were sentenced, even

if you have no place to go. To get the transfer, you'll need to see your case manager and have an address to live at which there are no felons or guns, among other things. It takes about a month to properly transfer your probation..

When you're facing a possible prison sentence, the anxiety can be overbearing. No person who is in prison knows what lies ahead from one day to the next. It is quite literally a step into the unknown.

When I first got to jail, I kept notes on experiences that might help ease some confusion for my codefendants. I had no idea I would be transported hundreds of miles to the sunshine state over a three-week period.

Roughly a month at Coleman Federal Correctional Institution, I was introduced to Joseph Buddenburg, another political prisoner, who is serving a 24-month sentence. Joseph was originally serving time in California and was sent to the east coast, away from his support, as a form of punishment.

I shared this writing project with him and we decided to combine our energy and experiences. Our goal is to give tips and tricks we had to learn the hard way. These are things we agree that we should have known before we heard the first door lock behind us.



I. WASHINGTON DC JAIL

Presentencing

Prior to being sentenced, if found guilty, you will go through presentencing. This office will interview you and send a report to your sentencing judge. This report recommends a sentence.



Be careful with how you word things during this interview, as everything said can and will be used against you.



I recommend your lawyers be present for this interview. For example, certain substances are legal in Washington DC, but if you're found guilty of a felony, you'll be doing federal time / federal probation.

Once you're in the DC jail, it can be hard to reach anyone for a very long time. most three weeks to get in touch with support because I didn't have numbers. Prior to the day of sentencing, I recommend making a list of ten people including their phone numbers and addresses.

You get one free five-minute call after you're processed in and see medical. You can acquire a pen and paper prior to this call and call the one person with that list. You should also have someone lined up to pick up your clothes and other personal belongings as they're only kept for 14 days.

Unless you want your support to be the ones making your wish list for reading material, you should already have this done as well.

"Ask your lawyer to send your papers as soon as possible.. These papers will prove you're not a sex offender and you'll likely need them to prove your story."
- DANE POWELL-

standing up for what you believe in and not snitching.

The prison bureaucrats may fuck with you, pinpointing you for harsher treatment or fucking with your mail or outside support. If this happens, be prepared to have your support pressure the prison, BOP, and oversight bodies and seek assistance from radical attorneys.

The most difficult thing about prison for me has been the isolation and interference by the BOP, and I regret not fighting it from the beginning. Don't fear their retaliation and petty games: the nature of being a political prisoner will get you targeted from the beginning. Having support is your best weapon to fight back, so never hesitate to call your people and the movement in general for help.



Check Your Papers

Depending on how one looks at it, I got lucky for spending my federal time in a low. There's a lot less prison politics in a low, which is good for political prisoners who don't want to deal with racist prisoners, but it also has drawbacks.

With prison politics low, prisoners are less likely to "check in" snitches and child molesters (i.e., to force them into protective custody). With a yard full of snitches, it's almost impossible to organize anything unless you start running with groups that check papers.

Ask your lawyer to send your sentencing papers as soon as possible. These papers will prove you're not a snitch or a sex offender and you'll likely need them to prove your story.

One cellie told me over and over that they were in for gun charges but refused to show papers. He always had an excuse as to why he couldn't get them.

DC Jail Schedule

Food comes about every eight hours to your cell. Breakfast comes at the odd hour of around three am. When you're in intake you get about one hour of rec Monday through Friday. The rest of the time you're locked down. This changes when you get into general population (genpop).

I was in this lockdown of intake for three weeks and I only managed to get put into genpop by going on a hunger strike. Once you're in genpop you'll be out of your cell for about 8 hours a day. You also get two video visits a week and your support will need to sign up for this.

Random Jail Tips

If you're having an issue on the inside, it will almost never be resolved the way you would like. The #1 thing to do is tell your support and have them put outside pressure on the jail. This works 99% of the time.

The mailroom was shit in DC. My support was calling daily as my mail wasn't getting through. The mailroom kept telling them they were backed up by two weeks. You can get books, but they need to come from a publisher and can only be softcover (this has varied at different locations but this is specific to DC). Legal mail can only be opened and looked through in front of the prisoner and shouldn't be read.

There are no lines (in the sense of queues) in jail or prison for things like computers or phones. For a turn on the phone, you ask who the last person is and let them know you're after them.

If you require a special diet, tell the chaplain it's for religious

purposes. This still took me a month to get, though.

To check your canteen account and order commissary, they have touch screen computers installed in the units. Don't order any commissary until you get to genpop [general population]. If you order it in Intake, they'll take your money and not give you anything. You can get it back, it's just a pain in the ass. When you first log into this computer, you'll need to use your DCDC number (your number as a prisoner) for your username and password. You'll be asked to set your password at this point.

The clothing exchange is the *worst!* You only get your clothes washed once monthly, so every day you have to wash your clothes with you in the shower.

Your toilet is in your cell and offers no privacy between you and your celly. There are places in the wall that you can shove a spork into; then you can hang a blanket from the spork in order to build a temporary wall for a bit of privacy. You should save about 8 sporks for this purpose and to hang clothes-drying lines.

You should really be saving everything you can get ahold of like salt, sugar, pepper, and other things like that. You can make an air freshener with a bottle of nose spray and the green cleaner they use on the floor. Chaplains give out free holiday cards and sometimes free phone calls.



The sole of your shoe can serve as a pencil eraser.



When you write a complaint, sometimes the officer whose behavior you are addressing in the complaint will be the one to take the complaint out of the box. When this happens,

If your charge is political, the BOP (Bureau of Prisons) will likely place a "management variable" of greater security or a "public safety factor" on you. This will make you ineligible for "Club Fed": federal prison camps, in which there is no fence and you have more freedom of movement. Political prisoners will go to low security or higher.

A "management variable" will bump you up one level, so if you're at camp level, you'll go to a low; low points go to mediums; and so on. Only long-term prisoners or those with a serious criminal background will be sent to a penitentiary.

Make sure to clean up any pending charges or warrants before resolving your case—I ended up getting 7 points added for a pending misdemeanor, which bumped me from camp points to low so the BOP sent me to medium security facilities. Also, be sure to have a copy of your high school diploma or GED included in your "pre-sentence report" prior to sentencing. The pre-sentencing officer won't track this down, it's on you to track down a copy—this will subtract two points from your custody scoring and could mean the difference between a low and medium security facility.

Ask your attorney to request a "self surrender" from the judge. This typically allows you to turn yourself in to the US Marshals / prison to begin your sentence. That will subtract 3 points from your score and gives you around 60 days to clear your affairs before turning yourself in. My sentencing judge doesn't give self-surrender, but my attorney convinced him to give 24 hours to self-surrender, thus lowering my points.

Politics

Low security prisons are devoid of convict politics. Snitches and sex offenders are everywhere, but you'll find a few solid people—usually older guys who have worked their way down from penitentiaries. It will be rare to find anyone who shares your politics, but for the most part other prisoners will respect you for "being standup": for

**"Having support is
your best weapon
to fight back, so never
hesitate to call your
people AND
movement in general
for help."**

- JOSEPH BUDDENBURG -

there's a good chance that that complaint will get "lost." There is a workaround for this: you go to the law library or the chaplain's office and put your complaint in their box.

Treat the detail crew on each block with respect and they'll treat you right. They're the ones who bring bathroom supplies, food to the door, and other things like this.

Tips for LGBTQ

My celly for a week of my time in Intake was an amazing person. When I told him that I was writing this, he wanted to give tips for any gay comrades who might be coming to DC jail. So these tips are coming from a gay man. He told me the gay community sticks together almost like a gang.

If you have any issues, you go talk to other gay prisoners before anyone else, and they will help you faster than anyone else. You can ask to be housed with other gay men / trans women if you identify as such. Trans peeps should see the chaplain for hormones (if needed), magic shave, and bras. If a celly is making you uncomfortable, you need to speak up ASAP.

In part two, I'm teaming up with Joseph Buddenburg to talk about our experiences with being transferred all around the United Snakes. He has experience from California to Florida and I have been all over the east coast.





III. FEDERAL CUSTODY

Management Variables:

I did most of my time at medium facilities, in terms of the levels of violence, the programs, the “freedoms” afforded to me, and general demeanor, politics, and culture of prisoners.

There's a rating system for prisoners: 0-11 points means you go to camp, 12-15 to a low security facility, 16-23 to a medium, and 24+ high security. The following factors determine federal custody levels:



- > history of violence
- > detainers / pending charges
- > found guilty of past failures to appear
- > severity of current offense (mine was moderate, 3 points)
- > criminal history / past convictions (0-1 past convictions is 0 points, 2-3 is 2 points)
- > history of escape attempts (should be 0, unless you've been voluntary surrender status (0 for no voluntary surrender, -3 for receiving a self-surrender)
- > age (8 points if 24 or younger at the date of sentencing, 4 points if 25-35 years old)
- > education level (0 points if you have a copy of your high school diploma/GED in your presentencing report, 2 points for “non-verified HSD/GED”)
- > drug or alcohol abuse / convictions (0 for never or more than 5 years previous, 1 point for any drug use or convictions in the last 5 years).

You're chained up with cuffs on your hands and ankles and the cuffs are attached to a chain around your stomach.



When the guards are putting on the abdomen chains, you should protrude your stomach as much as possible. That way, when you're sitting normally, it won't be too tight.



Normally, your support will get instructions on how to setup a prepaid account when you call them the first time. Every single prison and jail I've been to has had a different phone system. At all the places except for Petersburg, I was told that the next place would have the same system and support could load up on their prepaid accounts, but this was never the case.

Once you get into the federal system, those systems are all the same; but your support won't need to set up anything at that point.

The Power of Observation

Some of the best advice I can give about being thrown into new environments so frequently is just to be observant. You shouldn't really be asking too many questions unless you absolutely have to. You should ask your fellow prisoners if that situation occurs.

At the same time, don't bombard other prisoners with questions. Don't come off as someone who's new to the system, even if you are. You can learn everything you need to know by just sitting back and watching what others do. This takes time, but it's the safest way to approach this unknown. If you follow this, you'll be a step ahead of most.

"IT'S IMPORTANT
TO KEEP IN MIND
THAT THIS IS
ONLY TEMPORARY."
- JOSEPH BUDDENBURG -

II. IN TRANSPORTATION

Holdovers

Other than the time I've spent in the SHU (Solitary), being transported is the most stressful part of my experience while incarcerated. I've been held at six different federal prisons / holdover jails over the last seventeen months. That's a bit of an anomaly; if you're a "short-timer," you should spend the majority of your time at one facility, with a short stint in transit at holdover facilities.

For folks designated to a federal prison on the East Coast, you'll be bussed or fly ConAir to USP Atlanta's holdover facility before transport to your designated facility.

For folks designated to the West Coast, you'll pass through Oklahoma City Federal Transfer Center, or Pahrump, NV - a privatized Corrections Corporation of America facility that functions as another Western Region Processing Center for federal prisoners.

In my experience, these holdover facilities freak out when a political prisoner arrives. I was held in max custody at Pahrump, and at Oklahoma City I was thrown in solitary for the duration of my time.

If this happens to you, it's important to keep in mind that this is only temporary; once you get to your designated prison, you'll have more "freedom," access to the outside, and more contact with your supporters. I was held at Pahrump for three days and Oklahoma City for two weeks.

If you're thrown into solitary, there is very little stimulation. Use the time to work out, write, and engage with the prisoners on the housing block, who are just as bored and frustrated as you are.



**"I hear about
people months or years
in solitary; they
have my highest
respect."**

- DANE POWELL-

Health & Nutrition

During transport itself, I found it important to fast and not drink water. You'll be cuffed and shackled, and access to the bathroom is nearly impossible. On ConAir flights, the US Marshals allow you one chance to use the bathroom on a several hour flight. They go row to row at a time chosen by them. They'll yell and threaten you if you try to stand up or walk to the bathroom. The meals are disgusting and you're only given an eight-ounce bottle of water anyway.

You may be "black boxed" during transports, which is especially uncomfortable. Because I was convicted of a "domestic terrorism" statute, this happens to me. You'll be cuffed and shackled, and if black boxed, a black plastic contraption will be locked to the handcuffs, creating wrist discomfort and near immobility of your hands. Make sure the handcuffs are somewhat loose. Cops are assholes, but they can be reasoned with, sometimes.

I found that bus rides are generally much longer, with no air conditioning, and less space. If you manage to get a window seat, try to sleep throughout the ride.



Other things that helped were attempts at meditation, deep breathing, and just talking to other prisoners



Keep in mind that your designated facility will be nothing like these shitty county jails and holdover facilities, and that the misery of transfer is temporary. Most likely, you'll be designated to a low security prison, with access to recreation, "programs," college classes, and the like.

If you're vegan or have other dietary considerations, be prepared with a number to call your support person to

pressure the jail, and perhaps to go on hunger strike.

At Oklahoma City, they threw me in the SHU; they don't allow prisoners in the SHU use of the phone until 30 days have passed. They also (illegally) don't allow prisoners to have stamps—you can send out three letters a week, only on Wednesdays. This resulted in my being unable to contact friends or supporters, so I had to refuse meals until they finally put me on a "no flesh" diet. This was not always vegan, but there's enough vegan sustenance to survive on. Ask for a celly when you first arrive, so you'll be able to trade food.



Solitary

I was awoken around 4 am in my cell in DC. The cop told me "pack your shit, you're heading to the Feds." I was so new to everything, I thought I was already with the Feds. After all, I was put into the custody of the US Federal Marshals after sentencing. I was excited when my celly told me the Feds are "easy time." On the other hand, I had just got settled in and had a nice collection of books. You can't bring anything with you except for legal papers (put your contact list on your legal papers). So, I left my books and letters as property that

that was to be picked up, and I stepped off again into the unknown.

From the morning I left DC, it took me three weeks to get to Coleman, FL. The process of waking you up at 4 am was repeated each time we would be transported. In my three weeks, I saw one jail and two prisons before getting to Coleman. The first morning, after leaving DC, we were brought to Warsaw, VA. We were put into a large, dormitory-style housing unit with TVs, phones, and video calling. We were at this holdover area only for a few days until we were moved once again.

This time, we were moved to Petersburg, VA. At holdover here, we were all put into solitary (SHU), and we didn't come out from there once. We even had showers in our cells and were denied our daily recreation time due to our transportation status. We could yell to each other, but that was it. We had no books or anything to keep our minds busy.

This was the hardest week of my life, and I've been through a lot. I hear about people doing months or years in solitary; they have my highest respect. Only those who have been separated from human contact like this know the barbarism it takes for a human being to do this to another and the pain and suffering this torture causes. I hope I'm not affected from this time long term, but only time will tell.

After climbing out of the bowels of hell, I was brought to Atlanta Federal Institution. My experience in Atlanta was like a combination of the two previous locations, as we were mostly locked down due to two stabbings on the compound.

When you're being transported, you should try to be first in line if you are trying to get a window seat. I think I got a window seat once; the three other times, when I didn't, the only thing I could think of, the whole trip, was to tell others to get a window seat. I would fall asleep and with every bump I would smash my face on the seat in front of me.