

Covid Assignment

Covid's impact on me within the last 2 months has done immeasurable damage to my psyche. Although that moment has passed, the trauma that it produced is imperishable. In retrospect, life preceding the effects of this virus is as important as the impact of the last 2 months. Before Covid-19 began to suffocate society in its destructive ability to asphyxiate its victims, I found relief mentally through exercise. I conversed daily via telephone with loved ones and I also enjoyed the invaluable time I spent bonding with them through weekly visitation. As this virus became known and began to take its effect on society, the conspiracy theories within this facility had already arisen. In the ensuing days I witnessed the atmosphere accelerate from a state of tranquility, to one of great panic. Many men in this facility knew that an institutional lockdown was inevitable, including myself, but somehow we wanted to believe that it wouldn't come to that point. I remember the exact spot where I was standing in this unit when the facility went into its first advanced lockdown. It was like time stopped and people scrambled in attempts to prepare for what they couldn't foresee. No visits, no phone calls, no kiosks, and no showers. Just a cell for 24 hours a day fearing the unknown. For lack of better words, I was overwhelmed. In over 8 years of incarceration, I never imagined the privilege of touching a loved one would disintegrate in a matter of seconds. Just the mere thought of being removed from the lives of the people you love and you can no longer coalesce with them, is devastating. This isn't a thought that one could imagine, it is a lived experience. It is a feeling, a feeling so painful that you can actually feel it compromising the organs. I felt like I died in those same seconds that it took for them to make the announcement. So it is hard to fully grasp the internal pain that became me in that moment. Within the last 2 months a recent spike in cases has taken the lives of a few inmates and hospitalized many others. One of the inmates that passed I'd just had a conversation with prior to that, and now the realization of him never getting the opportunity to converse with his family again saddens me to the core. I could've been him, he could've been me, and my family would've been dealing with the same pain that I'm certain his is. This was an older gentleman who fought for his freedom, but somehow lost his life in the pursuit of that. His untimely death has definitely impacted me within the last 2 months, because I've seen him sick, and when he left he never returned. A very important question to ask is, if someone doesn't seem to matter while they're alive why should they matter when they are deceased? What many people tend to overlook when it comes to the incarcerated is, we are all imprisoned humans that were judged solely off of the worst moments in our lives. Our split decisions equated to years and years of confinement and in those years we've rehabilitated and reformed ourselves in subtle ways when there was no incentive in doing so. It is safe to say that there are many of us who have seen the benefits in improving ourselves and did so. Contrary to what some may believe, many of us are actually decent human beings who

really care about the effects that we have on people. We do matter and don't deserve to die anymore than anyone else in these difficult times. At the present, it is very difficult for me to elude what my reality has become, because truthfully my fight for freedom and to live has become symmetrical in this moment. And a constant, but realistic thought is, which will come first.

Edits-

Over the last 2 months Covid has done immeasurable damage to my psyche. Although that moment has passed, the trauma that it produced is imperishable.

In retrospect, life preceding the effects of this virus is as important as the impact of the last 2 months. Before Covid-19 began to suffocate society in its destructive ability to asphyxiate its victims, I found relief mentally through exercise. I conversed daily via telephone with loved ones and I also enjoyed the invaluable time I spent bonding with them through weekly visitation.

As this virus became known and began to take its effect on society, the conspiracy theories within the facility amongst many had already arisen. In the ensuing days I witnessed the atmosphere accelerate from a state of tranquility to one of great panic. Many men in this facility knew that an institutional lockdown was inevitable including myself, but somehow we wanted to believe that it wouldn't come to that point.

I remember the exact spot I was standing in when this facility went into its first advanced lockdown. I, and several other inmates, were standing in the area of the microwave engaged in an intense conversation about the detriments of a lockdown. When the announcement was made, it was like time stopped and people scrambled in attempts to prepare for what they couldn't foresee. No visits, no phone calls, no kiosks, and no showers. Just a cell for 24 hours a day fearing the unknown. For lack of better words, I was overwhelmed.

In over 8 years of incarceration, I never imagined the privilege of touching a loved one would disintegrate in a matter of seconds. Just the mere thought of being removed from the lives of the people you love and you can no longer coalesce with them, is devastating. This isn't a thought that one could imagine, it is a lived experience. It is a feeling, a feeling so painful that you can actually feel it compromising the organs. I felt like I died in those same seconds that it took for them to make the announcement, so it is hard to fully grasp the internal pain that became me in that moment.

Within the last 2 months a recent spike in cases has taken the lives of a few inmates and hospitalized many others. One of the inmates that was incarcerated for over 50 years (Alvin Joyner; an elder, ex-Black Panther, and Community activist) had passed, I'd just had a conversation with him prior to that about life in general, and now the realization of him never getting the opportunity to converse with his family again saddens me to the core. I could've been him, he could've been me, and my family would've been dealing with the same pain that I'm certain his is.

This was an older gentleman who fought for his freedom, but somehow lost his life in the pursuit of that. His untimely death has definitely impacted me within the last 2 months, because I saw him sick, and when he left the unit he never returned.

A very important question to ask is, if someone doesn't seem to matter while they're alive why should they seem to matter when they are deceased?

What many people tend to overlook when it comes to the incarcerated is, we are all imprisoned humans that were judged solely off of the worst moments in our lives. Our split decisions equated to years and years of confinement, and in those years we've rehabilitated and reformed ourselves in subtle ways where there was no incentive in doing so. It is safe to say that there are many of us who saw the benefits in improving ourselves and did so. Contrary to what some may believe, many of us are actually decent human beings who really care about the effects that we have on people. We do matter and don't deserve to die anymore than anyone else in these difficult times.

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