

1/66

Drake Everett Muek
May 3, 2020

Written Testimony

I was born at a hospital in Bellevue, WA in 1991, the first-born of my mom and dad, who'd just moved to Bainbridge Island, as my dad had recently graduated from the University of Michigan and ~~begun his~~ ^{begun his} career ~~in~~ in the Seattle area. Within a year, my dad was laid off, a casualty of that recession, and my parents and I moved to Orange County, CA, to live with their respective parents for a time, as well as a couple of other towns in the area, until my dad got back on his feet -- my mom was a homemaker from the time I was born until I finished college -- and we ended up in Temecula, CA.

By that time, I was starting grade school, and Temecula really was a great ~~place~~ place for a kid to grow up in: a suburb more or less the midpoint ~~between~~ between San Diego and Los Angeles, not a prohibitive distance from my parents' parents in Orange County; Temecula was booming as we settled there, offering a range of pretty good public schools, parks, and municipal activities. By that point, I had a brother 3 years younger -- I'd also

had a sister 4 years younger, who'd died at 12-days-old -- and while in Temecula my parents completed our family with a third son (6 years younger than me) and two more daughters (8 and 10 years younger than me respectively). It was a full house, which meant plenty of annoyances to deal with, but also plenty of kids to play with. And considering I didn't have the internet until near-middle school -- let alone smartphones not becoming a thing until I was near the end of high school -- and with my parents only allowing us to play video games Fridays after school and Saturdays, -- ~~there~~ there wasn't nearly as much content in general to binge on as there is nowadays -- most days at home were devoted to playing with others (or reading). In Temecula, the neighborhoods were full of kids playing with other kids, more outside than inside. My identity developed into being based around basketball, as I played the sport competitively and recreationally from 3rd grade through 9th -- then sporadically

3/66

Drake Mosek

Written Testimony (cont.)
afterwards.

In 2005, though, my dad informed us that he'd gotten a better job in Florida, so we'd be moving there. I'd just started high school, and shortly before Halloween of my freshman year we arrived in Brevard County, FL. We'd live in a couple different towns ~~in~~ in that area, the Space Coast, during the period of 2005-2008 -- and although the housing crisis of those years didn't especially afflict us, we'd dodged a bullet emigrating from Temecula when we did, as that town and the rest of Riverside County were one of the most devastated areas in the U.S.A., in terms of foreclosures, etc. Those towns were much like Temecula in that they seemed as middle-class suburban as could be, although whereas Temecula, a valley in the desert surrounded by ranges of hills, felt insulated from any crime in my childhood, Brevard County had what could be termed its rougher areas, certain neighborhoods less-developed economically where drugs and violent crime were known to exist. I kept out of all that myself, though -- my whole

4/66

family did -- and my avocation of basketball gave way to an identity based around rock music, of the family of sub-genres we called "hard core". In an entirely new state, on the opposite coast of the country, I recognized the opportunity to reinvent myself; also, after making the freshman basketball team, a coaching regime change resulted in my position no longer being wanted. I joined a rock band with one of my best friends and his cousin and friends, with whom I played the electric bass at our band practice every weekend or so, and I attended local shows every weekend that I could as well. I've long had many interests in a wide cultural range, so I was able to make friends with all sorts of types.

Then, at the end of my junior year, my dad informed us once again that he'd gotten a better job, this time in Michigan -- in Metro Detroit, of all places during that Great Recession. As in Temecula, my friends in Brevard County were sorry to see me go, and although I was

5/66

Drake Msek

Written Testimony (cont.)

anxious all over again, I'd adopted since the 4th grade the mantra to just "go with the flow", especially as the eldest son, who's supposed to be the totem of maturity, (which in a masculine paradigm means a stoic responsibility and determination for success). By the Fourth of July, 2008, we'd arrived in Michigan, and really I appreciated having such a big (for this era) family, as we all supported each other in this transition that we'd already successfully undergone together before. Socially, however, this move was more difficult for me. We settled in Ann Arbor -- where we've lived around to this date -- continuing the progressive elevation in quality of public education that may have been the greatest benefit of all these moves, only I just had my senior year of high school to finish. And, as I only had a half-day course load, thanks to all the credits I'd already earned and my having to dual-enroll in community college for my math courses, I was barely at the school as is. Therefore I made only a minimal

6/66

amount of friends before graduating. The only university I applied to was the University of Michigan, which accepted me, and so I attended college in my adoptive hometown of Ann Arbor. While my family -- who I continued to live with during college to save on housing expenses, as I couldn't afford even tuition, so that I'm still paying off the debts of my student loans and likely will be until they're forgiven -- lived in the suburbs, which felt safer to me even than Temecula's had, I now had my first-ever proximity to a college town's downtown, hipper and more culturally-enriching than anywhere I'd thus far resided. Since the first 8 musicians I met upon arriving in Ann Arbor all played the bass like me, I'd given up on continuing to be in a band, and I by-and-large stopped attending concerts too. Instead, my newest reinvented identity became based around my academic interests, which I developed as an undergraduate at U-M.

7/66

Drake Mosek

Written Testimony (cont.)

I graduated from U-M in May 2014, the first ever to do so with a BA in both English (Language & Literature, with a sub-concentration in Creative Writing) and Informatics (a concentration formed during my undergraduate years, in which I specialized in Social Computing). I'd really struggled to come up with the funds to pay for that fifth and final year to complete my dual-concentration, and the required courses for Informatics (which have since changed, but were then provided by other departments) had been so difficult for me that it was all I could do to graduate. I was expected by my parents to have a job lined up after graduating too, so I ended up not submitting any applications to graduate school, even though I'd been introduced to and fallen in love with the academic field of writing centers during my undergraduate years, and accordingly I knew that I wanted to pursue a career at a college where I could be a writing instructor as well as the director of their

8/66

writing center, which I'd accomplish via the credentials of a PhD in Rhetoric & Composition and/or an MFA in Creative Writing. Instead, I found myself floundering post-graduation, as the job I'd lined up ~~at~~ ~~at~~ ~~at~~ at a brand-new writing center at a liberal arts college in India fell through due to Narendra Modi's protectionism resulting in me being declined for a work visa. Eventually, by virtue of belonging to the U-M network, I received the opportunity to work at General Motors's corporate headquarters of the Renaissance Center in downtown Detroit, as an entry-level contractor providing Marketing Support as part of the ChatLab. However, I couldn't afford to move out, so I commuted from my parents' house in Ann Arbor. During this period, I formed (or, rather, received) my first opinion about the criminal legal system, which I hadn't had to encounter at any point thus far in my life: a woman I was romancing had ~~major~~ majored in criminal justice at Eastern

9/66

Drake Wisk

Written Testimony (cont.)
Michigan University, and she explained to me how messed-up private prisons are. Shortly before I was arrested, I'd gotten accepted into a program that in one year would've provided me an MA in ~~Education~~ ~~Education~~ Education with Secondary School Teacher's Certification, so that I could've become a high school teacher of English and psychology in Michigan, moving out and becoming a full-fledged adult while sprucing up the applications for programs that would enable me to pursue my ultimate dreams of working at a university.

After returning home in Ann Arbor late at night following my ^{February 7th, 2018} commute from the Ren Cen, however, I was arrested, for the first time in my life -- sure, I'd been pulled over by traffic cops several times in recent years, including a couple tickets, but never anything criminal. Although I was not a fugitive, the Michigan Fugitive Task Force pulled up into my parents' front yard after I'd ~~disembarked~~ ~~disembarked~~ disembarked from my car in the driveway and was about to

10/66

■ let myself in the front door of the house. I was told I was under arrest and to get on my knees. I complied, and they searched me for anything dangerous, and handcuffed me. Of course they read me my rights. Then they knocked on the front door, and explained the situation to my parents, who were of course shocked. None of my siblings had ever been arrested either. I left my work-bag with my parents and, after being allowed to use my restroom, I was driven by one of the cops from Ann Arbor to Ionia, to spend the night at their jail before being taken the rest of the way to Delta County in the Upper Peninsula, the site of my alleged crimes. I was arrested in my winter pea-coat over a button-up shirt, along with a pair of black skinny Levi's, black skinny American Apparel belt, black/gum Nike Lunar Force Duckboots, and socks and underwear. Despite all that clothing (minus the belt, which was kept in a bag with my wallet while I was jailed that night), I was utterly

11/66

Drake noise

Written Testimony (cont.)
freezing in the drunk-tank in which I was put with a couple other men (others would trickle in through the night), including an older man occasionally convulsing, likely ~~in~~ ~~the~~ the process of withdrawal. Some of those men received blankets, but they apparently soon ran out. There were elevated benches that a slim-enough man could lie on against either wall, and a toilet & sink behind a waist-high wall in the back corner of the open space. I felt air-conditioning blowing in, and I couldn't stop shivering nor teeth-chattering while trying to sleep on the hard floor. I tried to curl up for warmth, but I couldn't do that while also cushioning my head from the painfully hard surface. For a while, someone in one of the regular cells around the corner of the complex was singing -- it was around midnight. I didn't sleep an hour. In the morning, I was driven by a couple of the other cops who'd arrested me, who ~~took~~ ^{took} me from Ionia to the Mackinac Bridge, as we listened to a hunting talk-show on XM

(although two men of average height could barely fit head-to-feet on each one)

12/66

radio the whole trip -- the cop who'd taken me from Ann Arbor to Ionia had at least asked me what I'd like to listen to, to which I replied the alternative station he already had on was fine. At Mackinac ~~Bridge~~ Bridge, a duo of Michigan State Police took me over to the UP, driving eventually to Delta County, where they attempted to interrogate me, to which I replied I would not waive my right to be represented by a lawyer. In general, all the cops I had to interact with from Ann Arbor to Delta County Jail were respectful, if authoritarian; I responded respectfully, though minimally, in return.

~~So~~ So began my stay at Delta County Jail, which lasted from February 8th 2018 - ~~August~~ August of that year. My bail, even after it was reduced, was still in the tens of thousands of dollars, so I was stuck in jail until the conclusion of my case. Being many several hours away from my family, I only received a couple

13/66

Drake Mosek

Written Testimony (cont.)
visits, coinciding with my final court appearances, although my family (extended included) supported me from the beginning, keeping in regular touch via the quaint medium of letters and (for my immediate family) phone calls. All I knew about the criminal legal system was, if you're ~~be~~ arrested, to exercise your right to remain silent, waiting until a lawyer can do all the talking with the state on your behalf, so I just went with the flow, picking up what I could about the criminal legal system from other inmates, based on their personal experiences (allegedly) or he-said/she-said. After initially qualifying for a public defender -- of course I lost my job at GM in the immediate weeks following my arrest, without any contact from them, and like most other Americans I had no savings to draw on, living ~~paycheck~~ ^{paycheck} - to - ~~paycheck~~ ^{paycheck} with the assistance of debt, so I was personally broke and had to rely on my parents ~~again~~ again for any financial aid -- my parents hired me a local attorney -- the differences in

14/66

outcome were negligible (though exorbitant). Those 6 months I spent in jail (not pre-trial detention, as I'd be accepting a plea deal to avoid 2 greater charges) were at the original Delta County Jail (the new one being completed shortly after I was transferred to the care of the Michigan Department of Corrections), which may have been small (a capacity of around 120, which was almost always over-filled, resulting in inmates regularly having to sleep on the floor rather than any bunk, although at least they had plenty of sleeping mats) and out-dated (no paint job enough to hide the decay), but at least each cell had its own TV (small and kept behind bars, yet with free cable), in recognition of the UP being uninhabitable most of the year-- during that period of February - August 2018, we were only let out for yard 3 or 4 times, for about half an hour in the fenced-in grass with various sports equipment, Lake Michigan so close you could smell it.

15/66

Drake Msek

Written Testimony (cont.)
After the local newspaper reported on my alleged sex crimes, I received typical harassment from inmates in other cells (who could only shout threats at me, although the smallness of the jail meant that all the inmates could hear), but I got along with all the inmates I shared a cell with over the course of those 6 months. I read a lot of books, (both from the jail's torn-up library and mailed in courtesy of my parents), wrote a lot (buying paper, pens, and stamps & envelopes rather than snacks), watched certain TV shows at certain times, and played a lot of cards, while I awaited my spaced-out court dates. The COs at Delta County Jail each possessed an amount of Kooper gentility, even the ones who really didn't want to be stuck with that job, and after I'd been there for a while, I was afforded the almost-friendly respect of a tenant, only with an undercurrent of being in the presence of a man on his way to the gallows. When it was all said and done, I pled guilty to 2 counts

16/66

of 3rd Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct, for which I received the maximum amount of the minimum points possible, resulting in concurrent sentences of 4 years and 9 months to 15 years. (I'd been considering, though nothing so definite as expecting, 1 year, maybe 2; again, this was the first time in my life I'd ever even been charged with a crime.)

I then (on an indefinite morning following my sentencing date, at which my mom had cried out when the prosecution proposed 6 years for me, only for the judge to side with the recommendation given by the retiring Pre-Sentencing Investigator -- the judge, in his final speech to me, characterized the situation as me having been dealt 4 Aces by Life, only for me to have squandered that hand; ~~■~~ a college-educated middle class white young man isn't supposed to be caught up in the criminal legal system) followed the path to the MDOC all convicted felons take from county jails in the UP, who are supposedly short of the funds needed to

Drake Msek

17/66

Written Testimony (cont.)
transport such convicts to their
quarantine prison facility directly,
and therefore take them only as
far as Marquette Branch Prison.
I rode in the back of a Delta
County cop car while 2 COs from the
jail chit-chatted in the front over
a pop station played blaringly loud.
When we arrived at MBP, one of
the COs asked me whether I was
nervous, to which I replied yeah. I
was wearing my set of DCI-issued
oranges: a short-sleeved one-piece
pant-suit buttoned-up from the
waist over a ~~tee~~-shirt, boxers, and
crew ~~socks~~ socks, along with Crocs ~~socks~~
-- my clothes I was arrested in
having since been picked up by my
parents. After I was checked in, I
was given a set of MDOC-issued
blues & whites to change into: a
blue short-sleeve v-neck pullover, blue
stretchy-waisted pants, white briefs,
and canvas slip-on shoes -- I wasn't
given any socks, and as such new
prisoners are placed in MBP's Q-block,
where brought-over prisoners having to
admit into ~~the~~ the Marquette hospital are
quarantined, and given that my big toes

18/66

had developed ingrown toenails due to inconsistent availability of nail-clippers at DC), I believe I contracted MRSA there, or later in quarantine at RGC, where all the inmates of a unit showered together in a locker-room setting like gym classes of my parents' generation, as by MBP pus began to leak from one of my toes, and at RGC that toe began to bleed and scab, so that by the time I settled into Jackson Cooper Street facility I had to have medical remove the toenail, an excruciating ordeal to recover from (the MRSA was treated via anti-biotics, obtained by standing out in front of the control center in the morning and at night, in the freezing winter air, queued up with the other med-line prisoners and waiting for the CO to open it up, so that we could receive our controlled meds from the health worker at the window). En route, the CO accompanying me made an essentially homophobic joke with a very large black prisoner who was working as a janitor, insinuating along the lines of prison's racialized hegemony

19/66

Drake Mizek

Written Testimony (cont.)
of sexual/violent predation by certain black men against young white men, at my expense; I felt I had now entered prison, where COs displayed none of the respect of those in jail, instead preferring to intimidate -- later, I found out this culture may have been specific to MBP, a Level 5 facility. I went through a routine medical check-in, weighing in at 169 lbs. and with no known pre-existing health issues. Then I was left to wait, having had no chance to use a restroom since leaving DC). Finally, I met with a psych for a brief evaluation. I also, after having my prints taken (having also had that done at the Ionia jail and DC); I'd also have it done again at RGC, by which time I was able to help a new CO do it myself) had my picture taken, which was printed out as part of my ID card. I was then shown to my cell, my own one-man cell, with a toilet, sink, smudged mirror, miniature "desk", chest, ~~and~~ cot, and shelf. It was my first time since being incarcerated that I had my own cell -- there were prisoners in other cells

20/66

down the hall, and the ones next to me, though none of them reached out to me. I ~~was~~ sat on my bunk, having arranged the bed-set I'd been given (along with towels and toiletries), having nothing to do, until a CO came by and asked if I'd like to read a book; he came back wheeling a cart of books, and I picked out a few; he also got me a roll of toilet-paper. I spent the rest of my time reading, jotting a few notes occasionally with the pen and papers I'd been provided. Chow was served through the bars and expected to be eaten quickly. I began to understand how solitary confinement could be psychologically challenging, as you are literally left alone with your thoughts -- save for the CO regularly checking up on you, who I can sympathize with for having to field all frustrations and requests from all the prisoners he or she's responsible for, serving de facto as an outlet for that psychological distress. I tried to still go with the flow; failing that, my second recourse is to

Drake Mizek

21/66

Written Testimony (cont.)

tough it out. I treated ~~me~~ as a Level 5 prisoner, there was a specific time for all the prisoners in A-block to take turns ~~using~~ using the shower: bringing your towel, wash-cloth, bar of soap, and set of clothes, you are locked in a belly-chain through your bars, let out, led to the shower, closed in, then unlocked from the belly chains, to quickly take your shower (you're granted a dispensation of liquid shampoo if you want, to hold in your hands and apply before it slides away). At least the showers throughout my jail and prison experiences consistently provided warm-to-^{have} hot water.

I only stayed a ~~few~~ ~~days~~ ~~at~~ ^{couple days} at MBP -- the final night, the CO who liked to have a radio playing oldies loudly during his (second) shift left it on instead of turning it off like usual before leaving, and try as I might I couldn't fall asleep all night -- before I was placed in belly-chains and ankle-chains (I'd had to wear ankle-chains while taken to my court appearances, in my DCJ oranges, handcuffed too, but the belly-chains ^{over my}

22/66

were new-- and at least at DC)
~~_____~~ I was able to wear the handcuffs
in front; while being driven to ~~_____~~
Ionia, I had to wear handcuffs
behind my back, a unique difficulty
to sit comfortably with; from Ionia
all the way to Delta County I wore
the handcuffs-in-front-and-ankle-
chains combo, as I was given a paper
bag lunch to eat courtesy of the
Ionia jail, during my ride to the
Mackinac Bridge, and it is a decent
challenge to eat a plastic-wrapped
meal in handcuffs, especially opening
the seal of a juice bottle) and--
never explained to me, though I've
guessed that it's because my security
level had yet to be classified-- a
black box, an infamous contraption
true to its name that locks your
handcuffs into place, ostensibly for
an additional level of security,
though the chief effect seems to
be more painful chafing of your
wrists-- ~~_____~~ ~~_____~~ the ankle-chains
ended up cutting into my sock-less
ankles fairly severely too, even
through my pants legs, and although the
CO who'd given me a pair of size 12

23/66

Drake Wisek

Written Testimony (cont.)
black oxford state shoes (which I had to replace at JCS with size 13s, as ~~the~~ MDOC-issued clothing requires you to size up) to replace my canvas slip-ons noted that I could've just asked for a pair of socks (how was I to know that? what I could ask for?), he didn't offer me any as we waited at least an hour for the long ride down-state. We were packed into a nearful bus, with columns of pairs of seats too small for two men to fit within and a central aisle a man had to walk sideways through. Bars seperated our seating arrangement from the COs in the ~~the~~ front seats. There was a uninal for us to use, off on the side in the middle section of the bus. We rode down to the Central Michigan Facility, a processing facility by St. Louis where we were herded into what MDOC prisoners call "the cattle pens", for that is what they resemble, cages where men in chains and state-issued clothing stand bunched together, waiting for their bus to ship them to their destination--before that, though, the bus I was on had an overnight

24/66

stop-over at Kin Ross / URF, myself and actual Level 5 prisoners having to stay in the heightened security of ~~the~~ URF, where two of us were placed in one of the two-men cells in what seemed like an open recreation unit (perhaps specifically reserved for such lay-overs) while I and another prisoner were separately placed in our own respective cells; although they had a two-man bunk, they weren't very spacious, with a mirror/sink/~~toilet~~ toilet set-up, a desk, and a small window through which you could gaze outside; the COs gave each of us a book to read, though come the next morning we were off to the visiting room, to wait ^{with all the} ~~over~~ ^{other} outgoing prisoners for our respective buses.

I ended up at RGC in Jackson, where both parole violators and new intake are sent for quarantine. It's a very old facility, with units like those you see in black & white prison movies: a ~~row~~ gallery of cells, row on top of row, mostly two-man cells though also some one-man, clanging steel barred doors that you have to catch when the CO unlocks them (forewarned

25/66

Drake Wuseh

Written Testimony (cont.)
only by the indecipherable announcement of a CO yelling over an ancient PA system) or else you're stuck inside missing that chow or yard. R6C operates like a Level 4, with 1-hour a day of yard (which is often cancelled, say by rain, or a forecast storm, or the temperature being too high), 1 time designated for showering, and the rest of the day (save for chow ~~breakfast~~ breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and any call-outs you may personally have as you get processed officially into the system) spent locked up in your cell, a single or double cot with one or two corresponding lockers, along with the mirror/sink/toilet and a plastic chair, as well as a desk for one-man cells. Even with a bunkie to chat with, you inevitably fall into reading as much as you can (books circulate informally, and so are typically missing pages) and mostly napping the day away. That said, there are plenty of personality types among the prisoners who prefer to spend their time shouting, well into the night, whether talking with their

26/66

friends (or enemies), calling out moves in an improvised ~~game~~ of chess, freestyle rapping, or harassing the COs or chomos. At RGC, the threats I heard at DC) (which were largely talk, and performative at that, a thing to do for simple-minded ~~people~~ never-do-wells to occupy their time while incarcerated) became a bit more real for me. I didn't encounter any problems I couldn't handle, and I made plenty of amiable acquaintances, many of whom shared with me what I could expect in prison, offering words of advice as well as encouragement. Ultimately, prisoners look to form social in-groups and out-groups, essentially like ~~the~~ the rest of humanity. The easiest types of such group formation are racial, unfortunately--in general, prison is dominated by the working class, and so its culture is hegemonically conservative, maintaining religious practices and their corresponding patriarchy and resulting heteronormativity & misogyny, if all particularized through the warped customs of a world lacking

27/66

Drake Msek

Written Testimony (cont.)
all the information flows available outside -- although the over-arching binarization seems to be prisoners vs. COs; that said, the two major out-groups among prisoners are sex offenders and snitches -- informal laws (prisoners are keen to adhere to certain rules, internalizing that which has oppressed them) amount to a code of conduct that's roughly "honor amongst thieves", but such respect doesn't extend to chomos and rats, unclean castes who are favorite targets of muggings and other types of assault. I learned early on, though, that you don't want to let on to your loved ones how bad it is, at least until they've proven ready for it. Such a positive mental attitude (underwritten by realism) will do you well while incarcerated too.

After about 5 weeks in quarantine (more or less ~~typical~~ typical), I was transported down and across the street to JCS, where I reside to this day. of the 11 J units at JCS, I've stayed in 4 of them, placed

at the end of september,

28/66

initially in A Unit, which was intended for well-behaving prisoners though also commonly used as a transitional sort of holding unit, before I was re-assigned to F Unit, one of the sex offender residential programming units at JCS (which itself is a programming facility, a Level 1 for prisoners on their way to paroling who just need to complete one or more programs recommended to them; although my Early Release Date not being for another 4+ years scored me for a Level 2 facility, I had 0 mal-behavioral points, so I was waived down to Level 1 upon my quarantine evaluation), until F Unit became designated for medium-risk sex offenders (I'd scored low-risk and been waived by the psychologist who evaluated me at RGC) and a glut of sex offenders needing to enroll in MSOP made me superfluous, so that I was re-assigned to H Unit, a generic unit, although I eventually settled at G Unit, the residential programming unit for low-risk sex offenders. Although I ~~was~~

29/66

Drake Msek

Written Testimony (cont.)
attended breakfast chow daily--
I'd gotten used to that schedule
at R6C, where everyone went to every
chow if only to get out of their cell
(not to mention being unable to order
food off commissary while in
quarantine, only being able to
purchase hygiene products, writing
material, and the most essential
item in prison, shower shoes, i.e. cheap
rubber ~~slides~~ slides, to wear in
the shower where who knows what
lurks); plus, A Unit was right by the
chow hall, and my bunkie was keen
to wake me up for it-- I gave up
that practice after being moved
to F Unit, and never went again. I
judged it healthier to get the extra
couple hours of sleep (breakfast chow
being called around 5:30 AM), and
even when I'd gone I ended up
hungry again by 10 AM, with a few
hours still to go before lunch chow,
so why not just have breakfast at
9:30 AM or so? At first I had Pop-
Tarts, a childhood favorite I'd long
given up, (even though the only two
flavors available ~~via~~ via commissary
were just blueberry and strawberry),

30/66

but by the time I was re-assigned to 6 Unit I decided to attempt to be healthy and instead had oatmeal for breakfast. I've never been much of a snacker -- really, ~~you~~ you could say I'm a coffee-drinker instead, and after regularly using outside then not having any available while in DC) or quarantine, I've worked my way back up to 3 cups a day at JCS, even after the commissary supplier removed my 2 favorite bags from ~~our~~ our store list -- and so for the most part I ~~don't~~ don't cook up like other prisoners enjoy doing; I just like to have a bag of chips or chocolate-filled/covered pastry to treat myself to on occasion. Besides the oatmeal and coffee, the rest of the \$50 or so a month I get from my parents to spend on store goes to replenishing my hygiene products and writing materials. My parents have also continued to order books for me on occasion, and they provided me the funds to order a TV, running shoes, and a desk-fan --

, and if I do need a snack, it'll usually be a strawberry-flavored "cereal bar" (i.e. a generic Nutrigrain Bar)

31/66

Drake Msek

Written Testimony (cont.)
prison is truly a much better experience than jail in terms of all the personal items you can get, and a Level 1 facility or the like is even better because of all the freedom of movement ~~in~~ ^{within} your unit and out on the yard. My parents visit me at least once a month, and occasionally other family members come too. Rather than talking with them over the phone on opposite sides of a transparent window like at DC), I get to sit with them at a table, enjoying vending machine food & drink. One of the greatest truths of incarceration is that having a support system outside is the major way to make your incarceration as positive an experience as possible.

A typical day for me in prison, by which I mean the routine I've progressively developed ~~in~~ during my incarceration, and which I practice more or less every day here at JCS in 6 Unit, where I've resided since May 24, 2019, ~~in~~ ~~at~~ certainly the longest I've spent in any one place as a prisoner is this: I wake up around 8-9:30 AM, having

32/66

- slept since 11:30 ~~PM~~ PM - 12:30 AM.
- I pour a spoonful of instant
- coffee (from the 1 bag left on
- the store that I like) into my
- plastic tumbler, wh~~ic~~ich I then
- fill halfway from the hot-water
- dispenser in the back dayroom, and
- then I use the bathroom. I take
- a shower, using cocoa butter soap
- and every other day or so some
- shampoo, then I get dressed in a
- fresh white t-shirt, white briefs,
- white crew socks (one size fits all),
- and ^{the} not-so-fresh pair of orange
- mesh basketball shorts, all of which
- are MDOC-issued -- 3 t-shirts, 3
- pairs of socks, plenty of briefs, yet
- only 1 pair of shorts, with laundry
- done by one of the inmate porters
- assigned to it 3 days a week, 1 more
- day for the blues (3 shirts, 2 pants)
- and sheets, all of which can be
- swapped at the quartermaster every
- so often ^{for fresh copies} with a call-out -- which I'll
- wear the rest of the day within the
- unit. (if it's particularly cold, I may
- don ^{walking around in my shower shoes} an MSI sweatshirt I ordered
- on the cheap, along with a matching pair of
- sweatpants, crafted by MDOC prisoners

Drake Msek

33/66

Written Testimony (cont.)

somewhere, and maybe my pants too; if it's too cold, I may wear my state-issued thermal top and/or bottom too, although the rules for how we may wear those are so onerous I usually try to avoid it altogether); depending on the ~~weather~~ weather, I may wear when going out for chow my pants, winter jacket, beanie, and/or gloves, along with my state shoes. After I'm done with my shower, I'll open up a packet of flavored instant oatmeal (from a variety pack) and a packet of regular instant oatmeal, dumping both into my tupperware bowl, and I'll add just enough hot water from the dispenser in the back dayroom to achieve a thick consistency that I like; I eat that with my plastic spoon -- that's my snacking spoon, I have a larger one for scooping my instant coffee -- then I wash the bowl out when I'm done from the faucet of a sink in the bathroom -- as ~~the~~ JCS is a Level 1, prisoners live in military-dormitory-like settings, each unit a polebarn of cubes to live in,

34/66

along with the lobby (where the phones, officers' station, and laundry closet is located, along with the mail and store boxes), counselor's ^{outgoing} office, ~~the~~ front and back dayroom, a psychologist's office for the sex offenders residential programming units, and a bathroom (4 toilet stalls, 4 urinals, 4 shower stalls, and 8 sinks with mirrors) ~~at~~ at the end of each of the two hallways, both containing 2 columns of 5 rows (on either side of their respective hall) of cubes, each cube containing 4 double-bunk beds, ~~each~~ each next to a pair of vertical lockers, with a table with 2 built-in seats and some shelf-space in the center -- and then I drink my by-now-cooled-enough-to-drink coffee completing my breakfast -- maybe it's not much of a substitute breakfast, as I recently ~~weighed~~ weighed in at 133.8 lbs., although the regular chow meals seem hardly sufficient for a day's worth of calories, and barely anyone likes ~~everything~~ everything on every tray enough to eat regardless. Each shift ~~of~~ of

35/66

Drake Mizek

Written Testimony (cont.)

COs is typified by a distinct framework of pet peeves, regardless of what unit at JCS you reside in, thus providing different sets throughout the day of what rule-bending you can get away with and what you can't -- this is a result of there being so many rules from MDOIC in general and each facility in particular that it's impossible to enforce them to the full extent.

First shift is primarily considered with your cube and, particularly, your bunk being in order;

therefore I have to be careful about leaving anything on my bed from the time I wake up until about 3 PM. And my bed is where I spend most of my time each day, reading books (whether ordered for me directly from the vendor by my parents or checked out by me on a call-out at JCS's General Library, which has one column of "classics", compared to shelves after shelves of sci-fi, fantasy, mystery, Western, and other such genre fiction) or horror, magazines (subscribed to for me by my

parents) -- specifically The Economist, an echo of my abortive intent to major in Economics at U-M, (along with English) -- writing (short stories, poems, a journal of my incarceration, and notes on my day-to-day thoughts), and watching TV (CNBC most of the daytime, then whatever sports events or films on TCM I may want to catch, in addition to a few series I try to keep up with, all of which I've discovered since being locked up in prison save for the sports). I regularly attend lunch chow, after which I brush my teeth then fix myself the day's second cup of coffee. Second shift's pet peeves have to do with loitering in the unit where you're not supposed to be, which is never really a worry of mine. I regularly attend dinner chow too -- I'll only miss lunch or dinner chow if I catch a particularly good film on TCM, or if I'm watching a can't-miss live sporting event, in which case my meal will be a package of Top Ramen, barely submerged in my bowl.

Drake Wsek

37/66

Written Testimony (cont.)

by hot water from the dispenser, then heated up in the microwaves that are also in ^{one of} the back dayroom for a minute or so, or I may have a chocolate-filled croissant instead (rarely). -- and upon returning from that I once again brush my teeth then fix myself ~~at~~ the day's third and final cup of coffee -- on the odd day I get a visit, I'll wait until afterward to fix myself a cup of coffee, usually just that one. Every other day I call home for the full 15 minutes allotted to one call, chatting typically with my dad, though sometimes with another member of my immediate family. And I send and receive letters with my extended family, and certain family friends, as well as my immediate family. I don't use

Pay, because it's a hassle to get on, competing with fellow prisoners, and the aforementioned traditional communication media feel sufficient for me. I haven't bought a)P5 (essentially an iTouch) either, because I've heard countless complaints from other prisoners about bugs, and as

(can email-type system that doubles as a music store)

38/66

much as I enjoy listening to music and playing videogames, I prefer to save the money and save those pleasures for when I return home. Really, even though I have no regular callouts -- I clearly don't need a GED, and the only college courses I can take are for an AA via ~~the~~ the local community college; as for programming, I haven't been recommended any; and the one special activity I'm interested in, U-M's PCAP Creative Writing classes, are so popular I can only get in one semester (out of the 3 offered, in Fall, Winter, and Summer) per year -- I keep myself so busy I actually end up not having enough time in the day to accomplish everything I want. I've long believed in the value of maximizing the productivity of the limited time you have, and so as to make sure these 57+ months aren't a total waste of my life I'm pursuing all sorts of creative projects. In fact, I'd only recently gotten back into reading books before getting arrested, following many years, since the

as for employment, I signed up for the jobs suggested to me by the counselor I met with at RGC (tutor as my first choice, clerk as my second) and have yet to hear back about anything, let alone receive a position, despite having additionally submitted multiple resumes summarizing my credentials (as a writing tutor especially);

Drake Wsek

39/66

Written Testimony (cont.)

end of college, that I'd been reading only online content; as for writing, I'd been blocked from writing short stories since the end of college too, and I'd given up poetry my first year at U-M -- now I've written hundreds of pages of material I'll clean up and seek to publish after I'm paroled, along with thousands more pages that can be considered at minimum blogging, or, optimistically, the groundwork for enough future projects to ~~outlast~~ outlast my lifetime. Also, in discovering TCM, I'm ever more deeply developing my knowledge of cinema, especially many U.S. films I hadn't had on my radar -- I've long been an autodidact of cinema appreciation, but my personal focus is mainly on foreign films. Incarceration certainly provides you the opportunity, the time to step back and reflect on your life, your self, to reorient your focuses, and, of course, to dream. At the end of the day, I sleep on the ~~wool~~ wool blanket covering my sheet covering my mat, my other wool blanket which I spend the day sitting

40/66

on, folded up almost as a cushion) covering me (or, if it's too hot, another sheet instead)-- it's luck of the draw how cushioning your mattress is, how worn, as it is with your pillow (which you do have covers for, as part of ~~the~~ the bed-roll you receive upon arriving to a facility), although of course swapping occurs. Third shift's pet peeves have to do with making too much noise and using the power after it's been disallowed (midnight every night except Fridays and Saturdays, when it's 2:00 AM for late-night weekends, all until morning chow.).

Although it's yet to be resolved whatsoever, ~~the~~ ~~the~~ I suppose I should mention what my incarceration's been like during this corona-crisis, as the covid-19 pandemic is one of the major historical events I'll witness ~~in~~ in my lifetime, and I'm experiencing it through the relatively unique prism of prison. First off, JCS was effectively set under lockdown about a month before the state of Michigan began to discuss doing so, as several units (not

Drake Msek

4/1/66

Written Testimony (cont.)

G. Unit) had apparently suffered outbreaks of seasonal flu bad enough to warrant quarantine, during which they were given their own (or no) time for yard, and each unit ate chow separately, rather than the units being successively called every 15 minutes or so as usual; also, no visits were allowed, and no volunteers (e.g. for special activities) were allowed into JCS either. While I don't spend much of my day on the yard, I do make my every-other-day phone-call on the phones out there (rather than queuing up for one of the four in the unit), and the restrictions on yard resulted in a difficultly brief window in which I could call home. And with no visits, I lost a significant chunk of my contact with my family, my support system -- not to mention my one regular call-out was cut short, although the U-M students who volunteered for the PCAP Creative Writing seminars had their Winter semester ingloriously interrupted themselves. Once Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced a lockdown for the state, it

42/66

became as clear as anything that our pre-existing lockdown had become an indefinite one. As visits and special activities were supposed to be essential aspects of our rehabilitation in prison, the possibility that we wouldn't enjoy any of that for another year or two or however long it takes the world's best & brightest to develop a SARS-COV-2 vaccine is discouraging -- then again, the supposition that the carceral system is rehabilitative is essentially a falsehood: the contradictions that expose this system as not fundamentally stemming from an intention to rehabilitate are too many to list, though in considering each restriction you hear presented to a felon (not to mention sex offender or other violent criminal), whether as a convict or an ex-con, ask yourself, "Do I believe this person should become a productive member of society, deserving of the rights as a citizen that the U.S. constitution affords, as well as the human rights that the U.S. has

43/66

Drake Wsek

Written Testimony (cont.)
endorsed?" As the covid-19 pandemic became a panic, with stock markets crashing, tens of millions unemployed, tens of thousands dying and so many more becoming infected with a virus that scientists still haven't figured out, the MDOC responded as most other institutions did: haphazardly, and based more on popular practices than scientific logic. As such, each prisoner received 2 masks (later, a third), and was instructed to wear it whenever leaving your cube (although enforcement has been lax, and really, who wants to wear a mask all day?). Every morning around 8 AM we're waken up to wipe down our areas of control with a rag soaked in a bleach solution-- we used to do so regularly on "Bleach Saturdays", but those had been cancelled for a year or so, leaving us with only the couple spray bottles of disinfectant spray in each bathroom, which were used not only on a rag to clean your area of control but also to clean your "dishes", to clean the toilet seat before you sat down, and to attempt to clean the shower stall. And

44/66

lines have been painted to enforce 6 feet of social distancing, though only when queuing for official routines (i.e. chow, med-line, and store, ^{for} which each prisoner picks up his bag from ~~the~~ the back dayroom)-- of course it's impossible to maintain social distancing at a Level 1 facility. It was evident that most prisoners' main interest in the whole corona-crisis ~~was~~ was whether they'd for whatever reason be let out early-- such myopic rumor-mongering is widespread in prison (just strike up a conversation about good time coming back), which is understandable for prisoners who can't take their mind off their incarceration, and whose information sources are limited; other frequent covid-19-related topics are whether it's ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ the facility, who may be ~~in~~ infected (including COs or other staff), and whether the commissary supplier is going to run out of store goods for us. Given that most prisoners already avoid reporting any symptoms of illness due to the \$5 co-pay associated with a medical call-out, the MDOC's culture

45/66

May 4th, 2020
Drake Wislek

Written Testimony (cont.)

is not ideally suited for a health crisis. There is something to be said though, I believe, for the common refrain among prisoners that we may have received a prison sentence, but it wasn't a capital one (at a Level 1 facility, there are no lifers). As a token of goodwill for banning our visits, the MDOC has provided us with 2 free iPay messages and 2 free 5-minute phone calls weekly during this covid-19 lockdown-- then again, I don't use iPay; my parents can afford my 15-minute calls so the 5-minute ones (which I have to exhaust before moving on to regular ones) are ~~short-lived~~ short-lived nuisances mostly; and visits are so much more fulfilling for me-- getting to be with those from the outside, even in a largely prison setting, truly ~~allows~~ allows you to escape from feeling so incarcerated and instead feel more part of the outside world again. And considering sports are one of my main forms of entertainment, the global lockdowns have deprived me of a major source of escapism on the TV-- I'd been really looking forward to immersing

46/66

myself in the Tokyo Olympics this July. Although, from what I hear, those on the outside have had their lives much more disrupted than ours; in fact, it's almost as if those on the outside in lockdown are experiencing a taste of incarceration.

Of course the covid-19 pandemic is developing so recursively that practices, even supposed facts are changing weekly, if not daily, so I'm sure a lot more will be in store for the MDOC in the near-future. I have about 2 and a half years left now until my ERD, my earliest possible parole date. And I know there's a lot more in store for my personal incarceration. Come 2 years prior to my ERD (so this November) I'll be submitting an application to the Vocational Village, a special residential unit for prisoners enrolled in vocational training at the Parnell facility. I signed up for The Last Mile (a Silicon Valley initiative recently brought to MDOC that purports to teach prisoners how to code via a special program they've developed that

Drake Msek

4/7/66

Written Testimony (cont.)

gets around the fact we have such limited access to ~~the~~ computers -- here at JCS, prisoners only use computers in certain classrooms of the school building, notwithstanding the prisoners who work in the library who use database software to keep track of all the texts, and those computers certainly don't provide internet access, only a strictly walled-in program) as my first choice -- considering coding is the in-demand skill of skills, already in the recent-past, the present, and the foreseeable future, until a few months ago, however, the vocational trades offered/mandated by MDOC were by and large manual labor, and sure those jobs are still a vital part of our socioeconomy (until they're rendered obsolete by automation), and they do offer skills and certification, but shouldn't I have more possibilities with a college degree? yet the vocational counselor I met with during my required ~~the~~ employment call-out never brought up the fact that I have a BA in English and Informatics from U-M (and therefore may not need to pursue a trade to be

... I suggest checking

48/66

employable post-prison); she seemed primarily interested in going through the motions of her job (not an unfamiliar experience for me while incarcerated; for example, every in-unit counselor I ever tried asking for help/advice briskly informed me of the limits of what they can do, and COs at DC) were clearly trained to acknowledge inmate requests as they passed by without actually following up on them, to appease their helplessness (though only momentarily), the same procedures as with all the other hundreds/thousands of prisoners she meets, not actually offering any employment counselling (i.e. counselling each individual prisoner on what their resume thus far may qualify them for, what career of all those available in the world they may want to shoot for and how they could go about it, and detailing the obstacles to employment a felon or, especially, a sex offender may face, which are apparently all-too-numerous, despite ex-cons having officially and literally paid their debt to society, although

Drake Wisen

4/9/66

Written Testimony (cont.)

Frankfully it seems that we are in the early stages of a public backlash against the tough-on-crime paradigm that climaxed in the 1990s, and many public figures have advocated that employers disregard criminal records from their hiring decisions) -- and computer service technician (which may be a manual skillset but would at least place me in workplace environments that I'd enjoy, although when I initially tried to indicate my preference for CST, back when it was the newest-available trade in MDOC, the counselor told me a curriculum had been developed but no ~~instructors~~ instructors had been found yet) as my second choice. Should I be accepted into either of these vocations' training -- which I think likely, given that I have no recommended programming -- I'll be spending probably my final 1-2 years at Parnett, which may still be in Jackson (and therefore still within easy range for my family to visit me, if MDOC manages to figure out how to offer visits despite covid-19 in that time -- I suggest checking

50/66

temperatures at the door, mandatory wearing of mask and gloves, and observation of social-distancing, at least between families) but it's human to develop a ~~level~~ level of comfort resembling home wherever you stay for a significant length of time (a remarkable trait of adaptability), which is)CS for me. Then again, I've lived in 4 different states, many more houses, several correctional facilities, and 4 housing units at)CS alone, so I'm confident I'll adapt, just as, ultimately, I'm confident I'll adapt back out in the world, even with my new status of felon/sex offender.

--if there's one mantra for prison, it's "don't get too comfortable"

Hopefully I get paroled on my ERD -- I'm on my ~~●~~ A-prefix; I'm not a PV; I have no Class I nor II tickets; I scored low enough in my security level to be waived down to Level 1; I scored Low-Waived for my MSOP psychological evaluation; ~~●~~ I was recommended for no programming; I have a support system to parole to (back with my family in Ann Arbor); and I have a college degree that should provide

Drake Mizek

5/1/66

Written Testimony (cont.)

me employment opportunities, along with my work history (not to mention I've expressed my remorse over my crimes, at my sentencing and at my psychological evaluation, and I will reiterate that conviction at my parole hearing 6 months or so before my ERD, via videoconferencing like my arraignment at DC), although many prisoners fret over rumor-mongering that claims there are certain programs you're unofficially required (if not officially recommended) lest your parole be deferred to take those programs (now as official recommendations, thereby keeping you in prison those extra 6 months or 1 year or so), or that the parole board conspires with psychologists to keep sex offenders locked-up; I don't believe those tales, as there are also plenty of first-hand accounts, plenty of which I heard from sex offenders, of getting their parole with no fuss; instead, it seems that certain prisoners have personality disorders that (left untreated) prohibit them from respecting authority, which can result in them getting

52/66

flopped (i.e. their parole denied) until they max out (i.e. reaching the tail of their sentence, often decades, at which point they must be released) -- although parole is still incarceration. I'll receive all sorts of stipulations (particularly because I'm a sex offender) for my parole officer to enforce over the 18-24 months my parole will likely last. Many ex-cons can't stay out of such trouble and, due simply to violating these stipulations (without any actual new case) have their parole revoked and are sent back to prison. I believe I'll be able to complete my parole (upon which I'll have officially served my sentence), thanks to the relatively-privileged environment I'll be returning to, in a house with law-abiding family members, within a safe, middle-class, suburban neighborhood, around which there are plenty of employment opportunities, and not belonging to any community in which my friends carry guns nor drugs. My career path may have taken a step back, but I plan on settling for a retail

Drake Misk

53/66

Written Testimony (cont.)

or fast-casual restaurant job, even an entry-level position -- by the time I'm paroled, the minimum wage may well be ~~■~~ \$15/hr, which will be higher than my previous wage of \$14.28/hr -- for immediate employment, then building myself up with better jobs while pursuing graduate school applications.

Because I was convicted for my sex offenses in 2018, however, I will have to register ~~■~~ ~~■~~ under the ever-expanding SORA as a lifetime sex offender, and so, essentially, my incarceration will last the rest of my life -- the ACLU's Michigan chapter and a law center at the University of Michigan are advocating to amend SORA so that it's actually constitutional, and thanks to their litigious activism there will be changes made to Michigan's version of SORA, only that legislation has been delayed as part of the corona-crisis. I've never been interested in carrying a gun, but I am a believer in free movement -- even if the current wave of right-wing populism is restricting that in practice around the world

54/66

and so I'll be profoundly wounded if my status as a ~~sex~~ sex offender (let alone a felon) disqualifies me from visiting certain countries I'd planned on experiencing -- I believe you only get 1 life ~~in~~ in this world, so for that single try to be deprived of any potential life, liberty, or pursuit of happiness goes against the moral underpinnings of the nation in which I was born and raised. What I ask for is always an ~~evidence-based~~ ~~approach~~ ~~for~~ ~~the~~ evidence-based approach for the criminal legal system, so that ~~offenders~~ offenders are rehabilitated via practices that are scientifically-proven to be effective, not putative/retributive measures derived out of fear or malice that are scientifically-proven to be ineffective (e.g. registries and zoning restrictions, ~~both~~ both of which actually increase the potential of recidivism by making it prohibitively difficult to reintegrate into the socioeconomy; consider^{top} that a first-time sex offender actually has a lower probability of committing a sex offense

Drake Mizek

55/66

Written Testimony (cont.)

in future than a non-sex offender).

In reflecting upon my incarceration, I have two major complaints I'd like to voice. First, correctional facilities are full of hard surfaces. Everything's steel (often rusted), with sharp edges, and uncomfortable to sit on (let alone sleep on) for any period of time. I have to be very careful every time I reach into my locker, lest I scrape my hand against a steel edge -- I've ~~accumulated~~ accumulated many scratches accidentally that ~~trap~~ trap, some of which have ⁱⁿ drawn blood, which is always a worry in a correctional facility environment -- and that goes as well for not bumping into any table/desk, etc. with my hip. The shower stalls in JCS's units are pretty compact, so that I semi-regularly bump my elbow just trying to dry off. And, since I'm relatively young and healthy, I'm always assigned to the top bunk, which is never made easy to climb on and off: at DC, you had to climb on the bars separating the cell from the galleyway (where the TV was located, and where COs would drop off mail and the trustee ^{the} would pass

56/66

out supplies) up and down if you were on the second bunk, and the steel slots of the bars were narrower than my feet, and resulted in blisters on my hands; at RGC, at least I could use the plastic chair as a step up and down, but at JCS, while I could take one step on the ladder built into the bunk bed, (linking the bottom and top) and swing myself up, the ladder's steps were spaced so shortly that it's ~~too~~ too awkward to use it to step down, so I've had to hop down onto the hard floor every time I want to get off my bunk (a frequent occurrence, as I've detailed how I typically spend my days), which has resulted in my feet becoming sore, and I wouldn't be surprised to learn I've developed stress fractures or bone bruises I like in my feet -- also, given all the time I spend in my bunk, often sitting to write, though lying on my back when I can, ^{upright} (in an attempt to maintain a semblance of comfort), my butt gets very sore, and I believe has developed some sort of bed-sores from time to time. (I admit I bear part of the responsibility for that, as I'm

Drake Mizek

57/66

Written Testimony (cont.)

prone to laziness, finding creative endeavors and content-consuming significantly more fulfilling than working out, or even walks on the yard, that is, when the Michigan climate is even sufficiently hospitable).

Second, the most significant punishments of incarceration while in jail or prison are those propagated by your fellow inmates. Yes, the state has manufactured an environment that on one level is a simulacrum of military austerity -- the transfer of boot camp to E Unit here at JCS in recent months has reminded me of that fact (now E Unit and the surrounding portables are partitioned from us prisoners by a chain-link fence ~~erected~~ erected just for that purpose, and though the boot-campers' schedules are un-synchronized with the rest of the facility, we occasionally see them through the fence), and I believe it's perverse for a liberal democracy to ~~support~~ support (in practice) the authoritarianism of militarization of offenders (whether putative or for their rehabilitation), although I suppose I shouldn't be

58/66

surprised given the criminal legal system's front-facing operations already involve the quasi-militarization of police (in terms of ranking as well as equipment)-- while on a deeper level a shadow socioeconomy governed by a rule of law developed by those who've broken the law. But, while I agree that institutions have the power to influence individuals (via incentives and dis-incentives), I also believe that theorists must never forget that each and every person is a moral agent. And although it typically takes a certain immorality or amorality (even if only against the customs of your contemporary society) to end up incarcerated, my personal existentialism is to ^{ever} progress in virtue (and knowledge)-- which I know is typically a component of the beliefs of the religions so many prisoners profess. So it disheartens me to witness prisoners embrace a dog-eat-dog mentality -- you hear • the nihilistic refrain that we're all just animals locked in cages -- preying on vulnerable inmates, incarnating toxic masculinity. ■ Though no unit is immune from such

Drake Musek

59/66

Written Testimony (cont.)

violence/aggression and economic crimes (not to mention drug abuse), I've noticed that the sex of fender residential programming units I've been in generally have a more mature social disposition that closest resembles the middle-class ~~code of~~ code of conduct I'm used to. Of course gangsters are the worst; dope-friends, while typically not as violent, are shifty/sneaky instead. It's the fundamental issue of Marxism: for how historic class ~~revolutions~~ revolutions have been, it's so difficult to band an oppressed class together against their oppressors, who have all devious tools of power to divide to maintain that power.

(though still falls short of)

I do believe it's valuable to identify the moments of joy you may experience while incarcerated -- such occurrences are testaments to the power of the human spirit, in the face of the carceral state (or, rather, in the belly of the beast). Three categories of such moments come to mind for me: one, encountering a great book to read or film to watch, which recharges my creative spirit and renews

that sense only available from art that there's something deeper than all this mundanity; two, catching an inspiring political program, typically on PBS, which often brings me to tears, as my faith in humanity is restored by revolutionary grassroots activism in action, whether historically or contemporarily; three, a particularly stimulating conversation over the phone or during a visit with my family, reminding me that I come from an intellectual and creative community, to which I'll be returning, after being locked up in a largely art-less and under-educated environment. Of course there are also simple pleasures from time to time: ~~gazing up at a sunset or full moon, stepping out into the~~ ~~sunlight~~ ~~of the first warm days~~ of the year, savoring the taste of a food or drink treat.

Although I've been a progressive all my adulthood, I can admit my focus was, as a Marxist, on the transition to socialism, and although the

Drake Mizek

6/1/66

Written Testimony (cont.)
carceral system is inextricably tied up in economics (the over-representation of black and brown people in prison, coupled with the fact that I am a rarity as a college-educated middle-class convict, should tell you that much, to the shame of our nation), because I'd never encountered the criminal legal system (nor did anyone in my communities, really) I gave that system no thought. And that's the feedback loop that we as a society need to move on from: the more economically disadvantaged you are, the more vulnerable you are to the carceral system; the more economically disadvantaged you are, the less of a voice you have within capitalist society; so the advocates and activists exposed to the injustices of the system (first-, second-, and/or third-hand) tend to lack the influence (capital/networks) to lobby effectively enough to affect public policy, while the natural/right-wing ideology of law & order in politics encourages ^{and tougher} "tougher" anti-crime" (in actuality, anti-criminal)

62/66

legislation--as a result, we're hopelessly years and years behind in reforming the carceral system, which is why progressives such as Ayanna Pressley have proposed a radical dismantling then reconstruction of the system. Once you become involved with the criminal legal system, once you see the effects of the carceral state on human beings, it's all too easy to recognize the litany of injustices--the struggle is still at the early stage of ~~■~~ simply needing to build public awareness. The advocacy of organizations such as the CURE network and the ACLU provides me hope, and I personally ~~██████████~~ have a theory that the recent--
petit bourgeois class of millionaire (even billionaire, if they become a major brand) rappers and professional athletes, who are disproportionately black and brown too, has increased the amount of capital to deploy among those from communities impacted ~~by~~ by the carceral state, which will foster a cultural change in public sentiment towards such issues,

only ^a beginning in the mid-1980s or so--

Drake Mizek

63/66

Written Testimony (cont.)
as this new entertainer class is so popular (especially among the youth, i.e. the future of society)-- this has already started: e.g. the NBA's support of the Black Lives Matter campaign against extrajudicial killings by the police, and Meek Mill's work on jail reform. We cannot be satisfied merely with a "first step" either: a lot of reform is needed, urgently.

Let me be clear that I don't believe a society can or should let crimes go unaddressed. The rule of law may be vital for capitalism, but I value more society's need to instill the awareness of morality within its citizens, who should then go on to develop their morality as individuals, an essential factor for ~~the~~ secular democracies to function. And I can absolutely sympathize with the pain suffered by victims of crime: I value safety, and one of my academic focuses in English literature was trauma studies--not to mention I was well on my way to being credentialled to teach high school psychology too. But I also believe in

64/66

the ideal of unconditional love for your fellow human beings, simply because we all belong to the same species trying to survive and thrive in a lonely universe, and I believe in the concept of forgiveness as essential to the maturation of an individual as well as society as a whole. The U.S. was founded on Enlightenment ideals and has served as the main beacon for them during its history (if more in advocacy than in activism), so the fact that we, the richest country in the world, has also the worst mass incarceration in the world, and, within that carceral system, we haven't even implemented best practices already in use in other developed countries (as with so many other policies, for which to be a progressive in the U.S. means simply to catch up with the First World hegemony). Psychologists can perform a vital role in managing the emotions that arise out of the criminal legal system (provided their methods are informed by scientific research), for both offenders

65/66

Written Testimony (cont.)
and victims. As so many states have sworn off the death penalty, I think that the next step is to realize a life sentence is just as (or more) cruel a punishment, that the propensity for violent crime tends to drop as testosterone levels drop (with age), and that unless someone has proven to be a chronic violent offender (in which case prison may be the only place they belong, sad as it is to admit) or a drug addict (in which case they should be sentenced to a rehab facility and supervised by a social worker until they attain sobriety) they are probably better off attempting to be a productive member of society rather than wasting away in a correctional facility -- where, the fact is, prisoners are infantilized and overcrowded, which in turn inhibits their access to any of the rehabilitative programming that may be available.

In this written testimony, I hope to have illustrated what incarceration is like for a middle-class white young man with a college degree serving a minimum of several years

as a sex offender in Level 1 on his A-prefix. This is a more or less stream-of-consciousness first draft written with pen & paper from May 3-4, 2020, although ~~these~~ ~~thoughts~~ these thoughts have been circulating in my mind over the past 2.25 years or so. What I want all those interested in the carceral system to know is that if you just ~~just~~ sit down and spend time ~~time~~ talking (listening) to anyone who's been incarcerated for a significant amount, you'll hear all sorts of anecdotes about injustices in need of reform. Of course I haven't even listed all the ones accumulated in my own memory here. While ~~while~~ civil society, scholars, policy-makers, and activists are all needed to find solutions, incarcerated peoples are essential for identifying the problems.