

To: The University of Michigan Carceral Project  
 and the Confronting Conditions of Confinement  
 research team, The Michigan Humanities  
 Collaboratory and particularly to, but not  
 exclusively to, Nora Krinitzky, and to  
 all of the collective minds with collective  
 efforts towards the progression of Justice.

First and foremost I want to thank and commend the sincere  
 hearts for the acknowledgment and the courage that's been devoted  
 to a cause that has savagely impacted my family for generations  
 and my personal experience for 12 years.

This topic here is something that I too am passionate about  
 so forgive me and bear with me if I get long winded. However,  
 there's not enough ink in my pen or paper available to describe  
 in detail the many emotions that one feels during an extensive prison  
 sentence.

• Background

My name is Terrence Douglas Coles Jr. I'm 35 yrs old  
 and I've been incarcerated since June '08 serving both Federal  
 and State sentences (concurrent) which commenced when I was  
 22 yrs old. I was born in Detroit, Mich on April 13, 1985 to  
 loving parents. My father was incarcerated after my conception  
 and was to serve a 6-15 + 2 yr sentence in The State of Michigan  
 for manslaughter. During his stay in prison I was raised by my  
 mom and supported by my grandparents.

Outside my family unit while growing up the world was essentially the same as time immemorial to present day: Selfish, corrupt, violent, oppressive and systemically biased. Fortunately for me my mother was college educated and worked as a secretary for O.C.C. (Oakland Community College) for 15 yrs so she was mindful of what I was exposed to. She was murdered in our family home in 1994 when I was 9 years old. I was then predominantly living with my grandparents although my dad won the custody battle over my brother and I. My grandparents were devout Christians and avid churchgoers so I did know of ethics and values. Then I was to return to my dad's home where I was exposed to things that no one should see or experience, especially a child.

I lived a first, criminal lifestyle so before my incarceration I spent the majority of time out of state and Canada (where this case was to come from) but I lived in Detroit's West Side. Those places varied in scenery and economic standards. Out West in California or Arizona it was a middle to upper class areas but in the Midwest or down South it was lower class.

As a young person I thought the police and the "system" were the bad guys and those thoughts go back as far as pre-adolescent days. Because they took all of my male influences from me, from my dad to friends, uncles, who in my head were the most loving and charismatic people. But those were my immature thoughts and to be honest they probably belonged in jail now that I know the full story with a broader scope. But that's not the focal point because in my opinion prison should exist its only sad when people are targeted and marginalized.

My first contact with the legal system was in 2003 during my senior year in high school. A friend, my cousin and I were hanging with some girls from a neighboring high school and we were sexually involved with them. One of the girls parents found out and notified the police. I was 18 my cousin and friend were both 17 and they were 15 so we were charged with a sex crime for engaging with underage girls sexually. We were sentenced to a year in jail and we were to take Sex offender classes with registry. Absolutely the most devastating, embarrassing and hurtful times of my life. We were to take classes among men who truly had sexual attraction towards children or who physically raped people and here we were high school aged young men who didn't even know the true age of the girls because it was our first time seeing them. I was hurt because the system couldn't clearly see that we weren't sexual deviants and exceptions to those rules were required. But no, they threatened us with 15 yrs if we fought, so we pled out. Please don't mistake my disposition as a victim or claiming to be one. I hold myself accountable for the outcome of my life in its entirety, I will never relinquish my powers to anyone by placing blame. It's just that sound reasoning and judgment has no home in our carceral system.

1st time 2003  
• Incarceration

I was convicted in Oakland County so I was sent to O.C.J and I was placed in minimum security (I don't know why because the others were sent to maximum, guess it's true that even in my time of tumult the Universe favors me). It was my first experience so I had nothing to compare it to but I did know a few guys in there from the neighborhood so we were supporting

enchantment. I was then sent to a placement in Oakland City called 'Frank Greenen' I believe. Change is difficult for most of us humans to go from one prison to another is internally conflicting with your comfortableness. It's over because you then realize that these people can just ship you wherever they please. Frank Greenen was filthy in comparison to OCJ's minimum because Frank Greenen was geared down with open showers and toilets. In hindsight I do and did appreciate the diversity in staff in O. County's jails because I rarely felt any racial tension from staff. In fact, I remember one officer (black woman) waking me up in the morning cursing me out because I was scheduled to take my GED test and verbally forced me to go. lol... but it was with the same love and concern she would've done with her son. Out of respect I awoke and took the test then passed with flying colors. Yay!! lol. I also recall in Frank Greenen when an officer (spanish woman) braided my hair for me. Of course it was against the rules but it showed human connection. ~ This system is created to create sociopaths with complete human detachment. The rules itself implies a mechanic, emotionless disconnection among staff and inmates with the latter being placed at the bottom of the caste system, triggering an oppressive nature in the very one who self proclaims to be of high moral stature. ~ I commend those beautifully spirited people who helped me maintain my humanity.

I was then sent to East Lansing's Eaton City where the food and living conditions were a relative upgrade but I then felt the tension of being in a jail with mostly all white inmates and staff. I was in minimum custody for the first month or so then out of nowhere sent to maximum and 'pod'. This is where the black men were. lol seriously. I asked why they were placed in MAX with no TV and no other privileges and they all had the same story as mine. They were woken out of

their sleep and told to pack up. After feeling how cold and callous the officers were I almost was in fear that they may do something harmful to me unwarranted.

Then I was sent to Lansing, Eason City, and placed in MAX but it was tolerable despite the deliberate, depressing colours of the unit, the lack of fresh air circulation and almost inedible food. Because it was a couple guys from Detroit there and I knew a couple of them so we relied on each other. ~ Contrary to public's view MY experiences wasn't one of wild knife fights and race wars, for the most part. ~ In prison you're stripped of all but the essentials and at times that's all you give and receive from others. So brothers became more sincere and genuine and supportive. Honest to God I've met some of the most beautiful brothers in person. Genuinely good guys, just coming from some backgrounds you couldn't imagine in your worst nightmares. But pure intentions though. ~ I went home from Lansing. Yes, they shipped me to 3 cities during a 1 year county sentence in 3 different counties.

"2008-2030"

\*Federal Suit — In 2007 I was under investigation from the Federal Government and Canadian Government for smuggling firearms into Canada and retrieving MDMA (Extray) in exchange. During my investigation I was caught with a firearm in Detroit. In honesty the gun was mine but also in honesty these officers profiled me and illegally searched and seized my vehicle. ~ For as long as I can recall officers in Detroit's illegal tactics are equivalent and as unconstitutional as New York's 'stop and frisk' procedures. Before I ever considered selling drugs I was harassed and accussed by corrupt officers who was in my neighborhood drunk on duty while planting drugs on people and having sex with the under aged girls in the neighborhood.

I'm sure they viewed us as society does, 'undesirables', so why be just with savages and beast they figure, my opinion. But that's a poor defective tactic to justify their barbaric antics and innate lower nature. My opinion.~

So after bonding out for the gun and fighting the case I was picked up by the feds who housed me in disgusting Wayne County. I was there for six months on the old side and I swear I don't believe that place has been disinfected EVER! Food was horrible and that time was very depressing for me because the feds were trying to give me 30 yrs! And I was only 23 yrs old. I went to trial for the gun in the state and lost. I was sentenced to 2 yrs + 2-5 yrs (CCW; felon in possession) I was then sent to St. Clair City in Port Huron, MI because they housed fed inmates there. I was in minimum security and it was clean and the food was better. But being 1 of only 4 blacks in a 80 man pool with ALL white staff begin to weigh on me. I've always had an open mind I just wasn't exposed to other cultures because I'm from the "blackest" city in America, Detroit. But it was clear some of them had non experiences of blacks by choice.

I then went to the hole (SHU) because I took the (GED) again after already having one. I passed at the top of my class. Yay!! So after being in the hole I was put in MAX and gress what? Just like Eaton City. This is where all the blacks are. SMH! After 6 months I was sent to Milan FDC in Milan, MI. It was clean and comfortable because we were all Federal inmates which meant we were all facing a world of time.

~ This federal system completely defies the Christian values and the constitution with ALL of its amendments that this country

claims to hold so dearly to its heart. Please understand that I am not kicking, bickering or complaining. I'm giving you my experiences and the experiences of others that I viewed first hand.

To be a Federal Prosecutor I truly believe that you have to secretly pledge your alliance with the most potent substance of demonic energy. In what world of decency is there when you have draconian laws that subject someone, and their family, with such harsh punishments for practically and literally NOTHING?!

Take my cellmate for instance. He sold an undercover officer 86.5 grams of crack and was then given the ultimatum... Accept 30 yrs in prison or go to trial and receive LIFE! He's 18 yrs on a 30 yrs sentence.

His co-defendant who didn't serve ANYONE drugs exercised his constitutional right to trial and also has 18 yrs in prison while serving a LIFE + 42 yrs without being caught with ANY drugs!

What establishment will even consider the thought of giving someone less time if they cooperate against their own mother? The feds!

I've seen young men as young as 18 or 19 yrs old get drunk with their buddies and decide to foolishly rob a dollar store. After retrieving the shorter part of \$400 they decide to rob a couple more. They were completely wrong and stupid, my opinion, but considering that they hurt no one I will presume that they serve some time but nothing harsh. With Fed statute 924(c) they are subject to substantial, consecutive time. 4 robberies gave them 85 yrs! ~

While in FDC Milan I respected and appreciated the semi prison like culture among staff and inmates because it was unlike the county jails. Medicine was just as bad in Milan. I caught the 'Swine Flu' in '09 in Milan and was bed ridden for a week and only got

assistance from fellow inmates who seemed to be the only ones that cared. Dental was the same as St. Clair City Jail, whenever you have a dental issue there only recourse was to pull out the tooth. I had 4 teeth pulled at St. Clair City that could've been salvaged.

For sake of remaining loyal to the topic of this cause I want discuss my experiences in FCI McKean (Pennsylvania), FCI Raybrook (New York) or FCI Fort Dix (New Jersey) because they aren't prisons in Michigan. \*Remember, the feds send you all over the country to do time, that's a whole story within itself\*

Now I'm here in FCI Milan where the prison environment is the most serene of all my prison experiences. Not because of the institution but because of the chilled inmates. The food is relatively great but just as most ghettos in America the "Authority" doesn't fit the racial percentile of the people. Mostly all white staff and you can almost smell the racism on them. ~ You lived in some rural area or grew up on farm land, America where you encountered no ethnic groups but your own. Which means you weren't exposed to other cultures or "races" of people to mistreat you, so why do you hate me, again? Another story, I know ~ I must say that medical and dental here is great I swear those doctors and dentists are some sweet people. ~ You cannot underestimate the importance of making someone feel human! Although it's a small percentage you do have some staff that recognize that we too have a soul and spirit. Or it could be their humility knowing no one is perfect, themselves included. ~

Here at FCI Milan I was introduced to U of M programs  
Yay!! lol I love what you guys are doing and I will love to assist you all in any capacity once released: July 16, 2020



Years ago I accepted this maxim or maxim as a guiding post for my community in prison, "Pick your crowd, don't let your crowd pick you." So just as in society you have sub-cultures you have them in prison. Me, I program ACOT and I read thought provoking material so just as the Universal Principle goes "Like begets Like" I naturally find myself in a community of Like minded people. I maintain my ties to the outside by our limited, overly surveilled communication outlets.

To survive in prison is easy because all you have to do is wake up. But to find joy in prison means to thrive and how do you do that? Well its many of rivers that leads to the Ocean so its no one particular way to do it but there is a source, thought. Every action has a preceding thought. So you must embrace a paradigm shift that will require sacrifice, discipline and sincerity but the payoff is immeasurable. Although you will have an emotional response or reaction to life, in conjunction with your prison circumstance, you must maintain the Spirit of resilience. I pray, meditate, fast, exercise, study, read, write, think creatively and keep good company around.

#### • Reflections

My incarceration means to me different things on different levels, because life has a way of being eclectic so to draw a sound conclusion you must have a circumvolutional perspective. On the highest vibration of thought I can say that my incarceration means that I was placed in a position where I was afforded the opportunity to gain knowledge of Self and the interconnection between All. Or I can say that its my second chance of life considering the government was trying to strategically trigger a mandatory CO or charge against me (All Praises to whom its due for not allowing that to happen)

Incarceration affects me in every way imaginable. I have a "best friend" and two female cousins that testified against me while I represented myself during trial (I opted to proceed pro se because the governments options were cooperate or take this 26 yr plea deal. They truly wanted a 23 yr old young man who never robbed, raped or murdered before to spend 26 yrs in prison for a victimless crime. SMH!) So its clear to see I may forever more have trust issues considering... While I was starting trial my classmates were graduating college so its safe to say I felt like a failure for a short while. I never married or had children so its many experiences I missed out on. Just being casted away, states away from family missing a womans presence, her soft, kind words of encouragement and the simple affection that clinical studies have proven to be necessary for emotional development. Losing countless family members and friends and not being able to make them proud before they passed hurts like hell. Dreams deferred is dreadful enough.

My ideas and perceptions about the career system now is that the federal system is getting very desperate. They're locking up babies for state charges! It's almost as if they have to justify government funding so you know they finesse data and projection charts. I think it was Truman that said "The best way to solve a problem is to create one." I promise they make it so hard to be patriotic.

I did two articles with Canadian journalist for 'The Toronto Star' and 'The Windsor Star' years ago and I stated that these studies have proven "Toughness on crime" increases as crime essentially decrease. We invest more into prisons than education. Ignited, "blacks" weren't brought over here with good intentions so being disproportionately incarcerated while

others financially and economically benefit from it seems to be consistent with the plan of Americas "Forefathers".

My perspective on the the world changed by being informed on matters that's not addressed to the public, like seeing the Mafia's terrorism amongst global gangsters under the guise as humanitarianism: W.H.O, FEMA, NATO, G20 etc These "imperialist" and 'colonialist', to me, are synonymous with thuggery.

My perspective on life though is beautiful! I'm so enthusiastic about the most trivial things after being deprived so long, I can't wait to help an old lady across the street or cut a relatives grass. Life is marvelous its the abuse of sensations that causes pain.

I would want people to know that incarceration in the United States is common place as 'undocumented immigrants cheap labor', 'planned Parenthood's advertisements ONLY in urban communities' or '5<sup>th</sup> grade equivalency test determining how many prisons to build in the future'. Its normal, its shameful. Its just as bad as the regimes of the other countries they reprimand, invade and economically disenfranchise.

I would like scholars to know the psychological by products and emotional retardation that long term punitive punishment produces.

I would like policy makers to know that the 'Establishment on Capitol Hill' will one day be replaced by just, civil people such as: A.O. C, Ilham Omar and our Rashida Tuleb and when it does what will history then say of your legacy? So it behoves you to stand for righteousness.

I would like members of my community to know that I personally apologize on behalf of myself and others who perpetuated the cookie cutter image that mainstream society force-fed the media.

Contrary to public perspectives criminals are a small percentage of people, in the overwhelming majority of productive citizens in the urban community. We are the sleeping giants with so much raw untapped potential!

For the community activist I tilt my hat to you in honor of your dedication and sacrifice. The ancestors are pleased and the Universe conspires to give you what your heart desires.

PEACE!

Once more I would like to thank the University of Michigan Carceral Project and the Confronting Conditions of Confinement research team. The Michigan Humanities Collaboratory; thank you for your efforts. Nora Krinsky and others thank you for this opportunity to release my thoughts and concerns.

Sincerely,  
 Terrance D. Coles Jr.  
 Terrance D. Coles Jr.  
 #42787-039

P.S.

Overall I believe them to be more effective alternatives to prison that will enrich a persons values opposed to housing 'the walking dead'. There's people in here that I truly know to not be competent to stand trial who were coerced and deceived by attorneys and prosecutors to take plea agreements involving crimes they didn't commit. Sad but true