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As my email stated, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit federal prisoners hard. From my perspective its not about keeping us alive, its about keeping their property intact. Keeping money flow continuous. In my case I work as a Dental Assistant in the Medical Department. We went on full lockdown the night of March 31st. When I saw my Boss on April 16th, she had just come back from a 14 day quarantine. That means she left sick with COVID-19 either April 1st or 2nd. In fact the entire medical staff left sick with COVID-19 and neither I nor the medical orderly were ever quarantined. The Idea is that they (staff) get sick from the inmates. We havent had contact with anyone from our families or religious communities since March 13th. Because of the extreme amounts of money to be made, officers that have fevers today can come to work tomorrow without a fever. A gentleman three cells down from me was tested several times by medical staff over weeks. In may he was quarantined for less than 14 days and released. He continued to show symptoms until early June when

Maybe I gave it to her. who knows

he left ~~the~~ unit in a wheelchair clutching his chest. He was then taken to a hospital where he tested positive for COVID-19. Less than 14 days later (approx. 7 days) he is back in the unit, with me, 3 cells down from me.

Me, who has Asthma¹⁵, Pre-diabetic (A1C 6.2), Sleep Apnea (Obstructive), currently waiting to have a polyp removed from my right nostril, is left to "hope" I don't receive a death sentence called COVID-19. Warden J. Hemmingway has told inmates that he, nor his father, grandfather or great grandfather have ever been in the business of letting inmates go. When I personally asked him about contact tracing I was told "the only thing I need to worry about is washing my hands, cleaning my cell and wearing my mask." Lastly, inmates have to quarantine for 14 days. They are placed in the same building (E-unit) ~~that~~ with inmates that have tested positive for COVID-19.

Before going home

We don't have a voice in this pandemic. It is my hope that we will in the future.

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Living conditions are changing more and more as time goes on. Housing is cramped. Even 4 mans are kept full. The "SHU" is often used to house inmates that wont fit on the compound because its full.

Food varies with each "FSA". Overall its a diabetics worse nightmare. Bread, Potatoes, Pasta, Rice and beef are the main dishes. Vegetables are served but not enough. Commissary is all processed. My cholesterol was 116 with the range ending at 130. I stopped eating all fish off commissary and it dropped to ^{except} 131. That leaves me with little to eat because I dont eat beef or pork. Everything has a 30% mark-up. Even Hobby craft materials that the BOP orders from vendors with our money. We are still charged a 30% mark-up. The money is supposed to be for ~~the~~ inmate Trust Fund, yet over the past few years they've taken washing machines, microwaves and other commodities. Our phone calls are still \$3.²⁴ for 15 minutes even though everything is unlimited in the world. As a Dental Assistant / Equipment sterilizer / orderly I make \$44 a month. Thats \$528.⁰⁰ a year. My first job

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in Milan I made \$17 for a year. I got a raise and made inbetween \$24-34. A month. ^{A month} ^{\$240}
You have to buy cosmetics, Toothpaste, deodorant, Glass, soap, washing powder, socks, boxers shoes, boots, the list goes on. So we end up being a burden to our families. Making money other than from your job is illegal. I braid hair, style Dreadlocks, sew, make cheesecakes, crochet, leather crafts and other things to make a living. Again, all of it is illegal. I hate asking my family to send money. I especially hate that in order to eat on a visitation my family has to spend crazy money, \$8.00 for a sandwich, \$2 for a candy bar, \$1+ for 25¢ bags of chips. Its a business. Its not meant to bring families together. This is not a business for rehabilitating people. They only have limited programing for us to learn actual workforce skills. They are all apprenticeships and all of them only allow 1 person at a time. Most of them are in UNICOR or facilities. Out of 1300 inmates only about ~~100~~⁵⁰⁻⁷⁵ can actually get certified. If that, so the majority of inmates leave prison with the same skills they came in with. They have the same

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criminal mentality. You have select groups that take it upon themselves to figure things out. I've had the pleasure of meeting several men that bettered themselves despite the negative ~~environment~~ environment. Despite the labels and stereotypes attached to them. Most people have the misconception that all prisons are wild and dangerous with people dying everyday. Not this prison, (F.C.I. Allenwood, Milan, Terre Haute) or any prison I've been located at. Of course you have issue, but overall we pretty much get a long. We police ourselves most of the time because most of us have become close.

When your in the medium-high facilities most men aren't going home anytime soon. So, we ~~are~~ ~~are~~ become like family. We learn about each others children, mothers, family and friends. We cook meals together and support each others hustles. Those conscious of the change needed to not come back try to instill better qualities in others. So this community and the outside community become one if your fortunate. Your family gets to know and hear about those your cool with in here and your prison community comes to know your family.

Jehovah

How do I survive prison? God!!! Lots of Him. Its been 10yrs since my arrest and I've been blessed the entire time. One situation that I saw his hands all over me was about 2yrs ago. I was working in food service warehouse and a very disrespectful officer asked me to give another inmate an order to come see him. The inmate told me he wasn't going and I continued doing my job. The officer came yelling at the top of his lungs about how he "gave me a direct order." When I tried to speak, he told me to "Shut UP." lol. Before I knew it ~~to~~ I was telling him to "make me shut" "Come shut me up." We were feet to face arguing and he never hit the emergency button. Even after I refused to put my hands on the wall, he still didn't hit the button that would've gotten me sent back to a medium high security. I think God knew that that wasn't who I was, or who I am I should say. The fact that I've been able to learn so many new skills well into my 30's gives testimony to a higher power. Doing so despite those in charges lack of doing their jobs. Despite my case manager continuously suggesting that I take a class that no longer exists, in my yearly review, God continues to help me improve

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my life and survive this dim chapter. My joy comes from seeing all the brilliant men that leave here and prove all the stereotypes wrong. Their thriving in a society that once thought them irredeemable. That brings a joy that can't be described. The relationships that I've built with my spiritual family of Jehovah's Witnesses in communities from Michigan to Pennsylvania. Having children that for some reason love me so deeply brings tearful joy to my heart. Even as I write that sentence. A better relationship with those I hurt coming here brings me joy.

This has been a learning experience. Even as I write this letter my ability to know me is strengthened. I've become a man that I am proud of. One that continues to grow despite constant opposition from those society put in charge to rehabilitate me. It's a constant battle within myself. Like that of Paul (The Apostle) in Romans 7: 14-24 "..... When I wish to do what's right, what is bad is present with me." I will always fight. I just need those reading this to not be an obstacle. I have enough of those within me.

The carceral system is broken beyond repair. It would cost too much money to

Fix it. The First STEP ACT required the BOP to institute programs that help inmates be better prepared for release. It's been 18 months and not one program has been created. I am sure money has been dispersed though. AG Barr told the BOP to release all those pre-disposed to COVID-19 because of health and mental issues. F.C.I Milan just put them all in one unit. There is absolutely no one that oversees the Federal Bureau of Prisons. From the top down to these officers, ~~that~~ who because of their union get away with everything. I can be sanctioned by an officer because I speak up for myself after a verbal assault. I lose my job, housing status, and even ~~be~~ transferred to a higher security. An officer tells me to have my cello jacked off until my wrist could be fixed. After he intentionally made me miss my doctors appointment because they wouldn't let him cancel it, or call in. My complaint though went unheard. When I was called to the Lt. office they basically gave me a choice, if it's an issue I go to the state, if not I can stay. Simple. So the carceral system is broken. and the world could care less. I don't really see a "world", just those that I love. The world is way to big from this small cell I live in.

and be transferred

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Yes incarceration is needed, but only for rehabilitation and not ^{for} warehousing people you don't want to help fix. There are approx. 1800 inmates here. There are maybe maybe 600 jobs maybe enough space for 100 college students 1 (one) vocational training course maybe 50+ apprenticeships 1 counselor for 190 men 1 case manager for 190 men People should know that because of Budget cuts, the men who are incarcerated have little to ~~to~~ no help in fixing the issues that brought them here. It's time to find other ways. You spend tens of thousands on inmates like me when psychological help could've been funded after my suicide attempt that left me in the hospital 30 days prior to my 11 day crime spree. People should know that prison life starts well before men or women catch cases. It is preventable and it will cost a lot less than what they are currently paying. Scholars should stop looking at numbers and statistics and do their utmost to change conditions. Don't just look at the crime, start from the beginning. Learn how to intervene in situations that are proven to lead to prison. Stop watching. Stop being afraid to participate.

Change the conditions and you change the results.
It is my hope that a message will be heard
outside of the usual people. There is no excuse
for making the decision to break the law. But
as I learned, there were several issues in my
life that gave reason for my thinking patterns.
That influenced how I processed adversity.
Those are the conditions of prison ^{well before} cell doors ~~are~~ ^{were} introduced. ^{Introduced to} ^{me}
well before the suicide attempts
and broken relationships. Hundreds of thousands
of kids are facing similar and or much worse
conditions that if unchecked can lead them
down the same journey. Help them and you
prevent us. You prevent this.
Thank you.

Stephon Yarbrough

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Any questions please feel free. If you would
like more information please feel free.