

My name is Robert Fowler and I grew up in the deep south...The town I was born in Cowpens, South Carolina does have some history to it but for me there isn't much to tell about the town... My birth occurred on March 19th in 1959... Two weeks later my mother left me with my grandparents and headed to Texas...I never called her mom and by now I am sure she has long passed away.... I grew up dirt poor but I did have a chance to have a normal life but the mistakes I made caused me to end up in prison... I have been in prison sense I was 22 years old... I m now 61 at this time and in a few days I will have a total of 39 years in prison.....i went behind the walls of prison in Columbia,, South Carolina in 1981..My SCDC number is 108128.... In 2001 I was sent behind the walls at Jackson Michigan my MDOC number is 384621 and as of today I m still here in the MDOC and will be for a long long time ...I've seen alot in my life most of it has been inside a prison.... You can almost say that I am some what knowledgable when it comes to the inside of prison....

Is there a differenc between the prison of S.C and MI. prisons, yes there is a big difference.....In the SCDC they had work credits and goodtime which meant there was a reason to work which reduced the amount of time you had to serve and also allowed you to learn a job skill..I worked in the prison store within the SCDC and worked my way up to a one for two work credit slot, which means for every two days I worked I got one day off my sentence.....Pay was different also... There I made 18;25 every two weeks.... Here in the MDOC i make !;31 a day but only have a job detail for three days a week and only get paid once a month....

There is so many other things that are different between the two states regarding prison... Take healthcare for a reference... The SCDC you sign up to see healthcare in the mornings at the C/O's station and then they will call you that same morning to be seen by healthcare...Here the MDOC has you fill out a healthcare kite and send it in and then a couple days later you get it back letting you know you will be seen by healthcare within a few days at a cost of FIVE DOLLARS....So it's best not to wake up sick here within the MDOC and expect to be treated anytime soon....However there is some bright spots within the MDOC's helthcare.... Here is how I would rate them as for as treatment and how good the nurses and doctors are as a group...

The number one facility regarding healthcare in the MDOC is Kinross..

Number two is Brooks Correctionl facility known as LRF.....The worst facility for me would be without a doubt Saginaw, SRF...But wait just a second and hear why I base my facts on this as the worst facility... I came to SRF with Parkinson disease and wearing contacts because my eyes are so bad... While being here at SRF for only a few months healthcare has told me I no longer have Parkinson nor do I need contacts anymore... So maybe just maybe SRF has a healthcare staff that can and does cure inmates simply by the swipe of a pen....Oh ya they ony charge five dollars for this service of healing....Does this sound as if I am unhappy with healthcare here at SRF no I am only being truthful and explaining how I rate them... Other differences within the MDOC is yard times... Again Kinross has open yard and LRF had a good yard schedule as well....Believe it or not but because of this covid 19 our yard times here at SRF have gotten better... They now open up our small yard all day which makes things much better here and without problems... So why did it take a pandemic to get this done....Please understand I am not speaking bad about SRF I am only telling you the differences between prisons that I have been to...

I have been to the following prisons so you can see I do have knowledge of different prisons and how they function...Here is my prison list...

Marquette
Ojibway
URF
Kinross
Bellamy Creek
Muskegon
Brooks corr.
MTU
Saginaw
Jackson
Cotton corr.

Some of these places I have been more than once....I have been in the level five prisons, the level four and the level two facilities...

Now in regards to wardens hands down the best warden I have ever met was Ms. Mary Burgess at Brooks correctional facility... Warden Burgess made sure both staff and C/O's as well as inmates were on the right track... Warden Burgess had volunteers coming in daily to help with getting inmates headed in the right direction... The programs at LRF ranged from art to music and covered so many areas in between... Warden Burgess treated all with respect and received respect in return.... In my lifetime I have never met another warden that cared for people..... Warden Burgess wanted the best for every inmate every staff member and every C/O that worked at her facility or

9 served time at her facility...Warden Burgess also took time to be with every volunteer and listened to what they had to say and she made sure they were also appreciated by all.....We the MDOC needs more Warden Burgess type wardens and if they did this our prison systems would work better and do more for the inmates rather than having so many repeat offenders....Inmates need direction and a need to feel that they matter until this happens it will always be a return cycle and Warden Burgess knew and understood this that's why her prison ran so well and had so many successful inmates make it without returning back into the MDOC.. Programs that work within the MDOC that do make a difference....Here is my list regarding that....

Horticulture
Welding
Auto Mech.
Religious programs

Art and Music, meaning music theory and understanding all areas of music...

Dog grooming and handling teaches responsibility....College programs covering different subjects....Remember these progrms need to be offered for all not for the selected few that seem to always get the program no matter what that program is. I know many inmates that never get selected.

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Living in prison to me feels like I've wasted my life and that having something such as a family never happened... I'm guilty as sin in regards to my crimes... I have never denied that nor will I ever forget the wrongs I've done... But at the same time I want people to know those wrongs will live and do live within me every single day... In my mind and heart I re-live the wrongs I have done daily... To quote the song I created my own prison... Even if I were free this would remain with me for the rest of my life... Could I make a difference if I should ever be released well that is a question only time can answer but I do feel I could be a positive and maybe help someone to understand what it means to have freedom taken away by the actions they do... Here is a normal day inside for me... I get up round 5 clean up and wait to go eat then for the yard to open... Once that happens I go walk the yard thinking about how nice it would be to wake up in a real home and what would I be doing... Then I go in and do my job as a unit porter... My job is cleaning the bathrooms and showers and then because of the covid 19 I also clean the day rooms for every wing which means I clean the day rooms 15 times a day every single day... So in between my job I spend my time walking round a small circle... I am always alone even though I am surrounded by others doing the something as we survive inside... At one point I did hobbycraft but here at SRF we are not allowed to have any wood material so for me there is no hobbycraft... I do play mandolin and guitar and harmonica and yes I have a mandolin... When I was at LRF I played in the prison church band... That is where I met Mrs. Deborah Klaus a volunteer that lead the church band... She taught me many things and helped me to understand that I did have some good within myself... She opened a door for me regarding songwriting and I wrote a book of songs that even got published called Inside Out by Robert Carolina Fowler... These songs expressed how I felt and gave me a way to explain how my day was going but in a positive way... I got transferred from LRF to MCF and Mrs Klaus visited me there and kept encouraging me and even helped me form a band made up of inmates and volunteers and we did 4 sixteen song set concerts at MCF... No words can describe how this made me feel and the inmates and staff that attended the concerts really enjoyed our concerts... Then I was transferred to KCF which was another low point but Mrs. Klaus and her sister visited me there and lifted me up even though there wasn't any music concerts allowed... Then I was transferred to SRF where I am at as we speak... I am sharing this so you will know that when someone believes in you it makes a huge difference in your life... Mrs Klaus believed in me and still does and her actions gave me hope... With that hope I know I can now make a difference if ever I should get the chance... Mrs Klaus and her husband Brian and their entire family have kinda adopted me and for me having someone treat me like a member of their family has really turned my life around... Now I think about how I could make a difference and how I could help in a positive way... So even though I am still in prison I am finally learning what love peace and kindness of having a family really feels like... So I try to come up with ideas to help my adopted family as much as possible even if it's making them cards to give others for birthdays, or other special days... I simply try to help and it feels good to have someone to care about... What does it feel like to live in a cell, well I have lived in both cells and open cubes and there is a big difference... Yes the cell has a door and only two people live there but both have positives and negatives... The positive for the cell is that every now and again you get some alone time to be at rest... The negative is dealing with a bunkie at times that has issues can be stressful... The MDOC kinda just throws people together without looking at the picture... Take for instance why would you house a 60 year old with a 19 year old gang banger?? The MDOC needs to structure housing better and maybe they need to set up the prison system with housing for different age groups which would make things so much better... I believe the feds do this now... As for the cube setting when it was 4 to a cube it wasn't bad because there was more room than a cell then the MDOC doubled up the bunks so a 4 man cube went to an 8 man cube therefore no one had any space... So as odd as this may sound I would rather live in a 4 man cube if that were possible again... But due to the cubes being 8 man now the cell is a better option... The cell is 8 by 10 with a set of bunk beds 2 wall lockers 2 desks and 2 chairs... Now add footlockers and personal items and there is no room especially with 2 grown men... So bunkies need to be on the same page and have a routine that works in order for the cell to work... At SRF there is no music program per say even though people have instruments... SRF has no band room nor do they allow concerts so music isn't something to look forward to here... Like I said earlier hobbycraft here at SRF is limited to knitting or painting which limits activities especially for those like myself... With the covid 19 there is no visiting state wide but SRF does have a real nice visiting room... I would rate it as in the top two in the state... Muskegon visiting room would be number one and Kinross would be last... Now as for changes in prison regarding crimes the MDOC has a very high rate of sex offenders and gays... Years ago this was very different but now it seems to be the norm for the MDOC and the parole board seems to favor these crimes because they tend to parole the above... I guess they know they are returning so they are in the release and catch business... What changes do I think that could be made that would help the prison system, that's simple treat everyone FAIR and

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just and this starts at the time of arrest through the jail and courts and then into the prison system... Believe it or not but one guard can and does influence higher ups as to who gets this job and program depending on where you are from and who you are... Because I am not from Michigan I get overlooked for many good jobs and programs yet my name is always at the top of the list for the unwanted jobs... This stems down from the wardens... How can one prison run so well and have inmates involved in becoming better people while other prisons have nothing going on for the betterment of the prisoners?? Lansing sets the same standards for all the prisons yet they are so different when it comes to programs and projects... The reason I see is having the right wardens and staff in place... If it works at one joint why can't it work at all the prisons?? In order to fix the problem we need to address the problem at the head and then make the changes needed to correct the matter... If you put a thousand men in one place and treat all of them fair and offer the programs they need then changes will happen for the better... If you put a thousand men together and tell them they have nothing coming then you get what you get... Make all the prisons the same so that a prisoner will have a fighting chance to not only get the help they need but to also have a chance at becoming a positive and break the cycle they are now in... Something as simple as having garden programs at every level two and one prison, having classes on more trades at these same facilities... Offer work credits which would give an inmate a chance at reducing their sentence by working... This way they would be earning the credit not being given anything... Have more interaction with the free world by having more volunteers work with the programming... USE COMMON SENSE and fix this MDOC mess that the good old boys have been using for all these years... Hold the wardens and staff accountable and then see if they changes are working... Find another Warden like Ms. Burgess and have that warden train the wardens to come... In order to fix the problems within the MDOC we must first fix the MDOC starting at the head... Until this is done there will never be any corrections made as a whole... To answer your last question if I should ever be released what would I do?? With the help of the Klaus family I would live at the mission in Holland and work at whatever job I could obtain and in my free time use music to help others understand how important family and freedom really are... Thank you for your time, respectfully Robert Carolina Fowler...