

March 2021.

This is the first time I am writing for this website and it took me a year and a half. I wanted to document my experience in prison from the beginning, but I would always tell myself I didn't have much value to offer on here or no one would be interested. When I finally worked up the strength to share on here, I had it quickly knocked out of me again by the challenges that came with living in a prison.

It's difficult to maintain a positive and/or productive attitude when you have such little control over the experiences of your life. I've been sent to the hole (solitary) for catching COVID and getting sick. I deal with random raids and have been yelled at, swore at, and insulted by staff for asking about their poor implementation of a law passed to benefit prisoners.

Last week a guard and an inmate got into an altercation and the inmate is now sitting in the hole for "assaulting staff." There has been an increase in raids and pat and frisk orders since then.

Another inmate is pursuing a PREA charge against staff (claiming sexual misconduct during a pat-down search). That inmate is also now in the hole for his own "protection."

The atmosphere around here lately had me feeling I should wait until I was in a more confident place before writing this, but I waited a year and a half already and I know the timing will never be 100% right, especially while I'm in prison. So here I am, sharing the truth of my insecurities and frustrations, not just cherry picking the positive moments to put on display and appear like it's easy for me to overcome all the burdens of being in prison. It's not.

Perhaps that's where my value is to be found, in sharing honestly with you what it's like to be a man trying to figure out how to keep his head up while in prison as he navigates his way back home. Sometimes I feel more lost and lonely than I ever have. Other times I find overwhelming moments of joy and love, flowing from my heart.

I will share all of this with you and I hope you come back here every once in a while to hear some more of my story.

Keep your heads up,

Pepe