

A REAL NIGHTMARE – TRANSGENDER BEHIND BARS

“The Truth” Written by T [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

I was asked to tell my story. It's been a long time coming. But here it is at last. The readers of my story will find some of it to be offensive and perhaps even distasteful. But if you want to know the truth...the real...the uncut. Then please read:

I'm a 50 year old black African American serving a 22 year sentence at 85% for Voluntary Manslaughter in California. I was arrested in Oakland, California in the county of Alameda in 1995. I arrived at San Quentin State Prison Reception Center in December of 1996. Being that this was my first serious conviction I was placed in "C" Section of the reception center. This section was where serious offenders were being held while awaiting endorsements to prisons where they'd serve part or all of their sentences. Now, while I was in the county jail I was allowed to take my female hormone medication. I was taking Premarin, Provera, and Estinyl. The pills did their jobs. My complexion was glowing, my hair had grown down to my shoulders and my breasts were 48 DD's. Needless to say, I was greeted at the reception center with some appreciation and a lot of discrimination. I was called fag, she-he, he-she, fairy, punk, homosexual. I was liked by the male officers and inmates. But hated by female staff. Most of whom were members of the "itty bitty tittie club!" I was placed in a cell with an inmate who didn't shower. The cell reeked of musk and urine. The toilet and sink had spit and urine all over them. Of course, after a lot of complaining I was moved to another cell with an inmate. At least he was clean. After a week or so I was given a guy who was extremely handsome. But was only in it to get what he could. After a week or so he was moved out after a fight. I wasn't allowed the same benefits as the other guys. I wasn't allowed a tier worker's job because of my sexual orientation until I submitted an inmate appeal. I was interviewed by the "Unit Lieutenant" and then given a job. It took almost 5 months before I was endorsed to Pelican Bay State Prison. I arrived at Pelican Bay in June of 1997. I was on orientation and put in a cell by myself. For obvious reasons of course. A week later I appeared before Intake Classification Committee and was cleared to go to Facility B. I was called that evening to move over to Facility B and was chained up with several other male inmates and brought out of orientation building. There was an officer who had our custody cards. He was like a marine drill sergeant. He stood next to me, looked at me and made the following statement: "I'm glad you're not staying on my yard, freak." I ignored him as I thought that was the best thing for me. I got over to Facility B, which was a horrible place. I was put in a cell by myself. After a couple of days everyone in my section was called down to the office but me. Then when they came back a correctional officer came to me and asked me would I mind moving in with this older guy? I said no, but I'd like to first speak with him. After some conversation, he and I moved in together. He was about 46. Nice looking black man. He made me feel very comfortable. The next day his peers told him to put me out of the cell or else. So coming in off the yard I wasn't allowed to go and pack my property. He did and sat it out on the tier. Later that afternoon I moved into a cell again by myself. No one to talk to. No t.v. No radio. No books. I went on the yard and there was a gay boy whom I hadn't seen in years. He came over, greeted me with a hug and said: "Tunisia girl you are in the wrong place!" There's no program. The officers hate us and the inmates are not what you're used to. He told me a few days later about a guy who liked me. I was very lonely and after a week I moved in with him. Big mistake. He was jealous,

impressionable by his homeboys. He jumped on me one night and beat me up real bad. Of course I said nothing to staff. But they knew. I had scratches and bruises all on my neck. I said nothing. Neither did they. I finally asked to be moved. When asked: Why? I simply told them my life was in danger. They moved me back over to Facility A. I was approached by the "yard sergeant." He told me to take my ponytail holder off and to not let him see it again. I was placed in a cell by myself. A few hours later I had a cellie. Nice older brother. Never hit on me. Never asked me for any sexual favors. He called me his little sister. I called him my big brother. We laughed together. Traded some secrets. And we had our misunderstandings also. But to date we are the best of friends. I moved in with a Puerto Rican inmate. He fell in love with me. I fell in love with him. Usually this would bring racial tension. It didn't with us. I was finally happy. But little did I know this happiness was only for a few months. I went on a job interview for a teacher's aide. It wasn't a pay number but it was a job. Programming was my goal. One afternoon I came home from my job and my love was very quiet. I asked him what was wrong. He kept saying nothing was wrong. I let it alone, gave him a kiss and went back to work. Little did I know that it would be our last kiss. I got off of work at 3 p.m. I came across the recreation yard and I saw him. He smiled and spoke and I went on in. At about 3:15 no one was coming off the yard. I called up to the control booth officer and asked him to let me shower. He told me the yard was down. I got a cold chill in my stomach and as I turned towards the t.v., I saw it. A note. My hand started trembling as I opened the letter. I won't share but one part with you. It said: Tunisia if you're reading this letter it means I've had to handle my business on the yard. The tears rolled down my cheeks. The section doors opened. People stopped by my house and said your man is gone. I shut down. I couldn't believe it. Assault on an inmate with a weapon. I would be alone for a year. How could I make it? I cried so hard. Whenever I thought about him I cried. The pain became too much to bear. But I had to make it. I couldn't let this get me down. I had no money. He was my only source of income. There was one counselor who looked out for me. He cleared it so we could write through the mail. But after six months I began to weaken. I had to find a cellmate. I didn't want anyone but I had to get someone or else they (Department of Corrections) could just put anyone in my cell. Needless to say for one whole year my life was turned upside down. The door to my cell revolving every other week. No one would stay. All they wanted was to take me to bed. Get what they could while the getting was good. I asked to be put on single cell status. Finally they put me on single cell. It was good. I got a good job. Then came the racial riot on Facility B. We were put on lockdown on Facility A. This went on for 13 months off and on. Now I'm here at SATF-Corcoran. I've had to go through so much here. Been called names, threatened, discriminated against. It's been real hard. At this time there's no one in my life. Prison has been horrible for me. My release date is March 2014. My health is bad. I'm HIV-negative, but I have high blood pressure and I have a bad liver. Will I make it? I sure hope so. It's one thing I won't do. I can't give up. I won't give up.

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