

## PAUL V.

### **I. Fear**

My problem is that when I would get afraid and my fear, I know it's not a rational fear, although you could argue that it is rational because I'm in prison, I'm surrounded by dangerous people, but that I would lose control of bowels and my bladder, I would have accidents on myself and the humiliation of that, the embarrassment of that and it being around an all male peer group was terrifying, also and the only kind of treatment that has ever worked, I mean, I was on Benzadiazapene on the street and then I also had to take other, like I took Compozene for the nausea if I had to travel, I was agoraphobic on the street, but the way I controlled my symptoms was by having control of my environment. If I chose not to go out my house, I could eliminate my illness completely, basically because it – because I only had it when I crossed my threshold, that's the only time I felt afraid. When I come to prison I didn't have that control anymore and then the medications that helped me, I didn't have access to because they were medications that are abused by people and so that was the reason why they always used as a reason to withheld them from me is because they have the potential for abuse.

For me it's not just the suffering but I want to function better, I want to be able to have a quality of life and I can't do that if I can't leave my cell and because there are programs, I like to read, I would like to go to chapel. I would like to be able to – like when they have recreation activities outside of the dorm, I'd like to be able to go and do those things but my illness makes it impossible for me to do that unless it is treated

adequately and unless I develop my own kind of way, you know, of coping, my coping mechanisms is what I call them.

They don't believe, me they don't take me seriously. They don't think this is a serious illness because it's neurotic and not psychotic but it's still, it's very debilitating and even though I'm not hearing voices, I'm not hurting people, you know it's still – I'm still suffering.

I feel like the officers here and at Perry think that the mentally ill inmates are faking, that they're just criminals and they want to be treated better than the average criminal in prison and so they don't think that we have a genuine illness. They think that you know that we're faking or that we're weak. That we're weak and we can't, we can't make it in general population and so we try to cry that we're vulnerable so please don't – that's how I feel about it.

Anyways, but see that's another one of the problems that I've always had, is most of our counselors I have come in contact with used to be officers who wanted a job where they can be in plain clothes instead of—and she's right they are still security because when they like, um, you know, kind of emergencies where they have a list of essential employees.

But we don't, but we don't get, we don't have professionally trained counselors or therapists.

## II. Lockup

I remember when I was in the hospital on the street I was in a group therapy session with a young girl, she was 15 or 16. She was beautiful and she could play—she was a musician and an artist and she was so smart and talented and pretty, but yet she thought she was none of those things because her father had killed himself and she felt like he didn't love her enough. He didn't care enough about her to see how she would have turned out. That really touched me and I have a son. I don't care what I have to endure in here I will never make him feel that way. So I've never been suicidal to need to go on crisis intervention. There have been times when I had wished that there was a way to find out if he would you know release me from that cause I mean it's frustrating being powerless.

It's frustrating when it doesn't matter what right or wrong is. I doesn't matter what good or bad is because all that matters is who has control and power. You give some of these individuals that hold authority and power, it's like they got their own mental illness. They feel so small and their self-esteem is so low that they only thing that makes them feel better is to dominate and torment and torture somebody else and then they justify it as being right because we're convicted of a crime and we're put in here so obviously we deserve to be treated this way.

POPE: While you were in lockup at Perry – is that the only time you've been in lockup when they put you in there?

PAUL: That's the first time I've been in lockup in three years, you know. Yeah, it's the first time I've been in lockup in three years. While I was there I observed some mentally ill patients getting really treated terribly.

Yeah, I can't tell you their names because I don't know them but I know that this one man he was urinating on the floor, okay. An um, he was stripped out naked in a suicide cell. His mattress was on the floor in front of the door. That's for two reasons. One is so that he can't push urine or feces out under the door and so that the officer knows that, you know, that cell gets a Styrofoam tray or it gets Nutraloaf. But the dude would he would when they turn the water on he would splash the water out of the toilet so they turned his water off.

And they left it off for three days and when they brought him trays they gave him no water, no cup of water, no drink.

For three days the man did not get anything to drink and from shift to shift to shift we had people yelling on the wing you know please give that man a drink of water. And they just didn't care. It wasn't until we got a nurse that was there to give medication that we begged her please when you sign the chart that you come to bring his medicine write on there that he hasn't had water. Once she did the officers started giving him water. Or turning on—they turn on his water so that he could get a drink of water.

But you know that was appalling.

And I've seen them spray, that same man got sprayed with pepper spray for urinating on the floor and pushing it under the door. Yeah, they don't—it's some people that are mentally ill their behaviors can be irritating and nauseating but they don't deserve to be hurt like that. And they don't deserve to be deprived of basic needs like water and food to punish them because they made your job inconvenient.

### **III. A Little Bit of Joy**

What is my greatest fear? Well I have so many.

I, it is kind of a toss up between it being openly known amongst my peers that I had the fecal and urinary incontinence and also like when I've been sick and the nurses are the ones who control your access to medical care.

So what I am—I'd say that's my biggest fear. My biggest fear is that I'm going to get sick and I'm not going to have access to medical care because I'm not deemed worthy of being relieved of my suffering or even being allowed to live. Because it's kind of like I think some of these people have a vigilante kind of feeling about the way they treat us. Like God has given them the job of punishing us for our sins or our crimes.

But they're not supposed to take so much pleasure in it.

I don't live with the anticipation day to day of ever getting out of prison. I'm 43 years old and there's I deal with so many obstacles about even surviving prison that I just don't consider it. I mean it's not that I don't have hope but if right now my goal is just trying to establish some quality of life right here right now where I can find some level of contentment. And, um, but I will tell you this as something that I've observed in other inmates, and that is that they don't feel any more. That they become detached from their emotions because they have felt the hurt of loneliness, of abandonment, of being forgotten and um, or betrayed and that it hurts so much more than it hurts to be cut by a knife physically. The emotional pain hurts so much that for two reasons. They somehow learn how to detach themselves from their emotions, how to disconnect themselves from their emotions so they don't feel that. One because it hurts too much, two because to have their peers see them experiencing that kind of emotional pain makes them fear that they would be thought to be weak and therefore be vulnerable.

And I've also noticed or observed that those individuals who don't feel any more, who have become detached that they also they don't feel joy any more.

And me, as far as I see that for other people in the future and I strive daily not to become that way. I strive daily to be—to remain somebody who is sensitive and so that I continue to have empathy, compassion for my fellow man. And I've learned that just a little bit of joy can heal a lot, an awful lot of pain.