



How To Survive in Prison as an Innocent Man Convicted of a Sex Crime

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Psychology Editor's Note: This article includes some strong views that may be surprising and challenging. We have chosen to publish it because we believe prisoners have a right to seek interaction with those outside the prison walls. We also believe there are many innocent men and women in prison who are wrongly convicted of sex offenses. They too, have a right to stand up for their innocence. One of the more poignant episodes in our lives was in June, 1985, when Lois Bentz, accused with her husband, Robert, of sexually abusing children in Jordan, Minnesota, was told by her attorney about a very attractive plea bargain. With tears running down her face, Lois said to us, "I did not do it and I will not say I did something I didn't do." The Bentzes rejected the plea bargain and went to trial. The Bentzes were acquitted and the Jordan case is often regarded as the beginning of the "backlash" that has led to increased awareness of false accusations and the reversals of several highly publicized convictions in recent years.

Still there are many many lesser known cases where Large numbers of innocent people remain behind bars. We receive letters every week from men and women in prison who assert their innocence. For years we have agonized about what we can do in response. The most we have been able to do is to try to stay in contact and provide information to assist those working on appeals. Based upon our experience with Ms. Bentz, we have also tried to say what Mr. Anderson repeats several times in this article — maintain your own personal integrity. Mr. Anderson tells us how he has done this for himself. It may not be a way that works for everyone, but this is what he tells us works for him. We believe Mr. Anderson is very likely to walk out of prison when his time is served and be standing up straight and tall.

Your only exposure to what prison is like has been through movies that sensationalize the violence, drug use, and sex in the big house. The prison bus you're on rounds a lonely highway corner and you get your first glimpse of what is to be your home for the next 10-odd years — a steel, razor wire, and concrete house of pain. You wonder how you'll ever make it out of this hate factory alive. You imagine your first day being gang-raped by six huge, tattooed lifers, by the end of the week you're being sold up and down the tier for cigarettes, and within a month, you're found dead in your cell with a twelve-inch "shank" protruding from your chest. Not only are you the new fish in the cell block, but you have been convicted of a sex

crime, and you've heard how convicted sex criminals are abused in the joint.

You're one of the thousands of innocent men wrongly convicted of sex crimes in the U.S. every year. Won't it matter to your fellow prisoners that you are not a sex criminal and are completely innocent? Not in the least. It is possible, though, to make it through prison even though you were convicted of a skin beef. You can not only live through the prison experience, you can claim some degree of victory at the end of your unjust prison term. Life will be neither easy nor fun for the innocent man convicted of a sex crime and sent to prison. But, surviving prison is not impossible.

I have spent over seven years in maximum-, medium-, and minimum security prisons after being wrongly convicted of first degree rape — the result of my having been falsely accused of date rape by a mentally deranged woman with a history of falsely accusing men of sex crimes. I am writing this from the Oregon State Correctional Institution. Although life has not been easy for me in prison, I have managed to keep my self-respect, my dignity, and my integrity. I have spent months in solitary confinement for defending myself when necessary. I have allowed no prisoner, no prison guard, and no member of the parole board to disrespect me due to my wrongful conviction. I have consistently maintained my innocence, even when doing so has added years to my prison term.

I earned a college degree behind bars, and have even escaped from prison once. To help other innocent prisoners, I founded the Society Against False Accusations of Rape (SAFAR), and for five years have published the underground prison publication, The SAFAR Newsletter. Currently, I'm working on my book, *Falling on the Deaf Ear: False Accusations of Rape, Child Abuse Hoaxes, Innocent People in Prison and How to End the Sex Crime Witchhunt*. I know first-hand what it is to be an innocent man in prison, wrongly convicted of a sex crime, and I know how to survive the prison experience.

Now that you have been falsely accused of rape or child abuse, been convicted in record time, lost all your assets along with your reputation, and been sentenced to 10 years in prison by a judge who couldn't care less that you are innocent, you would think your troubles are over. Think again. You not only have to make it out of the prison with your life and sanity, but with your self-respect, honor, and integrity intact. Let's face it. After being wrongly convicted of a sex crime, your sanity, self-respect, honor, and integrity is all you have left. Prison will not break you if you are a man — or learn to become a man, even though the main goal of prison officials is to sap the soul from men, and spit out castrated, submissive males. With all the odds against you, it is even possible to walk out of prison a better man with your head held high. Again, it will be neither fun nor easy, but what battle ever is easy? You can either walk out of prison with your manhood intact knowing you beat the corrupt prison industry or you can crawl out on your belly as a hated sex offender.

Outside Contacts

Don't fool yourself that the community will be outraged that you were convicted and sent to prison for a crime you didn't commit or that may have never even occurred.

You are now a convicted sex offender and your innocence means nothing. You're the lowest of the low, in and out of prison. There will be no mass protests at the prison gates demanding your release.

Most people believe the propaganda of the sex crime witch hunters and probably feel you should die in prison. Most of your friends will abandon you and even some members of your family will turn their backs on you. Only your very best friends and your immediate family will stick by your side at first and most of them will fall by the wayside in the coming years as you rot in prison.

One of the most important things for the innocent man in prison is to maintain contact with at least one person on the outside. This person can help you try to prove your innocence and keep you current on what's happening outside the prison walls. If you can maintain contact with at least one free worlder to help you, you'll be doing a lot better than some prisoners. Many prisoners lose their friends and their own families and are isolated in prison with no contact with the outside world. You are going to be walking into prison alone and will be alone while you do your time. You need at least one ally in the outside to help free yourself from the nightmare of being thrown in a cage and given the scarlet letter of a convicted sex offender for a crime you did not commit.

Prison violence

For the most part, prisons and correctional institutions are not the hell holes of years past. The "get tough on crime" craze has mutated into "get tough on prisoners." Although prisons are not for continued and endless punishment, politicians don't want to educate or rehabilitate prisoners. Prisoners are to be warehoused like the commodities they've become. College courses and vocational training in prison are a thing of the past. With all the new prisons being built in the U.S., doing time has become quite sterile — even safe — because all the new prisons are so controlled and high-tech that prisoners now spend most of their time in their cells.

The idea that prisoners really run the joint is a myth. Some of the older prisons are still dangerous, but these are slowly being phased out. It used to be that only the worst, most dangerous, and most hardened criminal was sent to prison. It was no wonder that penitentiaries were dangerous. But these days, with so many first-time offenders doing mandatory prison terms and so many people being sent to prison, the nation's lock-ups have become diluted with nonviolent prisoners. Today most prisons can even be considered safe.

In all my years behind bars, I've never seen a murder, a stabbing, or a rape. I believe some prisoners try to brag how tough prison is to make themselves look tough. They romanticize their prison experience by telling their friends and family how brutal prison was and how they had to fight for their lives every day. Prison, however, may be harder for the innocent man convicted of a sex crime because of the scorn. In the old days, a convicted sex offender — innocent or guilty — was sure to get physically attacked. Today, that is not the case. A man wrongly convicted of a sex crime can make it out of prison unharmed if he stays on his toes

and keeps alert.

What about all the violence you read about what goes on in prison? Of course, violence does happen in U.S. penitentiaries, but with over 1.6 million Americans locked up these days, the chance of being one of the few hundred inmates who are killed or seriously injured is slim.

Standing Up for Yourself

Because you were convicted of a sex crime, you will not be winning any popularity contests with your fellow prisoners. At first, the other prisoners may mark you to be victimized and harassed. If you don't stand tall and fight back, you'll be victimized your entire prison term. You must stand up for yourself when you are tested by some idiot who thinks you're a rape-o, "Chester," "tree jumper," or "freak." In 1989, I was compelled to beat a man who attacked me with a folding chair. Besides a little blood, neither one of us was hurt badly. I did accidentally break a guard's hand in the melee and I've also had to fight a couple of other morons who disrespected me, but I haven't had any trouble in years. It is well worth it to spend a few months in solitary confinement for defending yourself when the option is being harassed continually in general population. Another option is hiding for years in Protective Custody (PC), totally separated from the rest of the prison, and locked in a cell for 24-hours a day. But only the weakest prisoners go PC, and I don't recommend it.

For the most part, even for the wrongly convicted sex offender, if you don't owe debts from gambling or drugs, and if you stay away from the homosexuals, keep your head down, don't bother anyone, and don't act like a wimp and whine about your wrongful conviction, you won't have to worry about prison violence. There is very little chance that you will be killed or even stabbed. But, if something does happen and you need to defend your good name, be a man and do it. In prison, your good name is all you have. If trouble comes your way in prison, you have to deal with it on the spot. Where are you going to run? You're in a cage.

Inmates and Convicts

During my years in prison I have found that there are two types of prisoners — inmates and convicts. Inmates will not fight if their lives depend on it and they will kiss any ass that comes their way. Inmates are the type of prisoners who go on national TV to praise prison officials and prison programs for straightening out their miserable lives. The inmate has no loyalty to anything or anyone except himself. Inmates will do anything to please their captors and cheerfully inform and rat on other prisoners for breaking prison rules. Inmates are not men.

Be aware that you can't always tell an inmate worm by his cover. The biggest, baddest killer on the tier can be the biggest, snitch rat in the joint. On the other hand, convicts used to be very common in U.S. prisons, but are now a dying breed. A true convict would never rat on anyone, would take no disrespect, would fight when necessary and would be loyal and live by a code of honor. Unlike an inmate, a convict is a man.

A convicted sex offender will never be considered a true convict by other prisoners, but you can live by your own code of honor in prison. Never whine or complain about your wrongful conviction; sniveling will only make you appear weak and make you a target. Other prisoners don't care about your innocence. The prison hierarchy has you at the bottom of the prison barrel. Your jacket is that of a sex offender but it's up to you if you wear this degrading jacket. You will find that the only prisoners who hang around the sex offender are other wide-eyed, scared, spineless sex offenders. Even though prison is going to be very lonely for the innocent man convicted of a sex crime, you don't want to befriend confessed sex offenders. Also, stay away from the prison chapel. For some strange reason, confessed sex offenders always find God in prison and carry their Bibles for all to see to show how repentant they are. In short, even though no one convicted of a sex crime can be a true convict, you must strive to be one.

Talking About Your Conviction

You may think that if you don't tell any of your fellow prisoners you were convicted of a sexual offense that no one will be the wiser and you won't be harassed. You may think that you can tell people you're a bank robber and even be a hero in prison. Nice try, but lying about what you were convicted of will not work. There are no secrets in prison, especially on why you are there. You're in prison now, and any possibility of privacy or keeping secrets is long gone. Be honest when talking about your wrongful conviction and get ready to defend yourself if it becomes necessary.

All of the convicted sex offenders (innocent or guilty) whom I've heard tell other prisoners that they were burglars or robbers in an effort to hide their convictions were eventually exposed. If you lie about your conviction, you will be exposed. Then, any attempts to claim innocence will not be believed and your prison time may get very tough. Don't advertise your wrongful conviction, or the facts of your supposed crime, but when asked why you're in prison, be honest.

Although a convicted sex offender can never gain full respect in prison, I've managed to gain some measure of respect by being truthful about why I am in prison, and fighting when necessary. Sure, some punk may call me a "rape-o" behind my back, but no prisoner ever disrespects me face to face. With so many innocent men being sent to prison these days on false accusations of rape and child abuse, the general prison population is starting to understand how widespread the sex crime witchhunt has become, and how many innocent men are now in prison due to false allegations. False reports of rape and other sex crimes are so common that an innocent man wrongfully convicted of a sex crime will not be alone.

Prison Guards

The men and women who hold the key to your freedom (the prison guards) should be considered your enemy. There is a reason that surveys on job status and job satisfaction often rate being a prison guard as the lowest job a person can hold. No one respects prison guards, and they know it. What kind of man or woman would

want to examine body openings for contraband, turn keys, and stand around and do nothing for a living? Prison guards hate their jobs and blame prisoners for their unhappy and unfulfilled lives. It takes no ambition, no talent, no drive, or any creativity to be a corrections officer. Even police officers know this, and look down on the lowly prison guard. Think about it. Does any kid have dreams of being a corrections officer when he or she grows up?

The Golden Rule to remember not only about prison guards, but about anyone that works inside the prison in which you are held captive, is to stay as far away from them as possible and avoid even talking to them unnecessarily. Even if you happen to run across a prison guard who appears to be halfway human, don't befriend him. Every inmate whom I've seen develop any type of friendship with any prison employee was, in the end, betrayed and shunned by other prisoners. Don't collaborate with anyone other than fellow prisoners while in prison. Every prison official or staff member is your enemy. Never forget that. They will gladly shoot you in the back if they feel the need. Don't make eye contact with the people who work at the prison because if you avoid eye contact they will leave you alone. The less contact you have with prison employees, the better off you will be.

In all my years in prison, I've observed hundreds of prison guards and only a couple could be considered normal. The typical male guard I have encountered is not someone you would consider a winner. He is usually a skinny geek (or is extremely overweight), is undereducated, has no ambition and is sadistic. His idea of success is a monthly state paycheck, a trailer home, a 12-pack of beer, and nightly TV. The typical female prison guard is homosexual, physically unattractive, overweight, and more masculine than most male prison guards. She's mad at the world for not being born a man and she takes her penis envy out on prisoners.

I fully admit my dislike for prison guards because I am convinced that every prison guard in the U.S. has witnessed, encouraged, and/or participated in the torture or murder of prisoners. Prison guards are cowards with a badge who are protected by the state and prison guard unions. Your only allies in prison are other prisoners. Never forget it.

Keeping Fit

One of the most important things to do while doing your prison time is to keep in the very best physical shape possible. Every prison has a weight room, and I strongly suggest pumping iron. Being in top shape not only feels good, but it's good for your head and will help you think more clearly. By working out, running, exercising, and eating as well as possible, you will be physically able to defend yourself in case of any violent situations. You will also be able to think straight to combat your unjust conviction. All the guys whom I've seen go insane in prison did not care about their health. They rotted in front of a TV for years until they were just a shell of a man. At age thirty-five, I am now in the best shape of my life and feel great.

Another reason to stay healthy in prison is that medical services are notoriously horrid. One of my worst prison experiences was when our prison doctor told me that

blood tests indicated that I had liver cancer. He smiled gleefully as he told me I had only a year to live. I tried to learn more, but he refused to answer my questions and ordered me out of his office. For months I thought I was going to leave this mad house on a slab. I learned later that my blood test indicated only that I had been exposed to hepatitis in the past. The good prison doctor told me I was dying for his own sick amusement.

Dental services are just as bad in prison. I'm currently waiting to have a back molar filled. I cracked my tooth on a rock in some chili in the chow hall. I've been on the waiting list to see the dentist for over six months now, and will probably lose the tooth due to neglect. There is nothing I can do about it.

While in prison, stay in shape, work out, run, and try to eat well — even though that's nearly impossible with the garbage that passes for food in prison. But, although you may get depressed, lonely, and frustrated in prison, never go to the prison psychologist. Prison shrinks only want to drug prisoners into submission. One of the newest fads in corrections is tranquilizers that are given out like candy to pacify and control inmates. What better way to turn prisoners into submissive zombies than by medicating them for depression and anxiety. Don't fall into the medication trap in prison. You need to be clear-headed while doing time, not in a drugged-out haze.

When you go to prison, settle down and find a positive routine. After the shock of prison wears off, and the other prisoners figure out you will defend yourself, you'll be left alone to do your time. Don't sit around vegetating in front of a TV, playing cards or reading westerns. Don't waste your time complaining about your wrongful conviction and what a poor victim you are. Don't turn into what I call a "prison zombie" who does his time like he's waiting to die. Your main mission in prison will be trying to get your unjust conviction overturned. Learn as much about the law and the corrupt legal system as you can. Get to know the prisoner law clerks in the law library, and spend as much time in the library as possible. Study every aspect of your case, and stay on top of your attorney. Your lawyer is not the one in prison, you are. The appeals process takes years. Prisoners rarely win a new trial because the criminal justice system is not about truth and justice, but you can't win if you don't try. Fighting the legal system will be frustrating and depressing, but try not to give up hope.

Not only do we prisoners have to stick together, but we men must also join forces in our fight against feminism. Become a soldier in the Men's Rights Fight. Contact the antifeminist, pro-family men's groups in your area, as well as some of the national groups.

Sex Offender Treatment

One of the most profitable scams in the prison behavioral modification business is the sex-offender treatment industry. Because you were convicted of a sex offense, you are now fuel for the sex-offender treatment profiteers. You will be expected to confess to your crime, end all appeals for a fair trial, dismiss all delusions of

innocence, and participate in sex-offender treatment along with admitted child molesters and serial rapists. Confession is the main tenet of sex-offender treatment. It does not matter to prison officials that you have always maintained your innocence and are in the process of appeal.

Thousands of people work in the sex-offender treatment industry and to justify their high-paying state jobs you must confess to your offense. You are the meal ticket not only of prison guards but also sex-offender treatment providers. As a wrongly convicted prisoner, you should have nothing to do with sex-offender treatment. Be a man, and stand up for what is right. There will be repercussions for you for not confessing and becoming another admitted sex offender. You will be denied any good-time off your prison term and early parole will be out of the question. I have always refused to even speak to sex-offender treatment counselors. Not only have I been denied any time off my sentence for good behavior, but the Oregon Parole Board has labeled me mentally unfit and dangerous to society because I refuse to confess, show remorse, and beg for forgiveness.

Not only should you avoid sex-offender treatment, but I suggest you refuse to participate in any behavior modification programs in prison. Don't admit anything to prison officials or prison counselors. Those who work in the behavior modification industry behind prison walls will use anything you tell them against you. Tell them nothing about your past. Prison counselors are not your friends.

Never talk to any prison psychologist. There is no faster way to be labeled mentally and emotionally unfit than to trust a prison psychologist. As a convicted sex offender, innocent or not, you are the bread and butter of the sex-offender treatment industry, prison counselors/psychologists, and prison guards. The only way they can justify their jobs is to keep you in their prison programs as long as possible. Be aware of their true motives, don't trust them, tell them nothing, and never doubt yourself. You owe them nothing.

You are an innocent man in prison. Act like one, and good luck my friend.

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