

To whom it may concern,

My name is Yared Retta, I am a African American man who is a father, son, grandson, brother, student (CSN), and also a formerly incarcerated person. It has been brought to my attention that a possible Oversight Panel may be created for the currently incarcerated population. I support the plan of an oversight panel, the way I was treated by the Prison Officials/Staff was extremely oppressive and at many times, counterproductive to my studies. When candidates are being selected to join the Prison Education Program through CSN, this select group of individuals are one on esteem standard amongst the masses. With that being said, this restores any lost dignity that may have been striped due to horrific conditions endured in these prisons. Which in turn, one would like to believe this is the purpose of these programs (Such as the Prison Education Program) to restore dignity and self respect to those who may have lost hope. Yet, the challenges only seemed to enhance in prison once I became a student; the Correctional Officers searched me more frequently due to my frequent movement around the prison to classes. Along with this, came the oppressive and discouraging language from prison staff and free staff making it their mission to let me know "How will this help you?" "Don't you think some people are hopeless". Many times, the students and I would have moments of self-doubt that would seep through our minds about the success upon our release to society, then we come across the staff who remind us all that we are still just another prison inmate. Instead of viewing us as success stories who are striving for an ounce of hope in the darkest times of one's life, we were viewed as less than the masses. Yet we sometimes do not get fed hot meals because we will be in class for higher education, so we will get a cold meal after studies, then we will lose opportunities to call our families, or be restricted for some school materials due to the prison's unprovoked reasoning. Which leads to us having late assignments, or we will be denied for tutor moments while the prison may be on a scheduled lock down. Coming from the lens of a formerly incarcerated man, who is a free one now, I must advocate a oversight panel to visit our students that way the students have advocates that will fight for reasonable and just conditions as a higher education student, in the most brutal places to get a education, I thank you all for your time, may God bless you and you all's family.

Respectfully,
Yared Retta
07/07/2022
