

Treatment of Prisoners in Santa Rita Jail

By Jazmine Davis

Hello, my name is Jazmine and I am housing insecure. I am a musician and I am from the bay area.

When I was in Santa Rita, I met several women who had been arrested for warrants they did not know about even after following up with the police.

One woman who was booked around the same time we were booked, had just gotten home from work only to find that the police had beaten her there and arrested her on the spot for a warrant she did not know about. Her boyfriend immediately posted her bail and waited outside from 4am past 11 am while she sat in the holding cell.

While in the transfer room, I met a woman who was a weekender, which meant that she had a prearranged release time every Sunday with the court so that she could get to work. But jail guards ignored her and kept her there for hours after her scheduled release time.

Another woman had been sitting in the transfer room for 7 hours before I got there and was also supposed to be released, but kept getting responses such as "we need to find your paperwork first," even though she had it in her hands.

While I was in my pod, I learned my cellmates had not eaten between 6 am and 3 pm and hadn't been outside in multiple days. My cellmates described the emotional abuse they received and even pointed out which guards smuggled in different drugs. When we did eat, it was bologna and nearly stale bread maybe with a tangerine and powdered "juice" which shouldn't legally pass as food. Sometimes you won't even receive a cup for your drink.

There were no trash cans or toilet paper in the holding cells. There was no privacy either. Once, one of us was using the toilet, and another imprisoned protestor stood up to give them privacy as a guard walked in. The guard threatened to taze the prisoner who stood up. This kind of verbal abuse and threats were common.

Meanwhile on the men's side, they had become tired of being abused and faced unfair labor conditions to the point in which they started a strike. Until we told them about the strike, the women's side had no idea about the men's organized resistance, but had been given all the men's duties while the men's complaints went ignored; they were in completely separate worlds.