

Stories from



Inside

Prisoner Rape and the War on Drugs

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STOP PRISONER RAPE



Venerable Kobutsu Malone is a 56-year-old American Zen Buddhist priest who has spent most of the last two decades teaching meditation in prisons, serving as a volunteer Buddhist Chaplain, and ministering to prisoners on death row. As a teenager in the mid-1960s, he was involved in the "psychedelic revolution." In 1968, at the age of 18, he was arrested during a raid at a friend's Washington, D.C. house.

I was charged with presence in an illegal establishment, possession of the instruments of a crime, violation of the 1937 Marijuana Tax Act, and impersonating a federal officer. The impersonating a federal officer charge consisted of me having a joke ID card in my wallet. That charge and the tax act charge were dropped.

The other two charges remained. The possession of the instruments of a crime charge consisted of the claim that I had a marijuana smoking pipe in my suitcase. I was a hippie—I had a gas mask bag—I never owned a suitcase, no self-respecting hippie in 1968 owned a suitcase. I had no drugs or paraphernalia; it was simply a routine police frame-up.

I got up in front of the judge, said I was not guilty and was given a trial date some three months down the line. Since I couldn't make bail, I had to go to the D.C. jail. I was absolutely scared to death—an 18-year-old white kid from middle class suburbia being placed in an inner-city, predominately black, jail. There were remarks made on the bus on the way to the jail: 'White boy is gonna get his ass reamed. You are in for it. You are going to be somebody's bitch.' When we got there, we were all made to strip and we were humiliated in front of everyone else, given ill-fitting clothing and put in cells.

One day later, after lunch, I went back to

my cell. Instead of the small, white fellow that had been in there, there was a very large black man inside. I stood outside the door because I was afraid to go in. One of the guards yelled, 'Get the fuck in your cell.' The black guy grabbed me and pulled me inside. At that point, the cell doors closed.

He sat me down and said we were going to play cards. I said I didn't know how to play cards. He said, 'Fuck this shit, you gonna suck my dick.' I was just floored. I got up to scream for help from the guards. The man hit me in the gut, as hard as I've ever been hit in my life. I nearly lost consciousness.

He pinned me down to the bars and had his fist in front of my face. This guy probably outweighed me by a factor of three. There was no way in hell I stood a chance. He threw me down onto the bunk, tore my pants off, and anally raped me.

I was terrified and in tremendous pain. People on the outside seemed to know what was going on, and they were making a lot of noise to cover up my protests.

After he had finished abusing me, he literally lifted me up and sat me down, and said, 'You're my bitch. You belong to me and you're going to do anything I say. You're going to fuck anyone I tell you to.'

When they opened the cell doors, I was frozen in place. It was lock-down time and they began closing the doors. I stuck my ankle

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in the moving door and screamed as loud as I could. They took me to the hospital, and I finally told an orderly what happened to me. They made a report and a doctor arrived five to six hours later to do a rectal examination.

A corrections captain then came in and said: 'You're a homosexual, right? You asked for this. You wanted this nigger with his telephone pole up your ass? That is what you have been going for, isn't it?'

It was something beyond any horror that I ever imagined—it gave me tremendous fear.

As a result of being so violently attacked, I was forced to deal with issues of racism, with issues of questioning my own masculinity in terms of defending myself against that attack. That work is not finished. I don't think that

work ever gets finished. It takes away something to be that humiliated, to be held so powerless, and to have the knowledge that one has not fought back with every shred of their being to the death. At some point, I surrendered out of unmitigated terror.

It never goes away. Over time, I think I've come to some understanding of the situation. One of the things that has helped me tremendously has been spending 16 years working with prisoners—witnessing countless cases of brutality, of dealing with rape and abuse victims, dealing with people who are being bought and sold as sexual chattel in prison, dealing with people who are being tortured, and worst of all, witnessing the executions of two of my students.

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