

1 We have three or four officers in 618

2 Attica shouldn't belong around any black man nowhere
3 because these are racists and that is a small minority.
4 I mean, these men come in to work in the morning and
5 they are going to find what they can do to irritate an
6 inmate. They do it deliberately with malice afore-
7 thought but that's in a very small minority.

8 I know, because I know--well, I am not deal-
9 ing in personalities as a whole, no. I won't lie, as
10 a whole, no.

11 The average--I mean, I never had an officer
12 holler at me.

13 Q Now, in looking over your disciplinary
14 record, Mr. Young, I was struck by the fact that
15 almost out of the blue on March 23, 1971, you were
16 written up and received a reprimand for disobeying an
17 order while marching.

18 Tell me why a man like you would have
19 gotten written up for that.

20 A That was all a mistake. On my part and
21 the officer's, too.

22 I eat every day with the guys I work with.
23 Some of these--and I eat on a line where I am the
24 only black man that eats on that side of the line.

25 On this side--they don't separate us. That's

1 something you do to yourself. Nobody makes 619

2 you eat like that.

3 So I am in line five minutes to 12:00
4 getting ready to go to the mess hall. A new officer
5 says, "Get over there in that line."

6 I says, "What?"

7 He says, "Get over there with the rest of
8 them."

9 My nose is open. The thing is, when he
10 said, "Get over there with the rest of them," and in
11 the other line opposite me, there was 15 or 16 blacks
12 and they heard him. And they started, just like that
13 they started.

14 "What is he talking about?" You know the
15 words they use.

16 I said, "Be quiet." I said, "I will handle
17 this."

18 I said, "Listen, I've eaten over here with
19 these men for two years. I am going to eat there
20 today and tomorrow."

21 I said, "I'm not going to move and you ain't
22 going to move me," and he said, "Let's forget about it.
23 You can do just what you please about it."

24 I went to the mess hall, came back and was
25 keeplocked.

1 The next morning I went to court.
2 This officer thought that was the way it was supposed
3 to be. It was a young guy and he ain't prejudiced.

4 Today me and him are friends. He just told
5 me to get over with the black guys, never thinking.
6 A big old country boy, you know. And that's a fact,
7 he wasn't prejudiced. He just didn't know.

8 Q You went to court.

9 What happened when you went to court?

10 A I went to court and so they asked me to
11 explain it. When I explained just how it was, Lt.
12 Maroni and the PK, I think Mr. Burger and they had
13 a representative from the service unit. And I told
14 them, I said, "I was made as hell."

15 I said I was mad. But I see if I got any
16 madder, there was eight or ten of them young guys,
17 all they wanted to do, this man talked to me like that
18 and their noses were open.

19 I am glad he talked to me instead of one
20 of those young guys.

21 Q What do you think would have happened if
22 this officer had told one of the younger inmates that
23 he couldn't stand in line with white inmates?

24 A I don't know. Depends on the individual.
25 Depends on how he was that day.

2 home the night before saying his wife had been
3 pregnant and he would have been in jail three years,
4 I don't know what he would have did. These things
5 happen every day. These happen to us. We know what
6 happens.

7 They expect us to be every day the same. I
8 seen a guy, his mother died in Mississippi. You
9 can't go out of State. And he was the only kid in
10 the family. And I know he come and sit, "What can I
11 do?"

12 I said, "Go see the chaplin, talk to him."

13 He said, "What is he going to do?"

14 The next morning this man lined up--the first
15 thing he did was hit the stick, line up, get in pairs,
16 be quiet. That's the first thing you hear when you
17 get out of the cell.

18 The officer don't know this guy. He don't
19 feel like getting lined up. He is bugged up to start
20 with. Not at the officer. Just in general, you under-
21 stand what I mean?

22 The guy says, "Man, go to hell. I don't
23 feel like it."

24 And that's just what he felt like. Boom, he
25 was locked up. You thought he killed somebody. The

1 way he was treated when he told that officer 622
2 to go to hell. And he would have told anyone. He
3 would have told me to go to hell. It had nothing to
4 do with the officer. Just at the time he didn't
5 care about anything.

6 Q Mr. Young, you're what's considered a good
7 inmate.

8 What is considered a bad inmate? What makes
9 a bad inmate in the eyes of the institution?

10 A What makes him in the eyes of the institution?
11 You can't think. You are not a man. You can't think.
12 They tell you when to get up in the morning, when to
13 go to chow, when to go to sleep at night, when to go
14 to the movies, when to go to yard, when to come back
15 from yard.

16 I have a job where I use a slide rule, I
17 use a typewriter, an adding machine. This is the
18 best thing that can happen to me because it keeps my
19 mind alert, but can you imagine year in, year out, an
20 adult cannot think? Can you imagine you not being
21 able to think, or just express an opinion?

22 You know, the first thing they say is, "I
23 don't want to hear."

24 When you got an opinion, "I don't want to
25 hear."

1 I am a man. I committed a crime, 623

2 but I am a man and I will be a man when I leave and
3 there is nothing they can do to make me not be a man.

4 I respect myself before I ever seen those
5 people and that's how come I can respect those people.

6 Q Mr. Young, did you ever witness a correction
7 officer hit an inmate--

8 A Never.

9 Q (continuing) --or an inmate hit a correction
10 officer?

11 A I have never seen either. It has happened,
12 but I have never seen it.

13 Q You have heard of these things happening, but
14 you have never seen it?

15 A I know they have happened on both sides.

16 Q And what about verbal abuse?

17 A Verbal abuse--you take--guys come in from
18 Greenhaven. Now, Attica is a prison all by itself.
19 Attica doen't do anything like any other prison in
20 New York State. Don't say it does, because we know.

21 If I was in Clinton today I could get cigars
22 from home. I smoke cigars. I can't get them in Attica
23 because I am in Attica.

24 If I was in Greenhaven today, I could get
25 cigarettes. I can't get them in Attica.

1 I will give you an example of

624

2 what happened to me right after Easter--before Easter.

3 I drink tea, not coffee. My brother brings
4 me anything I ask for, my oldest brother. I drink
5 tea, they call it iced tea mix and it's tea and sugar
6 and lemonade all mixed together. A little plastic
7 package and I drink it all the time.

8 You can't get anything in a glass. I got
9 it Thanksgiving, I got it Christmas. My brother brought
10 me 18 bags Good Friday and you know what they told me,
11 they had a notice on the package room you couldn't get
12 that no more. On the inside of the package room.

13 I like that. They didn't notify me. They
14 didn't put no bulletin on the housing area. I just
15 found it.

16 My brother said, "What the hell is going on?"

17 I said, "Be quiet. I'll take care of it
18 outside."

19 It's a mental harassment. It's a mental
20 thing. They just degrade you. You can't have to put
21 your hands on me to degrade me or upset me.

22 Q Do you think some of them even understand
23 they are degrading you when they do it?

24 A I will tell you something else: I have seen
25 officers go down the back--I remember an officer in the

1 metal shop wanting to get us showers at 625
2 night. You know what they told that officer, "Don't
3 rock the boat. Do your job."

4 I have seen officers go down--I am talking
5 about this particular fellow, I seen his officer go
6 right down front, he said, "Why don't you let the guy
7 spend the \$20?"

8 The PK down front told him to mind his own
9 business. This buy worked with him for probably five
10 or six or seven years. He wanted to keep--this is
11 what they call a good inmate, too. They keep the
12 officers--a good officer is scared to go to bat for
13 you.

14 The man down front will tell you, "What?"

15 Let me give you an example. Gideon versus
16 Wainwright came out in 1961. You know what happened
17 in 1961, everybody who thought the had anything wrong
18 wanted to try to help themselves. Anybody who
19 thought they didn't have a lawyer.

20 If they caught this man helping me with a
21 writ, with my papers--I can't write, all I can do is
22 tell them. This man knows a little about law. They
23 look me up and him up and destroy my papers.

24 Do you think any warden is going to stop a
25 man from trying to get out of prison, a legal way to

1 get out of prison?

626

2 In 1967 the Supreme Court said any inmate
3 can help another inmate prepare his papers.

4 Do you know what the warden of Attica told
5 me, "I run this place."

6 Two years ago we were allowed to help each
7 other. Another man was allowed to help another inmate.
8 A legal redress, but the warden said, "As long as I
9 run it, I run it. The hell with the Supreme Court."

10 Do you think that's harassment? It's not
11 a physical thing but the man said, "These people are
12 running me crazy."

13 Q Have you ever heard racial epithets by
14 inmates or correction officers directed toward one
15 another?

16 There was one incident that you told me
17 about in your presence of a correction officer.

18 A This happened after the riot. I was going
19 by. See, like you say, I'm a good inmate so I have a
20 pass. I don't have to go out to the prison with an
21 officer. I can go by myself because I am a clerk.

22 I happened to go by this group of officers,
23 and I heard him say, "These damn niggers."

24 I stopped right there and I turned around
25 and I said, "What did you say?"

1
2 standing together in A-block. I said, "What did you
3 say? If you ever say it again I will have you in
4 front of the warden."

5 Nobody said nothing. And my nose was open.
6 I walked right over to him. One of the men who said
7 that is one of the men who I said is a racist. They
8 regarded that--that's just one of those things, but
9 I will tell you something else.

10 You take right now. If I was to go right
11 now, today you got a package list, just like right
12 now. We are allowed 15 pounds of food a month. I can
13 get chicken five times a year or ham on a holiday.
14 Why?

15 If my people can afford to give me a package,
16 what difference does it make if it's 18 or 22 pounds?
17 Don't you think that is a morale booster? We have
18 asked for it how many times? Fifteen pounds, that's
19 all. You get chicken five times a year.

20 I'll give you an example of how they do. I
21 asked my brother five years ago to bring me six pair
22 of shorts, six T-shirts and two pair of pajamas. All
23 I have to do is tell him and he brings me.

24 On Saturday he brought me six shorts, six
25 T-shirts and two pair of pajamas. Three of my pair

1 of shorts were brown and three pair of 628
2 shorts were blue. One of my pajamas was brown and
3 one was blue.

4 Do you know, I could not have those three
5 pair of shorts and one pair of pajamas because I
6 violated security by having blue underwear nobody
7 could see but myself. That's a violation of security.

8 I mean, how can you tell a grown man that he
9 is violating security by wearing a blue pair of shorts?
10 I mean, this is the type of juvenile attitude they
11 treat us. They actually think that we believe that.

12 You know why the rule was made? For harass-
13 ment and for harassment only.

14 (Continued on page 629.)
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

1b Q And yet, despite all of these things, 629

2 you, because of your different background and other fac-
3 tors, have been able to acclimate yourself and be what
4 you yourself term, a good inmate?

5 A Like I said before, I am lucky. My dad was a
6 minister and I had a type of home where my mother and
7 father were happy. The first time in my life I went to a
8 football game, I saw Cornell in 1937. He was a companion.
9 I want to tell you of a friend of mine, who got killed
10 in the yard. I got two beautiful daughters. My wife is
11 white. I killed my father-in-law, which is a white man.

12 I think that is why I was tricked into prison,
13 not because of the crime I committed, but what I didn't
14 stay in my place. So the average young black guy in
15 Attica knows me, knows I got two daughters. My baby
16 daughter's pictures have been in Ebony, Life Magazine and
17 they are both beautiful children.

18 I got to be friends with guys. In the first
19 place, I have been an official on the football and I have
20 been a bridge official for nine years. So therefore, I
21 get over the institution a lot more than the average in-
22 mate and I have had a pass possibly ten years. Which al-
23 lows me over the institution.

24 Anyway, this kid used to call me father all the
25 time on account of my daughters. One Sunday we were sit-

2¹ ting in the yard talking. Talking about 630
3 Jamestown, how you live where you want to live, no de-
4 scrimination. How when I first got married, my wife was
5 white, I lived from a white family and went from them.
6 They don't even know what you are talking about.

7 He says, you know, and I cried. He says,
8 "When I was a kid my mother had five children. I don't
9 think any of us had the same father."

10 He said, "I have seen my mother come in with a
11 man and put us kids out in the hall. I was the oldest
12 when she had relationship," and I am 50 years old and
13 he is telling me this.

14 And how do you think that kid can relate to some
15 rural officer from an environment like Attica? He never
16 had a chance to start with. The first time he ever stole
17 anything, he stole from a fruit stand to hurt his mother.
18 The kid has never probably earned \$50 in a week in his
19 life. So, like I say, he gets arrested and what happens.

20 Like I said, I wasn't abused by any officer.
21 I didn't have a chip on my shoulder when I came in. No-
22 body mistreated me. Take one of those kids from Bedford-
23 Stuyvesant or somewhere in New York, he gets picked up,
24 what is the first thing that happens to him.

25 We say there isn't such a thing as brutality but
the kid gets beat over the head. By the time he gets old

31 enough to come to Attica, do you think that 631

2 he is going to relate to a man that doesn't even under-
3 stand his problem at all, his background?

4 He has never probably been to a ballgame in
5 the Yankee Stadium. He never seen the Giants play. He
6 never had anybody take him. How can he relate to one
7 of these people? They don't know what our problem is.

8 Q You have worn a white shirt and a tie and a
9 suit before the prison gave you this clothing to come and
10 testify here?

11 A Last year I worked in the street. I earned
12 over \$7,000 working in a ball-bearing factory in James-
13 town. That was in 1969.

14 Q Would you say there are many kids who, in Attica,
15 who will be putting on that suit and tie and white shirt,
16 for the first time when they are dressed up for court or
17 for an appearance before a Commission such as this?

18 A There are so many I hardly even realize.

19 Q Mr. Young, you have talked about what makes a
20 good inmate. Are there any correction officers at Attica
21 who you would consider to be good correction officers even
22 despite the great gap between their background and the
23 background of the inmates they are dealing with?

24 A You have some good officers and you have some
25 real good officers.

4 1 Q What makes a really, really good
2 officer?

3 A Well, let's say for instance like me, for
4 instance. When I came in the shop, the officers used to
5 say, "How are your kids getting along, do you get any
6 mail from home?"

7 The old timers. Whether he meant that or not,
8 he might be just psyching you. But it was nice. I said,
9 well, this guy is halfway concerned with me. The officers
10 today don't even know what the guys' names are, the major-
11 ity of them. I'll tell you, an officer, one who listened
12 to your problem and will attempt to do something about
13 it. One officer will say, "Wait, I don't want to hear
14 it." You got an officer say something to you, you cannot
15 even dispute him one bit. You cannot be human.

16 He say, "Okay, I want so and so done." Don't
17 say why.

18 "What do you mean why. Because I said so."

19 That is the system. You can't--you are not
20 supposed to even attempt to change the system.

21 Q Are there many officers who you would put in
22 this category of good officers at Attica?

23 A I will say 95 per cent of the officers at
24 Attica are fairly good people.

25 Q To you?

15

A To me. Well, I mean, an officer--

633

2 these guys come from the same environment I come from.

3 They like to go bowling, they like to fish and hunt.

4 A lot of these kids from New York City don't know what

5 you're talking about when you say things like that.

6 Q You can converse with them?

7 A I like to bowl. I like to fish and hunt.

8 Q You are on a first name basis with some offi-

9 cers, aren't you?

10 A Well, it depends on who is around. If the

11 PK is around--

12 Q Well, privately when the PK and nobody else

13 is around, you call a number of officers by their first

14 name and they call you?

15 A Certainly. Everybody in the place calls me

16 Boots.

17 Q Do you get along, for example, with the offi-

18 cers for whom you now work?

19 A Like I told you, I get along with every offi-

20 cer in Attica. The ones I know are no good, I avoid.

21 And I know how to avoid them. And that is only two or

22 three officers I know in the place that I do avoid, in

23 the whole of all the officers.

24 Q Mr. Young, I would like to ask you just one

25 last set of questions. You are in on a sentence where if

61 you had been convicted more recently you 634

2 would have been eligible for parole several years ago?

3 A Yes, sir.

4 Q You are now--because you were convicted under
5 the old law, entered a plea under the old law, you are
6 not eligible to meet the Parole Board until when?

7 A Eight more years .

8 Q How many other inmates are there in this same
9 situation as you in Attica that you have talked to them,
10 a number?

11 A I will say a minimum of 350.

12 Q Now, Mr. Young, you have heard that various com-
13 mittees including the Committee of Hugh Jones, which
14 Senator Dunne is on and other groups, correction officers
15 have advocated that the law be changed so that you would
16 have this, you and the other inmates would have the same
17 eligibility date for parole as under the new law. And no
18 action has yet been taken on that.

19 How do you and the others in your situation feel
20 about that?

21 A 95 per cent of us live in hopes that it will be
22 enacted. We write our people, we tell our people to write.
23 We think there is a big inequity. We know it's wrong. We
24 know it's wrong for me--in the first place, I did wrong to
25 be in Attica and I am an adult but there is a degree of

7 1 wrongness. What I did 12 years ago and I got 635
2 30 to life for and the same crime a man commits today,
3 which I am not justifying anybody committing any crime.
4 Why should he get half as much time as I got? We are
5 both citizens of New York State. It's just a frustrat-
6 ing thing. Why?

7 MR. LIMAN: I have no more questions.

8 Mr. Chairman?

9 MR. MCKAY: Mr. Young, as I think you have
10 been advised, you have an opportunity if you wish to
11 make a statement to the Commission and to the public
12 during the course of this, but no in response to a
13 specific question.

14 Do you wish to do that now or at the con-
15 clusion of any questions put by the Commission? We
16 would be glad to receive it.

17 THE WITNESS: Do it any way you want.

18 MR. MCKAY: Let me find out what questions
19 there are. I think Mr. Henix has a question and Mr.
20 Rothschild and perhaps others.

21 EXAMINATION BY MR. HENIX:

22 Q I really only have one question to ask you.

23 I could say this much, though, I think I should
24 say it in all fairness and all honesty. When I read on
25 the list of people who were going to come before us today

8 1 and the way you are described here as an older 636

2 black inmate in prison. I expected an entirely differ-
3 ent type of personality. I feel very good about the
4 fact that you are very objective and I think very rea-
5 listic in the way you see things, having been in this
6 type of situation myself.

7 But I've got a question to ask you, Mr. Young.
8 That question is in reference to harassment. This has
9 to do with now and certain changes. One in particular
10 change gives me a great deal of discomfort and you be-
11 ing able to travel throughout the institution. How do
12 you feel about the fact that gun towers are now being
13 installed around the recreation area?

14 A I have been in the yard once. I don't think
15 I will ever go again.

16 MR. HENIX: Thank you.

17 MR. MCKAY: Mr. Rothschild?

18 EXAMINATION BY MR. ROTHSCHILD:

19 Q Mr. Young, you talked about the problems of the
20 young inmates and the younger guards, the clash of two
21 societies that understand each other not. And its results
22 in the frustrations and the dehumanizing that it does. I
23 wanted to ask you from your perspective which Mr. Henix s
24 said is remarkably broad, I think. Do you think that that
25 dehumanizing and difficult--frustration is probably as

9¹ difficult for the young officers in many ways

637

2 as it is for the young inmates? They obviously occupy
3 different roles.

4 A I think it's quite different from the young
5 officer. He is clashing with a different culture. He
6 is clasing with something he can't comprehend. He
7 doesn't understand it. He doesn't live--some of the
8 people have never went to school--around Attica--with a
9 black person in their life. That is a white community
10 that's been running that prison ever since it was there.
11 And there is father and brother and uncle, which I don't
12 say is bad, because they are aware, buy I don't think it
13 will ever been enlightened or broadened. The dogma
14 is there that we did this 25 years ago and my father did
15 this 30 years ago.

16 I'm going to do the same thing. I am 50 years
17 old and there is no way in the world you are going to
18 treat a kid coming out of Brooklyn Stuyvesant, like you
19 do me and don't think you're going to do it. Just forget
20 it. He has been beaten, he has been hungry. He probably
21 never had a father in his life and you are going to treat
22 him like you do me? You can forget the whole thing be-
23 cause if you do, keep it up and you will have another
24 Attica somewhere and that is what all of us are trying to
25 prevent.

2 yard and I don't think it should have happened. If
3 things would have been different it wouldn't have hap-
4 pened.

5 Can you imagine, you don't know what it is. My
6 day has been closing every day for 12 years at 4:30.
7 Every day at 4:30. Monday, Tuesday, week in, week out,
8 every day. For 12 years I sit there in that cell. Some-
9 times I feel like reading. And it's not that nobody has
10 bothered me but do you know the frustration I am going
11 through and I am a good inmate, just being incarcerated.
12 Incarceration is hell, I don't care what anybody else
13 says. You don't have to be harassed to hate the kind of
14 living conditions you are under.

15 Can you imagine , some time you just wake up in
16 the morning, like in the summertime, and I say I wonder
17 what those two kids of mine are doing. I would like to
18 take them fishing. They even bait their own hooks, they
19 are girls. Putting minnows on them. And this officer
20 doesn't know what is on my mind and I am supposed to be
21 the same inmate day in, day out, day in, day out.

22 You know what made me a grateful inmate? In
23 1962 in Roswell Memorial Hospital, they had a childrens
24 ward on the fifth floor of Roswell. And these kinds were
25 all in this ward, there was Puerto Rican kids and black,

1 white and most of them were white.

639

2 The nurse told me, "Isn't it a pity, not a
3 one of them will live to go home."

4 I had two little babies at home. From that
5 day to this day, nothing ever bothered me. They never
6 had a chance. Just like these kids at Attica.

7 MR. MCKAY: Mr. Young, do you wish to make
8 a statement to the Commission?

9 THE WITNESS: What have I been doing?

10 MR. MCKAY: You have made a statement.

11 Thank you very much for being with us today.
12 We appreciate your attendance.

13 THE WITNESS: I appreciate your listening.

14 Thank you very much.

15 (Whereupon, the witness was excused.)
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
