

~~Shackles are~~ Cruel & Unusual Shackles

To: Salt Lake Trib. Editorial 7/19/22

Co: American Prison Writing Archive

From: ^{starting O.A. class} SDA, 228033, UAE

I'd like to unveil something as blatant and ignored as the "but the king has no clothes" fable/metaphor. I've been an inmate in Utah for 6.5 years, but the clarity of the unnecessary pain of shackles occurred to me during my 7/13 ^{to the new prison} move with four fellow inmates. We had shackles on both our ankles and wrists.

The chain between the two ankle shackles is about 14" to 18" long. You have to walk with short strides because of the chain's shortness. The shackles are ^{adjustable} tight enough to not spin freely around your ankle. As they toggle forward and backward ^{and twist} with each step, the shackles dig painfully into the flesh around the ankle, including the skin and tendons and ankle bone.

As we were walking out of Draper it occurred to me that with ^{the capabilities provided by} modern materials and 3-D printing, of designs ^{and God's inspiration,} if I had those tools and was versatile in their use, I could probably come up with a design in an afternoon, that would both restrain and be nominally comfortable. Give a competent ^{in-spired} team that task, and they could resolve this issue.

The typical response of officers when the shackle pain is mentioned is, "If you don't

Another friend here in our section said that putting his arms behind his back cuts off his circulation. His hand was purple when he arrived here - not to mention he's hearing-impaired and it supposed to be shackled if that's so we can do sign language.

like it, don't come to prison." In their minds, shackles have been usual and acceptable since forever. So what if it hurts a little [lot]. Yes, we had a dialogue to this effect as we walked from the Draper facility.

As we got into the van, the pain switched from our ankle shackles to our wrist shackles, as we were now sitting against the shackles behind our backs. I'm 5'9" - on the shorter end of the spectrum - and my knees were into the seat in front of me. We were all silent, wriggling to adjust the cuffs to an arrangement not so painful - too much in pain to chat, though friends. ‡

As for "usual," that is a relative term - very subjective. In Nazi Germany, shooting people for no reason was a regular occurrence. It's a function of growing accustomed to something unreasonable - the boiling frog parable.

In the case of shackles, the incremental disparity has been a function of shackle improvement not keeping up with materials science and seeking to improve their comfort.

There is no good reason we should be in the present status quo. ‡ We should design and implement more comfortable shackles. Anyone up to the task? It's a huge, global market. May the best design win (e.g. free market).

If this goes on much longer, when it doesn't need to, a cruel and unusual (unnecessary) punishment class action suit could ensue. They "know better, now."

Correct Dept. Facility, not prison. Can necessary force necessary. The high cost of and in using the best technology has the potential to pay for us in the long run.

Restraint doesn't have to be painful. The disrespect of shackles is contrary to prison.