

MY DIARY

8th October, 2008 to 29th December, 2008.

Foreword: The following notes have been transcribed from observations made while incarcerated at the North West Detention Centre in Tacoma, Washington State, US. It is one thing for a single person to comment on the conditions of such an establishment, it is another to give them credibility. With this in mind, I would recommend the following links in support of my opinions about the NWDC. NB. All hyperlinked pages open in a new window.

One America : Report: Conditions at the NW Detention Center are ...

<http://www.hatefreezone.org/article.php?id=262>

SEATTLE—The findings of Voices from Detention: A Report on Human Rights Violations at the Northwest Detention Center (NWDC) confirm human rights abuses are ...

T Don Hutto: Voices From Detention: GEO Group's Northwest ...

<http://tdonhutto.blogspot.com/2008/07/voices-from-detention-geo-groups.html>

"July 15: The Seattle University School of Law and OneAmerica (a Seattle-based organization advancing immigrant, civil, and human rights) released Voices from Detention on conditions at the GEO Group's Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, WA. Based on 46 interviews, primarily with detainees, the report found: Lack of due process and violations of attorney-client privilege. The use of physical threats and intimidation to force detainees to sign papers. Mistreatment of detainees by guards and federal marshalls. Inadequate medical care, esp. emergency care. Inadequate treatment of mentally ill, esp. refugees who had been persecuted in their homelands. Insufficient quantities of food and incidents of food poisoning. Poor living conditions due to severe overcrowding. Language barriers to detainees."

The Northwest Detention Center — Tahoma Organizer

<http://www.tahomaorganizer.org/the-northwest-detention-center>

27 Dec 2007 ... Robert Sorensen is a master's candidate at the University of Washington, Tacoma, who has devoted considerable time and effort to researching ...

This video: "What is the Northwest Detention Center?"

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=bTrR1s7du6s>

Toxic waste danger to NWDC detainees and staff?

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=Gj-g1xSExWQ>

Also of interest, and somewhat relevant:

Tacoma Police 1: <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=8NICPGhweFE>

Tacoma Police 2: <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=DMDW4Fszj2U>

I got to the detention centre (North West Detention Centre - "NWDC") late in the evening on the 8th October, 2008.

I had no idea what type of experience was awaiting me, but had a mixture of emotions. Those which were negative I tried to ignore. I was focussing on achieving an objective.

Upon arrival, you get put into a 'holding cell' at 'Intake' (so named for obvious reasons). Intake was a large room with a number of holding cells - perhaps about half a dozen. Food (in the loosest sense of the term) was provided. It actually constituted a form of torture. The name given to this food is a 'sacked lunch'. It doesn't actually come in a sack. It is a disgusting and heavily processed ham and cheese sandwich, a couple of small sticks of celery, and an orange lacking sweetness and some moisture. I took one bite of my sandwich and spat it out. I would add at this point that during my stay at the NWDC, that it was observed that even many of the the Hispanic (Mexican) detainees would not eat sacked lunches - and they generally would eat anything. That is how bad the sacked lunch is.

I have used the word 'Hispanic' to describe members of the Mexican population. I quickly learned that this was the appropriate way and politically correct to describe them. I suppose it is akin to being referred to as an Anglo-Saxon rather than a 'Brit' or and Englishman.

After a short time, I was sent to the desk officer at the centre of the room. Here I was photographed and (if I recall correctly), fingerprinted. Once all the paperwork is complete, you are given a wristband. This is similar to the type of ID that is given to hospital patients. It carries a photograph of you, your 'A Number' (a reference number given to all detainees) and a few other details.

There is also a change of clothing. The clothing comes in three colours, depending upon your background. I was a 'blue uniform' and this meant I had no background (of a criminal nature) to cause any concern to the NWDC. Then there were 'orange' uniforms and these were reserved for criminals with non-violent backgrounds. Red uniforms were the 3rd option. These were reserved for those with such a background they had to be detained under special circumstances. They were considered not safe to be housed with the blue uniforms in the 'general population' (a term used for all the detainees). However, they could be housed with orange uniforms.

My health concerns were made known to the NWDC's staff. All they would offer me was a bed in the (allegedly) calmest 'pod' in the building. A 'pod' is a dormitory with a fixed number of beds and facilities. I'm not sure which one I was sent to firstly, but it may be the one where I completed my stay with the NWDC - namely 'D2'.

Pod D2 has 80 beds. It is one of the smallest rooms at the NWDC, but noise levels could still be substantial. It was very noisy when I arrived in the room and I thought I would go crazy right there and then. It was like a lunatic asylum.

After a very short time laying on my bed in D2, and feeling very depressed, I was taken to the medical unit with severe chest pains. From here I was eventually offered two choices. I could either return to my pod, or I could go into 'segregation'. I had no idea what segregation was, and did not realise until sometime later that it was a punishment block.

The facilities in segregation were non-existent. The cells contained just two (bunked) beds and a small metal table and stool, and toilet. I was put in here because doctors at the medical centre thought it would be more peaceful for me. They did not tell me how much worse it would be in many other ways.

My bunk mate in this cell is a guy called 'Louis' (spelling?). He spoke little English but was good company regardless. He later ended up in D2 as well, and he became a good friend. But back to segregation.

One of the worse things about segregation is the noise levels. Neighbouring cellmates would bang on the doors and chant, 'rap' (as in singing), etc. I also cannot tolerate fluoridated tap-water, neither chlorine. I was not given any water to drink for at least 36 hours. My pleas for a suitable supply of drinking water fell upon deaf ears.

It was awful in there. Nothing to do but stare at the four walls and go out of one's mind. The food was abysmal and totally unsuitable. After just a meal or two, it was refused - to the point I said I was going on hunger strike. Even without this protest, I was having trouble swallowing due to the lack of water. It was torture. I used a pencil to scribble on the walls of my cell my new, real name, and the address of my website. I was determined to make a protest.

My bed was also a problem. Due to my Obstructive Sleep Apnoea ("OSA") medical condition, I could not sleep on it. I pulled my mattress onto the floor by the metal stool and folded it into an 90 degree angle. It was the only way I could ensure I would not stop breathing while unconscious. As more food was offered at meal times, I decided to show my contempt for the way I was being treated. No water, no suitable food, having to put up with noise from my neighbours in other cells, etc., drove me to the point of anger and despair. When the guards arrived with my food, it was refused simply by me remaining on the floor and raising one of my middle fingers.

It wasn't too long before I became ill again with chest pain (high blood pressure). I was sent back to the medical centre on the 10th October (a Friday). Here I was, at last, given a bottle of sterile water to drink. I'm also now being given a nutritional liquid supplement called 'Boost'. It is quite tasty and being offered as an insurance as I cannot eat the food here - at least most of the time. The only problem is that it was always the same flavour. I drank it for up to around 7 weeks, then had to stop.

Now that the medical staff could see how much I was suffering and at risk from a stroke, I was put into a 4-bed room in the medical unit. Only one bed was already occupied.

My new room mate was 'Peter' from Hong Kong. Peter was OK and we got along very well. We had occasional access to a TV and each day got to read a few newspapers (the US Today and the local newspaper, The News Tribune). There was a shower in the room with a screen, along with a toilet and wash basin. Peter was very clean, like myself, so we had no problems.

Peter liked to observe the stock-market. he appeared to have some investments and was regularly on the telephone to his contacts overseas. Compared to segregation, this was luxury. I had an adjustable bed which meant I did not have to lay flat. By elevating the rear part of my bed, I could sleep safely.

One thing I noticed soon after arrival in the medical unit was a strange smell that would occasionally waft through the ventilation system. After spending some time in this unit, I asked an officer about it. He said it came from outside the building and they had no control over it. Interestingly, the NWDC building is allegedly built over a toxic waste dump, with another nearby. There was a real danger that cancer-causing airborne chemicals were being drawn into the building. See: [1] A Utube video and; [2] The USEPA's Superfund webpage for more details [opens in a new window].

By the 11th October, my diet was changed. Now I am on something called a 'diet for health'. Essentially, it was just a simple low-sodium diet. But considering the Americans cram so much salt (and sugar and fat) into their processed foods, 'low-sodium' lost a lot of it's meaning. But it was a step in the right direction.

Only problem with my diet is that it does not suit my Irritable Bowel Syndrome ("IBS") condition. It is no surprise that the main part of the population at the NWDC is Hispanic, so it is also of no surprise that the food tends to be very spicy on a regular basis.

I've now been eating this spicy food since arriving in the medical centre and I am suffering from IBS. Between the 12th and 14th October, I have had virtually nothing to eat. Either my IBS has stopped me or the food has just been downright disgusting. In my diary notes, I see that all I have had is two apples, an orange and some small cartons of milk.

On the 13th and into the 14th, I get sciatica. I'm also feeling light-headed. There is nothing I can take to treat either of these conditions.

Getting the right medication to treat my IBS is impossible. My luggage contains my UK prescribed medications - but I am not allowed to have them. I also had some fruit, nuts and seeds in my luggage - but I have been told I am not allowed these either. In fact, they were thrown away after I arrived as food is not allowed to be kept.

I'm having problems getting my diet further modified. My IBS is not being treated as an allergy and therefore does not entitle me to suitable food. The medical staff are using a technicality to deny me anything suitable.

Also on the 14th I get a migraine. I have noticed the American medications are higher strength than the UK versions and I am offered far more pills than needed. I take as little as I can and my migraine subsides.

I am now learning that requests for simple needs are being ignored. This is mainly due to regulations which do not allow for any degree of common sense. I cannot even get my non-fluoride toothpaste. Hence, my teeth are brushed with just water. I don't have any dental floss either - even though I have some in my luggage. Some salt to put on my toothbrush may be useful, but it is never provided to anyone at the NWDC.

My final observation for this day is the promise I shall be taken to catalogue all my luggage possessions. I expected this to happen before lunch. I am denied this opportunity. I may now be in the medical unit and more comfortable, but everything else is so bad. The food, even when it is edible, is often lukewarm to cold.

At around 7-45am on the 15th October, I get to see a 'supervisor' (name?). I relate to him my observations and problems. He said he will pass on my concerns. But as you may expect, little changes. In fact, I'm wondering if he has passed on my concerns or if he is just being ignored. One of my concerns is that the staff that usually are stationed outside my cell often disappear for long periods of time during the night. This was later to prove unsettling (for reasons I shall explain a little later).

By 8-30am, my doctor appears. At a later date I am reminded his name is 'Bueno'. He tells me he does not care about me or the food I am given, but he will consider putting me on a diet similar to Peter's. Peter has a kidney stone and is on a 'renal diet'. His food looks suitable and more edible than the food I get.

At 8-45am, the doctor reappears. He tries to force me to sign a statement. I edit the statement to my own satisfaction before signing. I expect he's not happy about this and now he is telling me he does not care what my UK doctor has prescribed me and will not help me get access to my UK medications. He even adds that he does not care if I live or die. What? He goes on to say he will not discuss my diet in detail. He also shrugs off my other concerns about the medical unit. Back to my diet ...

Got some chicken and potato salad for lunch, and some other edible items. This is not likely due to any change in my diet as it usually takes days, if not weeks to change. The evening meal is back to the norm. I'm reporting more abdominal pain and this is due to lack of fibre in my diet. At 6-10pm a nurse arrives with some medications. They are refused as I do not know what I am taking, and they have been 'recommended' without examining me.

16th October. As usual, the breakfast is inedible. During my entire time at the NWDC, I've barely touched the food served at breakfast time. Several reasons. Usually, it is disgusting, and secondly, it is served at 5-30am. It is far too early to eat anything. My stomach is adjusting to the lack of food though.

I have more stupid forms to sign. If I refuse a meal, or medical treatment (or a procedure), I am expected to sign a form saying why I have refused. When I now decide to sign a form, I have to edit it to make it represent the truth. Otherwise, I am thinking of not signing. They cannot force me to sign forms against my will.

It appears that some of my earlier written complaints are now being answered. One way of making a point in this place is to submit either a 'Kite' form (a request) or a 'Grievance' form (obviously, to report a grievance). Kites usually come back with a reply, but grievances are often lost in the system, or ignored - or not suitably answered.

At 2-15pm, I am served papers for my court appearance - scheduled for the next day. I try to call an organisation known as the North West Immigration Rights Project, referred to by all concerned as 'NIRP'. It appears this is my second attempt to get their attention, but I am not sure when I made my first telephone call to their offices. All I get is voicemail and I leave a message.

Sometime between 3pm and 3-30pm, a man called Jennings appears. I'm told he is one of the senior figures here, and Peter tells me he is the guy who runs the NWDC. But I am not sure this is accurate information. Regardless, he does have some authority. As with the previous visit by a supervisor, I again relate my problems and observations.

4-45pm I speak to a guard about getting something from the 'commissary'. The commissary is a sort of mail-order shopping function. Anyone entering the NWDC has their money removed and placed into a 'commissary account'. With money in this account, you can then use it to buy things from the shop.

Trouble is, I had no US currency when I arrived, so I had no money to buy anything. Peter, who had given me a few coffee-flavoured candies since arriving, offered to buy a box for me. They are very cheap, so it was no big deal.

The guard returned with a commissary order form, but no reference guide. The reference guide is essential as everything is referred to by a code number. I ask for the guide so I can tick the right boxes on the commissary form.

He gets rather 'ratty' and he accuses me of treating him like a yo-yo. He refuses to get a guide for me. Ergo, I don't get to order my candies as Peter cannot remember what the code number is. Oh well, they say it's the thought that counts. One thing Peter did help me out with is his discarded phone cards. Once he had telephone abroad, he would have little left on his cards to make further long-distance calls. However, there would be enough to make local, and sometimes, State-to-State calls.

It's the 17th October and time for me to go to court. I arrive, but still no help from NIRP. My case is adjourned to the 4th November so I can make a bond appeal. By getting a bond, I can get some freedom to go and get my possessions, see some friends, and most importantly, see my wife. As I am about to leave, a NIRP representative in court says he tried to see me, but was refused by the NWDC. He tells me he will try to arrange an interview before my next hearing.

When I get back to my cell, I notice some people wandering around the medical unit. They are visitors of some description and they are filming certain things. I notice that they are directly outside my cell so I hold up a hastily written note which says: "Get the truth in here". I was hoping they would come into my cell so I could speak to them.

The female head of the medical unit who is showing these people around decides to stand in front of my cell and try to block out my written note. It is too late as the man with the video camera gets to record my message before I am obstructed. But it has not endeared me to this woman. I just wish I knew her name as she is a very disagreeable person (as I later came to discover).

Perhaps as revenge, or otherwise, Peter is moved to a cell next door. Now I am alone and with nobody to speak to. I decide to call the local newspaper with my story. I leave a message for someone called Ian Demsky (on 253-597-8872).

I also telephoned my former landlady and friend, CarolLee, today. Still no reply from her though. Not surprising as incoming calls are blocked - unless their are very mitigating circumstances.

I also try to call a number in the UK which I was hoping would be by the UK Prime Minister's office. But the number I think of is not quite correct. I actually get through to the Department of Health (ironically). I leave a message hoping someone will have the initiative to do something for me. This has also taken up a fair chunk of the money left on one of Peter's old telephone cards. Only had chance to make a one-minute call for around \$1.17. The telephone system here is a rip-off and detainees are charged high rates to make calls.

By 7-30pm, I am getting leg and back discomfort and lying on the floor. I do not move until 10-30pm, but it doesn't seem to bother anyone. I'm lying on the floor as I need a firm surface. My isolation is now getting to me and I feel depressed, perhaps that I am going crazy. It is not just that Peter has moved to an adjoining cell, it is his friendship and occasional small gestures of generosity that I shall miss.

18th October. Sleeping on the floor again today to avoid getting cramp. Also have painful spasms from a little food I ate earlier. Got the TV at 9pm. When Peter and I shared a cell, we could watch it together. Now we have to share viewing time. Not much happened on the 19th. Got a reasonable chicken dinner but had to relinquish the TV at 7-30pm. Without the TV, I am relying upon the newspapers to keep me occupied. I do most of the quizzes with the exception of any difficult Sudokus which Peter likes to take on - and nearly always complete. I sleep late in the morning. After being awoken each day for breakfast I rarely eat, I go back to sleep and wake up late in the morning. I then slowly get the newspapers off Peter. - one at a time. Fortunately, the Hispanics who arrive in the medical unit do not speak or read English, so me and Peter have the newspapers to ourselves. It's one small blessing.

20th October. Again, generally uneventful day. But Nurse Moon causes me a little grief. She is one of those who work at the NWDC who likes to stick rigidly to the rules. She will not let me drink my Boost from the bottle. I have to have it in a cup and drink it in front of her. Most others who work here just let me have the bottle and I sip it a little bit at a time. By keeping it in the bottle, I can keep the cap on and not spill it. As I cannot drink it all in one go, I refuse the Boost.

On the 21st, I received my inventory list. I look at the alleged contents of my luggage and become extremely concerned. there appears to be a lot missing. I file a grievance accordingly. I'm also feeling ill again today. More bowel pain.

22nd October. I called Maria (a mutual friend of myself and my wife) today and asked her pass on a message to my wife about my Deed Poll certificate. This certificate validates my change of name and I ensured a copy would be sent to my wife.

23rd October. I get a visit from 'Betsy' from NIRP today about my court case. She will see what she can do for me and get back to me next week. I'm filling in more grievance forms to day and making more Kite requests. Until someone starts to answer my concerns I have to do this.

24th October. Betsy returns unexpectedly. She gives me some legal papers, namely a 'U Visa' to complete. It all looks a little too complex and I need help to fill in the correct parts with the correct information. She cannot help me any further and I am left to deal with this myself. Note: A U Visa is designed for someone who has been a victim of crime in the US. Usually this is something like human trafficking. For me, it was to bring a legal case against those immigration officials who had abused their power on the 30th January and the 15th September, 2008.

The 25th October is a pretty wretched day. When I do not have the TV, I usually rely on the radio to while away a few hours. I notice that while I was sleeping this morning, it has been removed. Someone else has it but I'm not bothered by that, I am just wondering how I shall fill those few hours when I usually turn it on. I'm told there are no newspapers today either. This makes things much worse. I have four walls to stare at all day long. No TV, no radio, no newspapers.

I'm filling my day as best I can. I do have other things to occupy my mind. Plans for the future, tasks to be done when I get out, etc. I'm also dwelling on the situation in here. I have noticed that some of those employed by the NWDC seem to think that detainees should be happy and joyful. Are they real? Of course, the so-called guidelines that are given to new detainees in the NWDC's handbook upon arrival tell detainees that they should be happy - that it is a state of mind. Perhaps if you have the prospect of getting out and simply just crossing the Mexico-US border again, that state of mind may be easier to achieve. But when you are facing being shipped over 5,000 miles away and no way of getting back to the US, along with all my other challenges, it is not so easy.

To compound today's setbacks, I've also been served a cold lunchtime meal. It is designed to be cold, rather than the usual hot meal, which is sometimes served cold.

26th October. Another grim day. Feeling weak and light-headed again today. Lack of food must really be getting to me. Starting to get fed up with my Boost drinks. Wish they had different flavours. Got to think about different ways to drink them. Mixing with my sterile water or perhaps could squeeze some orange juice and mix that - assuming I have an orange set-aside. Food was no surprise. The NWDC dishes out soy mince on a regular basis here. Sometimes several times over the space of a few days. Despite my allergy to soy, the mince actually tastes quite good when cooked in a spicy sauce. If it were not for my IBS, I wouldn't mind eating this stuff on a regular basis.

27th October. Spoke to Ian Demsky again today and he tells me he has passed on my story to the editor. I'm not too optimistic of any success. I also called the British Consulate in San Francisco. In my diary notes I see this is my second attempt. Not sure when I called them previously, but when I did, I got through to some dreadful woman who just wanted to pick a fight with me and offer no help at all. So much for the British Government looking after the interests of its subjects abroad. I experienced the same attitude in Canada with the British Consulate (located in Vancouver, British Columbia). Nobody there cared that the Americans had illegally confiscated my passport, no way out of the country, and that I had no means of support.

Captain Cabalis called in tonight. He asked me to submit a Kite form to request legal papers from my luggage, and to check the contents of my luggage.

It's now the 28th October. The twenty days I have been here seem like a lifetime. I get a visit from a different representative from NIRP. She (name?) brings me a list of attorneys who may be able to help me. But I have no money for telephone calls and ask this representative to help me get legal help. There seems reluctance and as it later transpired, I would get no further help. I've learned from a few other people that NIRP are like this. They say they will try to help in different ways, but nothing ever happens. Nancy previously offered to try and get me help in different ways - such as getting me a telephone card so I could call some attorneys myself. It never happened.

The evening meal was left for ten minutes before it was served. The routine is that a guard will bring it from the kitchen and leave it for yet another guard to give to the detainees. Why the same guard cannot do both jobs is not very helpful. On this occasion, and on numerous occasions at later dates, there was nobody around to serve the food. Sometimes, it would take just a minute or two for someone to appear, but it was very frustrating when it took a long time to be served.

29th October. I submitted a Kite asking for emergency calls to local law authorities in attempt to get a signature for my U Visa. This may have set-off some alarm bells in the administration because of what is (wrongly) alleged to have happened the following day.

30th October. My doctor at the NWDC forgot to renew my prescription for my Boost drink. Therefore, I only got one drink for most of the oday. Captain Cabalis called back again and said he will try to arrange for me to go to intake tomorrow (Friday) to check the contents of my luggage. Critically, and in relation to my Kite form yesterday, I have enough funds on telephone cards to call the local police and the FBI. Neither wants to help investigate my complaints against US immigration or 'irregularities' at the NWDC. Did get a boost drink around midnight though.

31st October. Things turn nasty today. I'm being falsely charged with dialling 911. This is in the form of a notice I see 'cellotaped' to my cell door frame. It states that I am no longer allowed to use the telephone without prior permission of someone in authority (namely Warden Wigen). Captain Cabalis also failed to turn up and take me to check my luggage. To cap it all off, there was only one newspaper today and no TV.

New month, new hope? Not really. It's the 1st of November, and the beginning of a month to be filled with frustration and heartbreak. Dinner today was left to stand about 18 minutes before it was served. It went cold and had to be refused. On the 2nd November, I tried to complete my U Visa forms. Not easy as I lack some information contained in legal documents in my luggage. I'm hamstrung.

3rd November. Contrary to how the month has started, I get to check my luggage today. All seems to be OK and present and correct. But there does seem to have been damage to my bag, so filed a complaint about this (obviously, and as you would expect, a complete waste of time).

Captain Cabalis called in and accused me, as per the notice about my alleged 911 call, of trying to dial this emergency number. I denied this emphatically. He did add though that my police and FBI related matters are being investigated. There was no successful conclusion though. Nothing new here. One gets the clear impression that the people who run this place are working in co-operation with those interests in the immigration system who wish to conceal the truth about corruption, and to deny those most affected any real justice.

To cap my day, I had to suffer from a devious nurse who tried to get me to sign a form saying I was on hunger strike. This upset me. When I was in segregation and said I was on hunger strike, that was one thing. But when I got to the medical centre it was understood, after an agreement with my doctor, that I would no longer take this position and accept Boost drinks on a regular basis - and eat food when it was suitable. To try and resurrect this issue in such a devious fashion was despicable.

4th November. It's now time for my next hearing. It is a 'Master Hearing' (final hearing). When I get to court, I explain I want to apply for a bond before a final determination. The judge seems very humane and considerate and awards me a bond hearing for the 6th November. Perhaps my luck is changing. Interestingly, Lieutenant Portillo called into today and told me I cannot make telephone calls without the permission of 'ICE' (Immigration & Citizenship Enforcement). I thought Warden Wigen had to give permission? If ICE has to OK my calls, and having a vested interest in not letting me get justice, then a new picture emerges. Now the immigration system is effectively trying to prevent me from getting justice. This is a sinister development.

5th November. Another blow. I am told by the very friendly and helpful lady ("Michael") who comes to change my laundry every Monday, Wednesday and Friday that a malicious rumour is being spread about me. It involves my relationship with my wife and I am deeply upset about this. But I am grateful Michael has told me. She is a good person and was concerned about my reputation. I fill in a grievance form to complain and try to find out who is circulating the malicious lies I have been told of. I think this may have some connection to 'get me' by the establishment. Not only are they trying to deny me justice, accusing me of making a 911 call I never made, but also trying to besmirch my character. Tell me there is not a conspiracy brewing here. To be honest, with all the other crap I have to tolerate, I am getting really angry at the way I am being treated.

At last, I get to make my case for a Bond. I'm in court, but I am towards the end of the list of cases to be heard. Being in court is one thing, but being denied access to water is intolerable. I am suffering as well as developing a migraine.

I left the medical centre after 11am today to go to court, and by just after 3pm, I am still waiting to make my case. I'm starting to keel over sideways. The guard on duty at the court asks me to sit-up straight. I tell him I am ill and I am escorted from the room. I'm put into a holding cell outside the court while I wait for water and medication to arrive. I'm told that as soon as my name is called, I can return to the courtroom.

I'm not long in the holding cell when a guard arrives and escorts me out of the holding cell and takes me to another room. I'm wondering why I am not receiving medication. I am told I am to have a disciplinary hearing about my alleged 911 call. I say I am not doing this now and I'm taken to medical. I now expect to get medication and be returned to the courtroom. I arrive at the medical unit where I am told I have been (illegally) removed from the court system. I have lost my chance to put my case for a Bond to a judge I had some faith in. I'm gutted. Not only am I suffering from an increasingly painful migraine, I am now set back in my ambition to win my freedom.

I collapse in my cell when I am given this news. I just collapse, suffer a breakdown and bang my fists on the floor. I remain there some time.

I'm eventually informed I will get another hearing two weeks later on the 20th. But the circuit judge I wanted to appeal to will not be there on the 20th.

The guards on duty tonight are somewhat unsympathetic. Perhaps they just don't know what to do. What can anyone do in my situation?

Horrible start to the 7th November. Awoke early with not just a migraine, but very painful neuralgia. I am asking urgently for medications, but being denied. It's more than an hour, and still no sight of any medication. I'm suffering pretty badly. The day staff arrive as someone is visible I try to get their attention. Still feeling I am being ignored, I throw my bottle of sterile water at the door. I'm being treated with such disrespect and contempt.

A medic comes into my room in a bad temper and scolds me for throwing my bottle at the door. Tempers are frayed on both sides. Also had to address the issue of the malicious rumour being spread about me and this is just one of the further reasons I am feeling so angry. The medic said he will investigate but insists I tell him who is the source of the rumour. I have to reveal Michael as the source. I don't get any joy. The whole thing is whitewashed.

The medic returns later to tell me about being moved to general population. Michael is also present and I break down again. Talking about my wife is very distressing. But as the malicious rumour being spread about me involves my wife, it is not possible to leave her out of the discussion.

Just before 9am, I am told that Dr Balde (a mental health councillor) will call to see me. I am now under threat of being returned to general population and this is also praying on my mind. My first experience of general population was a very bad one. Can I survive in there?

Dr Balde turns up and we chat. I also had a visit from another doctor and anti-depressants were discussed. I said I would not take 'haloes' (halogenated drugs).

My diet has changed today. If anything though, it eventually gets worse. But for today, it seems OK. At 10pm, I try to get meds. I'm waiting 45 minutes and no response. I press my emergency call button to get an answer. I'm told I am no longer prescribed painkillers. One hour passes, and I am still being messed around. I have to wait for another medical operative to pass by my cell and I get that person to contact a doctor about my medications. After one and a quarter hours I get my pills. It's now 11-30pm, I take a shower and go to bed. It's been an extremely traumatic day.

I awake to approach a new day. It's the 8th November. First thing to concern me is the numbness that has been appearing in my left knee and sometimes radiating throughout my leg. It came on a day or two ago but seemed to be just temporary. Now it is a constant problem. It's a rather bad day and I am suffering from various problems with my Boost drinks, the newspapers, etc. Today is a disjointed one. The 9th November was just plain innocuous. Getting fed up with fishcakes. They are not nice. I'm also starting to get fed up with my Vanilla flavoured Boost drinks.

10th November. I mostly sleep through to just after midday. This is despite being woken up four times early in the morning. Some medics let me sleep through normally, but some will not let me sleep. One nurse upset me by banging on my door causing me to wake up in shock - so much so that I felt a 'chemical rush' through my brain and suffered severe migraine-like head pain. Another nurse tried to pre-mix my Boost drink and my milk before I got it today. Why can't some of these people just let me have my drinks so I can mix them as I please? It's like being treated as someone who is not capable of the simplest task. It's insulting.

Still no joy about the restrictions on me making telephone calls. I make a request to the guard on duty to speak to Lieutenant Portillo or Captain Cabalis. I'm told I have to speak to the Warden (Wigen). I really need to use the telephone. No newspapers again today.

11th November. Woke up at 5-10am in excruciating pain. Managed to get back to sleep. It's 'Veteran's Day' today, so not much will be achieved.

12th November. It's 8-10am. I speak to the guard on duty and ask him to contact Warden Wigen about the continued block on my telephone calls. I ask the guard to tell Wigen that if he does not allow me use of the telephone, I shall bring criminal charges against him for obstructing justice. It's not too long before I am told I have to go back to segregation for my 911 disciplinary hearing. It's Lieutenant Portillo who takes me to the hearing. By 11am, I am in segregation with my hands handcuffed behind my back. The chair I have to sit on is back to front, meaning my legs have to be spread to sit on it. In front of me are three people. One I recognize, but cannot recall his name. Perhaps it's Wigen.

I cannot sit on the chair like this. I have sciatica and my left knee is still numb. Lieutenant Portillo says I should turn the chair sideways to sit on it. But with my hands not free I cannot refer to my papers to conduct a proper defence. I am asked by Wigen (?) if I recognize the piece of paper he holds up to my face. I cannot see my own papers, so I say I do not remember. He quickly loses his temper and says he has heard enough. I have been there only a few minutes and I am being thrown out of the hearing. This is a serious breach of my human rights. I am to receive summary justice without any chance to properly defend myself. Dinner tonight was awful. About once a week, they serve breakfast twice a day. As it is totally disgusting, it's not eaten. I didn't even take my Boost drink as I have no milk to mix it with.

13th November. Did something today I should have done a long time ago - I visited the 'law library'. This is where detainees can go to read about the law and use some old computers. Some of the detainees there are quite informed. One who helped me was from Nigeria. His name is Remy Atanda. He's a great guy. We now have two TV sets in the medical unit as the place has been filling up with detainees. I manage to swap my TV (which only comes with a video player) for the one which comes with a DVD player.

On the 14th November I revisit the law library and make more progress. I make sure I book more time here so I can draw up a pre-court statement ahead of my next hearing (as recommended by Remy). As it is now Friday, I shall have to wait until Monday before I can do this.

I'm still being denied use of the telephone. I'm feeling giddy through lack of sleep. My leg problem remains. But at least I got some edible food today, so my stomach feels full.

It's around 5-30pm and Dr. Balde arrives. He is not sure why he has to speak to me. I tell him of my depression. Come 6pm and I start to prepare paperwork for my pre-court statement. The weekend, 15th and 16th November, is quiet. Still feeling groggy on the 16th but by the 17th, I am better.

On the 17th, I get some pressure put upon me by the medical unit. One of the male nurses tells me I am no longer allowed to keep food. Meals must be consumed within 30 minutes. I have previously always been able to keep aside some peanut butter, or fruit, for the late evening when I get hungry. With the evening meal arriving around 5-30pm each night, it is a long time before any more edible food arrives. I do get to the law library today though and start to increase my stays there from one hour to two for each session.

18th and 19th November and two more two hour sessions in the law library. My second session is cut short though as my pre-court statement is complete. Wish I had stayed the full two hours as I noticed later that it contained spelling and grammatical errors. It's too late to change anything as my next hearing is tomorrow.

My worst fears are realised. It's the 20th November and I get to appear before a judge who seems not to like me very much. It's due to the fact I am making allegations of corruption against the immigration system. It's a bit like appearing before a Mafia Godfather and telling him you want to prosecute his organisation. Forget the expression 'it's a win-win situation'. I'm in a 'lose-lose situation'. Even the ICE officer who is giving evidence against me is an unpleasant character and wants to paint me in the worst possible light. This guy wants the judge to maintain the bond price that was set when I was arrested - namely \$75,000. This is crazy. There are detainees in the NWDC who are very serious criminals and their bond value is far less than mine. The judge says he will reduce it to \$10,000, but he knows I have no money and no collateral. I was hoping to be released without a bond, but the law sets a minimum of \$1,500. This would have been an appropriate gesture. Perhaps I could have found a 'bondsman' who would have covered this amount. This in turn means that I would only have to give the bondsman 10% as a deposit (\$150). No luck though.

The one thing that did upset me during my trial, and it underlined the judge's contempt for my position, is that he would not read my pre-court statement (see the end of this diary for the link). He simply flicked through it and refused to take my argument seriously. Disgraceful - a word I get to use on occasions at the NWDC.

The 21st November is not a brilliant day. Quite the opposite in fact. The reality of my situation is starting to take it's toll. I try to settle down and watch a couple of movies at 7pm, but I am feeling very depressed. It's taking all my strength to keep things together. With the weekend approaching, nothing further can be achieved until Monday. My only task today was to submit a couple of Kites. I'm still trying to get a haircut and I am also trying to get emergency telephone calls out.

The weekend is a new low. Now I'm thinking of lots of things that are worrying me. My potential return to the UK, my wife's wellbeing, a feeling of failure, depression, etc. The 22nd November is lousy. Only thing achieved today was that I got my hair cut. The detainees who cut hair at the NWDC are not exactly trained in the practice, but the job they do is good enough. I was certainly glad to get a very irritating beard trimmed.

I rounded off the day by watching the movie, 'The Bridge over the River Kwai'. I felt some association - in respect to persevering and knowing how to deal with those who have no respect for your rights or your humanity. OK, I was not exactly being forced to build a railway line through jungle in unbearable heat, but there some more subtle lessons to be learned. Especially salient in this movie was the quote from Colonel Saito: "You are defeated, but you have no shame; You are stubborn, but have no pride; You endure, but have no courage." Being a Brit in an alien environment has not endeared me to everyone here. I've tried to be reasonable and polite when I have been shown respect, but I have stood my ground when I have been treated badly. I was defeated, but any shame was in my failure to achieve more. I was stubborn when I had to be, but I also did the best to keep my self-respect (not pride). I endured, but I feel I did lack some courage. Amen.

On the 23rd November, I started thinking about the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday in the US. I was hoping to be out of the NWDC before this date so I could spend this day with my wife. This was especially sad for me. The day ended on a really lousy note when I got a reasonably decent evening meal, only to see it spill on the floor because of a wet food tray and a far too small bedside trolley to balance it on. If spilling my meal wasn't bad enough, cleaning up the mess was another thing.

Monday the 24th November was a little less distressing. I saw an interesting quote in the USA Today. It is: "Illigitimum non carborundum". It translates to: "Don't let the bastards get you down". Seemed quite appropriate considering the timing of it's publication. If on cue, I get a visit from my appointed ICE officer. Different ethnic groups get different ICE officers and based on which country they are going to be deported to. he says he is going to obtain my passport from the Canadian immigration authorities and get me a ticket back to the UK. But how soon? I thought this would happen quickly. Wrong! Got one hour in the law library today. Trying to find another way out of the NWDC before deportation. The day was rounded off by getting the same type of evening meal as the previous night. This time I made sure not to spill it.

The 25th November was a bad day. The upcoming Thanksgiving holiday makes it difficult to get anything achieved this week. It falls on a Thursday every 4th Thursday of November each year. But today is Tuesday. Got fishcakes again. I'm sick of these things. I get them far too often. My one hour in the law library was used preparing a letter for the local director of Homeland Security. This letter was an appeal for parole so I could get some time settling my affairs in the US before being forced to leave. I'm still waiting for a reply to my earlier submitted Kite asking for emergency telephone calls. It is being ignored. That is what usually happens when those in power at the the NWDC don't want to allow you something. They just ignore you. Crooked, evil bastards.

To cap it all off, I have suffered abdominal pain all day long. Just wish I had access to my IBS medication.

26th November. I got the telephone today - but only because of some type of administrative mix-up. Took advantage of this lapse and got some calls out. I left messages with CarolLee, Wisnu (another friendly Indonesian contact), the British Consulate (a waste of time as they continue to pretend I do not exist), and finally, a Seattle-based attorney by the name of Robert Gibbs (another waste of time). Finally, submitted a Kite to day, address to ICE. I informed them I am trying to get parole and that they should not try to deport me until I get a decision. Guess you know how this eventually turned out.

I got to speak to Dolores today as well. But she had recently suffered a heart-attack and had just been released from hospital. Her condition is causing me serious concern and worry. It's Thanksgiving Day. The lunch was very good. I thought the food may be better today, but lunch was exceptional. Only downside was that the evening meal was one of those dreaded 'sacked lunches'. At least I got a bag of potato crisps with it, and along with the celery, the only edible things. Notably, no orange with this sandwich today.

28th November and it feels like the week has passed quickly. I'm hoping my parole application will be received by Monday latest. Just before lunch, I am told that I am now being returned to the general population. My first experience of this was a bad one, so I am alarmed by this prospect. My blood pressure goes up as a consequence, but it has no effect upon the decision to be rid of me.

After lunch I am taken to Pod D2. Oddly enough, I do not feel so upset upon re-entering this type of environment. The noise levels are drastically reduced and it seems relatively calm. My bunk number is 116B and it is one of four beds away from the main sleeping area and reserved for those people the NWDC feel should be kept under observation. I'm informed they consider me to be a suicide risk. Good thing about this bunk is that it is near to the guard's desk, so any problems I may encounter will be dealt with quickly. As I quickly came to realise though, Pod D2 was going to be an improvement upon my previous stay in the medical unit. More on this later.

My bed was one of four. The one guy who could speak English in my section is from Jamaica and his name is Joe. He is a really unusual character, but we became friends despite some volatile differences of opinions on some subjects. I think we came to respect each other. Because my bed was not suitable, I asked to make a living will - just in case my OSA caused me to stop breathing at night and I died. This request was made in a Kite. Later that day, it was decided that this Kite was a suicide threat and I was taken to intake for the evening. Here I was badly mistreated.

I must have been in a holding cell in Intake for about four or five hours. All I had to sleep on was a cold, concrete slab and no support for my head. I tried to relax and sleep, but every time I felt I was going to snatch a few minutes of much-needed rest, a guard would enter my cell and arouse me. Sometimes this would be done in a very aggressive way, and I would be shaken and sworn at. Most of the time the guards would leave my cell and violently slam the door behind them. This would make my heart jump and make my pulse race. Not good for someone with high blood pressure. But as one guard put it: "I'm not putting up with this bullshit" (when I refused to respond to his questions).

By around 12-30am on the 29th November, I was returned to my bunk in Pod D2. Could not get to sleep straight away despite my exhaustion. The Hispanics in the Pod like to make a lot of noise until, usually, around 1-30am each morning. Then is one awoken at 5-30am (each day) for breakfast. Only respite from the noise and disturbed sleep is that the Hispanics like to sleep after breakfast time. By 6-30am, usually all is very quiet again. This means extra sleep until around 11-30am each day.

But by 8-30am, I am awoken by more door slamming. Problem with my Pod is that in the adjoining hallway, there are security doors which make a loud noise when they are allowed to close without any control. My bunk was against the wall which was next to this hallway. Ergo, those of us in those four beds had to put up with the worst of this noise.

Joe's behaving a little erratically, so I'm minimising conversation. I think that he thinks that I have some unrealistic expectations, so he is trying to 'toughen me up' for the reality of my prospects. He probably meant well, but I was not ready yet for such an education.

I'm now having to go to something called 'Pill Line' for any medications, my bottles of sterile water, and my Boost drinks. I cannot take my Boost drinks back to my Pod, so I stopped drinking them.

30th November. Joe is not so challenging today and we switch some food. Actually, he's quite a considerate person. The same practice continues into the next day (December 1st). I've learned quickly, and as Joe suggested, that I have to do a lot of 'trading' to survive. I also got a visit from a medic who tells me there is no prospect of me returning to the medical unit. My leg is getting worse though and now I have weakness below my left knee.

I got another hour in the law library today. I reprinted my court statement and my parole application. I wanted to ensure I had extra copies for any future disposal - and to correct some of my pre-court statement spelling errors and grammar.

2nd December. Short of sleep again, no surprise. But around fifteen new detainees were brought in during the night. This came to be a common practice. Detainees, and especially Hispanics, were invariably brought into the Pod during the night. Perhaps this means ICE make most of their raids later in the day. Who knows? I certainly have a lot of gas today, so I'm feeling very uncomfortable.

Today is a more noisy day than usual, but I am too much 'out of it' to care very much. I am concerned though about my lack of water. I can only get one small bottle of sterile water at a time and I often run out before I can get another bottle. If one is delayed being released for Pill Line, then by the time you get there, there is a very long queue. It isn't worth having stand around forever, just waiting to get some water.

On the 3rd December I have a bad migraine. I got medication (in the medical unit) at 5-15pm, but only after protesting. The medics wanted to make wait until 9pm before I got any medication. It is the way the system works here. If you do not ask for medications at certain times, they can be refused. It does not matter how much you are suffering, unless you make a really big fuss, you have no chance of being treated. It's just another example of some of the insane and idiotically regimented rules that make being here so frustrating. One thing I did do while in the medical unit was to weigh myself while I had the chance. I got a reading of 195.5lbs. That's down from an estimated 210lbs upon entry to the NWDC.

Some letters I had written have been returned. Nothing gets sent out of here unless it has a stamp on it - unless it is legal paperwork sent from the law library. MY 'power of attorney' document I compiled previously was also returned. I made up this document in case I died while at the NWDC.

Final lesson of the day was that anything you have, you have to keep a close eye upon. A day or two before, and because I had helped someone with some verbal advice, I was given a 'Top Ramen' noodle soup mix. Today, it was missing and had been stolen.

Top Ramen soups are a staple in this place. Lots of detainees relied upon this soup to eat, usually for supper (due to the long break between dinner and breakfast the next day). I began trading lots of my food, which I did not want to eat, for Top Ramen soups. Apples were particularly prized, and because I was still on a special diet, I was one of the few people who got one as a meal supplement. Sometimes, everyone got an apple or an orange, but those of us on special diets got them more regularly. It was the same with the cartons of milk. Everyone got a carton in the morning, but only special diet recipients also got a carton in the evening. For me, it was like currency.

4th December. I learn my ICE officer is named 'Arroya'. They usually call in on a Wednesday, but I did not see my officer yesterday. He called in today though. I spoke to him, but he was vague. He didn't have any news for me as such. Think I spoke to Wisnu today to give him updates and to ask him to speak to the wife on my behalf. One thing that did upset me today was that I stopped breathing three times during the early morning due to my OSA. I awoke with bad chest pain and was hyper-ventilating. My heart was beating heavily.

This is a pertinent issue as I am supposed to be under watch from the guards in the Pod. But they don't seem to care. Their attitude is that if you are in danger, you should be in the medical unit. Otherwise, you are not worthy of any close scrutiny. To be fair, they don't even know what medical signs to look out for. If someone dies, they are left in a very serious situation. They have to take responsibility. What a crock of s**t - as they say in America.

I'm beginning to wonder if my diary notes for the last few days are accurate. I seem to be 'out of sync' and seem to be 'losing' a day somewhere. The facts are correct, but recent dates are vague. Regardless, I'm now 'back on track' (too many clichés?).

Got my first good trade since arriving. I got two Top Ramen soups for my dinner tray tonight. Perhaps I am now going to be known as the 'Ramen Baron' (sorry, another cliché).

It's Friday, 5th December, and I have something to look forward to. Every weekend there are three competitions and chess is on the agenda. It's time to 'rough up some bunnies' (you'll have to get used to the fact I cannot resist a cliché). Nobody in Pod D2 is up to my skill level. I just have to avoid making a series of stupid errors and I should win this tournament. There is never more than about eight people in each event, so a simple knock-out formula means just three rounds of best-of-three matches. One guy is quite handy though, and I have to be careful. His name is Jesus (pronounced 'Heyzus') and he is from Peru. His story is a sad one and I hope he gets his life back on track. That's one thing about being in this place, there is always someone who is worse off than yourself. But the system has no time for humanity or common sense, only process and regimentation. Detainees are statistics, numbers, and nothing more.

6th December and the chess tournament finishes ahead of time. My score is six out of six. Nice to be undefeated at something, bearing in mind all that has happened to me since arriving here. But I do know the meaning of humility as well. Future entries to drafts and domino tournaments see me 'shot down in flames'. Never mind, tomorrow I get my first prize for winning at chess. This will be a bottle of Pepsi, a bar of chocolate and a sort of 'pot noodle' soup. I haven't had chocolate for ages and I am so happy to get the chance to enjoy some again.

7th December and I have made numerous friends since arriving. In fact, these are really nice people. There is Konate from the Ivory Coast, Gabriel (from where?), 'Kinteh' (spelling? ... from Gambia), Joe, Ruslan (originally) from Georgia, Jesus, Sam from Pakistan, Benito, Omar, Vidal and Louis from Mexico. There are others too, but sadly, and due to my chronic fatigue, I cannot recall their names. Some are at the back of my mind, some forgotten.

Got my prizes today. A twin pack of Twix, my Pepsi and that pot noodle soup which I traded for a Top Ramen soup. I gave some of my Pepsi to Joe (I think it was Joe) as a thank you for the help he has given me. I always share my Pepsi when I get one.

I've also noticed that the guards who know me quite well are starting to call me by my (previous) first name. In fact, most of the guards who work in D2 are quite friendly. Some more strict, but still very humane. But none of them know how to deal with my OSA. Some of the guards eventually admitted they are in a very difficult situation with medical-need detainees under their charge. It's not fair they are given this burden.

More trading is done and more Top Ramen soups acquired. I'm virtually living on these now, and to be honest, I do enjoy them. There was a time I would not eat this type of food, but when you suffer deprivation for so long, they become quite a treat. Fortunately, Joe made sure I had a plastic bowl to cook them in when I arrived. Otherwise, I had no way of cooking them. He also provided me with a *spork.

**Spork. This item is a cross between a spoon and a fork*

Monday, the 8th December. I was expecting to be gone by now. Thought I would be on a plane back to the UK by today at the latest. Little did I know how many more days were to pass before this was to happen. However, I submitted a new Kite asking about my parole application. Just another chance to be ignored, I'm afraid.

The subject of my OSA was raised again. I told a guard, she told medical, I was told to report to medical the next day at 6am. I knew this would be a waste of time, so I didn't bother. They know about my condition and will not help me.

One visiting ICE officer was also informed about my OSA. He thought it was a joke. I told him of waking up choking for my breath. His reply was: "You are breathing now, aren't you?". What an asshole. But it was typical of the contempt ICE (generally) has for detainees. For the record, his name is 'Gamboa'.

I'm now playing more casual games of chess and losing some. Just as well as nobody will play chess with me if I never lose. Winning or losing is not really an issue with me, unless there is a prize at stake. This gives me a rare opportunity to get some much-needed items.

It appears that an 'issue' between a certain female guard and some detainees has been resolved today. She just got too 'friendly' with some of the young bucks here on her night duty, and now she is gone. She was friendly enough, but it appears she bought about her own downfall. I will not go into further detail as what I heard was only hearsay. One good thing about her removal though was that we got a new guard who did his job and keeps an eye on all of the detainees.

It's the 9th December and I am feeling depressed. ICE officer Orroya arrives today. he tells me he now has my passport but seems reluctant to tell me that I shall leave before Christmas. Why the hold-up, I wonder? he says it takes a few weeks to organize transport. If I was an Hispanic then I could understand. They are shipped out in large numbers. But I'm the only one from the UK who needs to be sent home. Finding me a flight back should be no problem. Orroya upsets me further by telling me I have no chance of bail. But it is not the decision of ICE. It is up to the local director of Homeland Security who makes that decision. I'm also concerned that if I am not sent home soon, or released, I cannot get a Christmas gift, or greeting card, to my wife. The thought of this is breaking my heart.

Later, I get a notice from ICE saying I will be deported within 2 weeks, but also before December 31st. What is going on? I assume the worst.

10th December and I am awoken at 3am. Four new detainees arrive. They tend to arrive up to several times a week. Sometimes I just sleep through and do not know who is coming in. When they go out, it is usually well before bedtime. Today, medical give me 42 Ibuprofen pills. Consider the logic. I am supposed to be on suicide watch and they give me enough medications to kill myself. Great, eh? Considering the lack of interest in my life-threatening OSA, I think that the powers-at-be at the NWDC must be hoping that I die before I am deported. Crazy? Perhaps not as crazy as it sounds.

Konate is feeling down today. He's had some bad news. But he will pick up and he will make some good progress later. of all the detainees here, he is the most likeable. I don't like to see him sad. He has my full sympathy.

11th December and a new detainee arrives. Originally from Vietnam, but now living in Canada. I get to chat to him and he seems like a nice guy. There are a lot of nice people in here. And a fair number of them should not really be here. An unremitting, stupid and rigid system puts them in here.

My headphones are missing tonight, so cannot enjoy the TV. We have three TV sets in the room tuned into different channels. To watch them, we have to use headphones and a radio set. Without these, we have no sound. It's bad enough the headphones are regularly failing without losing a decent working set. Feeling depressed again today, but I know I have to remain strong for the wife's sake. No good me failing emotionally and becoming a dribbling wreck. I've got to keep fighting for reunion.

Joe disappeared today, the 12th December. Not sure where he has gone, but as it later transpires, he's now being housed somewhere else.

I've got IBS again - or is it just trapped gas? I call NIRP and leave a message. The latest futile attempt to get help with my parole application. I feel completely isolated. There is more trading today, and more chocolate (hooray). Lost in the dominoes tournament first round. MY playing partner was Jesus. I had absolutely no idea what was going on, which rules we were playing, etc. Finished 3rd at checkers though, so will get one of those pot noodle soups for my efforts.

I learn that the Vietnamese guy from Canada (Vancouver, actually) is called Nguyen (pronounced "When"). Nguyen is not happy with his bunk and wants to move into Joe's vacated bed. He will be a good neighbour if he succeeds. Before I now it., a new guy arrives and he is from Somalia and describes himself as a 'freedom fighter'. Interesting! He takes up Joe's former bed.

13th December. My new Somalian friend has been moved. Didn't really get to know the guy, but learned he was a fan of the former Arsenal soccer player, Kanu. He was a very devout Muslim. He would gather his food at mealtime, place it into a plastic bowl and then give thanks to Allah. I watched him pray while his food went cold. Fortunately for the detainees, we have two microwaves in the Pod. That's how I get to cook my Top Ramen soups. What is remarkable is that a number of detainees have previously cooked stored in sealable plastic bowls, and then re-heat their food later in the day. How and why nobody has ever gone down with food poisoning never ceased to amaze me.

He was gone by dinner time and I then was able to get Nguyen this newly-vacated bed. It's always reassuring to have someone in an adjoining bunk who can speak your language. Into the 14th December and not much happens - except I am feeling very tired. Was hoping to get contact details for Konate's international lawyer, but nothing as yet.

15th December and cannot sleep. It's 1am and I have chest pain. Was hoping for a Boost drink. Now that I have been off them for some time, I think I can stomach one again. No luck though. Also must try and get the telephone number of the office of Homeland Security in Seattle later today. Before I get to sleep, if only for an hour or so, at about 4am, I dwell upon some of the generosity I have experienced since being in here. People give you something and expect nothing in return. Give and take is a practice without condition. Most of the population here co-operate in such a way that it makes one think that such an attitude would surprise many outside of the NWDC who have their own perceptions about illegal immigrants. Essentially, we are like a family. How incredible is that? Those who have lived in such deprivation and are driven to the US to try and earn a crust, are the most generous people I've ever met. They are used to having nothing and yet even when they have so little, they are still ready to share. Even my Somalian friend offered me some packets of oatmeal. I've just been so overwhelmed by the quality of people I have met.

Later today Jesus tells me he is soon to leave. It could be tomorrow. It's just another day here. The Hispanics are conducting one of their regular religious meetings tonight. They make speeches, sing songs, etc. Benito is one of this group and one of the most sincere people I have met. But that is not to take away anything from others I know here. Every day, every week, someone surprises you with some act or deed that you do not expect. For example, Kinteh bought me two Top Ramen soups today - without any prompting at all. Amazing.

16th December and I am still wondering when I will get out of here. Jesus is not going today, perhaps tomorrow. Some of the noise is getting on my nerves. Some of the crazier Hispanics make really grating and various sounds. But who wouldn't go crazy in a place like this. It's just a matter of time for some detainees.

Traded for some bread pudding today. It's one of the very few things that is made so well. Even managed to get some dental floss of Nguyen. I'm finding I can no longer tolerate sterile water. I'm taking a risk now and filling up my two empty sterile water bottles with an 'iced tea' type drink we get at lunchtime. Despite the fact it's made with tap-water, it tastes quite good. If need be, I top-up with the fruit punch soft drink served with dinner. Quite a large number of Hispanics leaving tonight, perhaps nineteen or twenty.

17th December. Lot of noise into the early hours of the morning. Some of the night duty guards do not exercise control. Hence, getting to sleep on the nights they are on duty (usually a week at a time) is not easy. But one cannot complain too much or there is the risk of being victimised. Not sure complaining would achieve much anyways. Not from experience, I've noticed.

Jesus left this morning before breakfast. He told me his name in Peru is 'Antonio'. You have my best wishes my friend. I hope you get back to your family in the US. God speed.

I filed two grievances to the kitchen on the 18th December. Will make no difference, but tried to make a point. The food is just getting worse from day to day. It's not just the quality of the food, it is the combination of food items that sometimes leaves me wondering if anyone in the kitchen knows what they are doing. Thank God I am enjoying some additional chocolate bars at the moment. Trade is good in that respect.

Life here is like a slow death. I speak to Konate and he says that he thinks that I will leave on the 21st December. I'm not so sure. Konate certainly has me thinking about my future. Not only have I seen overwhelming generosity here, I've also found the occasional inspiration.

The 18th December just drifts away like a passing cloud. Only thought worth recording was my weight loss. I must try to keep my weight down now. It would be a shame to have been starved so much and lost so much weight - and all for nothing if I let myself go when I return to the UK.

Now we are into the 19th December and it's tournament time again. No chess last weekend, but it's back today. Now my only serious challenger (Jesus) has left, who is going to give me a decent game? Omar is improving and Nguyen is quite a decent player. But Nguyen will not enter any competition. He doesn't need any prizes as he can afford anything he likes. He wants to spend time each day improving his English.

I also entered the 'Spades' card game tournament today. My playing partner is Omar. We lose the first game, but win the second in style. Get too ambitious in the third, but that's mostly my fault. Inevitably, we win third prize when our opponents drop out of the competition.

I filed another Kite today. I sent it to ICE and told them of my ill health and demanded some response. I am being kept in the dark about my parole application and my deportation. I concluded this Kite by writing the words: "Answer me Satan". These people are truly evil. On the subject of movement, there is increasing activity in the Pod. ICE are really busy at the moment.

20th December and my radio headphones fail again. They can last just a day or two. There is a request form that is sent off each week for radio and headphone sets. Will get my name on that list. I do win the chess tournament again. Another six victories out of six games. I feel like a fraud in some ways as the result of the tournament is known before it begins. But I am not complaining.

I speak to Vidal today about detainees who should be let out. His story is absorbing and he has had a rough time. There are some who have built a life here, pay tax, etc. They have no criminal record. I say they should be released and possible electronically tagged so they can continue their normal way of life - especially as they have family on the outside. Does it really help anyone to keep these people locked away? Families suffer, and the taxpayer suffers as it costs quite a lot to keep someone locked-up.

21st December and I feel like I am vegetating. My food supplies are down to zero, but will get my chess tournament prizes later. There is noise in the Pod until 2-30am. I'm pre-occupied with some of my more important issues and feel that I need to get out as soon as possible. I'm desperate for parole.

22nd December and no chance of getting out before Christmas. Konate's prediction has not come true. I'm praying for parole, but have the feeling that it is false hope. But trying as hard as I can to remain positive on that issue. More Hispanics are coming in than leaving. We are reaching capacity in here. Nguyen is moved to another bunk as his bed is required by one of the Hispanics moving in. This guy has OSA worse than mine. He is also mentally underdeveloped and causing me great concern. His name is 'Francisco'.

The weather outside is bad. Even if I was released early, I could not fly out. There are long queues at SeaTac airport from the plethora of cancelled flights. Not sure where it is more unbearable, here or the airport's departure lounge.

Into the 23rd December and I have to file a grievance about Francisco. I'm concerned about his behaviour and I want to be allocated a new bunk. It's impossible to sleep as he snores so loudly. He's even keeping other detainees at the other end of the Pod awake. My replacement headphones have failed again.

On the 24th December things become even more unbearable. I'm making observations and putting down my thoughts on paper. These will be published separately somewhere else. Don't know when, or where. Only good thing about today is the Christmas 'goodie bag' all detainees get. It's a gift of a large plastic bag full of edible items. About 20% is inedible but there are some nice things to consume.

Arroyo called in today, but did not speak to me. I'm really beginning to dislike this man. It's also been a 'messy' day. Dinner was 'breakfast' and the movie on TV was ruined by channel switching. At least I have some working headphones though. I got them off one of the departing Hispanics (I think). Nguyen had some earplugs he did not want. Brand new and given to me. I gave him some of my snacks from my goodie bag. One thing I did do here was repay everyone who gave me something. One guy I could never repay enough though was Louis. He was given some items from someone else's goodie bag which he did not want. So he gave them to me so I could trade them for soups. I gave most of these items to my friends in Konate's section of the Pod, either in exchange for favours already given, or for further trade.

25th December. I know I called Wisnu before Christmas and asked him to pass on my Christmas greeting to my wife. But when I called, I cannot recall. I know this much, it was no more than a few days before the holiday. I'm glad that at least I was able to get through. Thanks to Konate, and some trades, I got to use one of his phone cards to make this call. I was still awake into the early hours of the morning when I experienced something very sad. I saw five ladies brought into detention. One looked particularly sad. Those bastards at ICE never rest. Where is the Christian spirit that this country so often bullshits the rest of the world about?

Francisco is still unsettling me. He watches me while I eat, while I lay on my bed. Others I speak to say they are glad they are not in my position. For lunch, we had roast beef. I saved some of mine for later and hid. I move away from my bed and when I return, I see Francisco hovering over my bed looking for something. Perhaps he's after the beef I have saved. I protest to the female guard on duty and she calls the lieutenant. He says he knows about the situation with Francisco and that is it.

Our movie schedule gets screwed-up as well. On the list pinned to the wall, we are to see three movies today. The second is 'Scrooged'. The first is Rush Hour 3 and this is transmitted just before lunch and many of us miss the beginning. Why is this happening? The lieutenant arrives and says we want to see the Celtics-Lakers basketball game. I say that we do not. He says that I am one of the few exceptions. Bullshit. He wants to see the game, so our movie schedule is ruined. We have 75 people in this Pod now and not more than about two or three people are watching the game.

Not much else to note except I now have a 'gut feeling' that I will be leaving on the 29th December. This was to prove prophetic.

The 26th December was uneventful. It is a Friday though, so more tournaments begin. I lose at dominoes but win at drafts, beating Benito.

Onto the 27th December. Francisco would not wake up this morning. I am concerned at his health. This is despite the fact he unsettles me. He is still a human being. He gets some rough treatment as both the on-duty guard and then some of his compatriots try to arouse him. He's being pulled around and it is not nice to watch. He is still asleep when another Hispanic comes over, but at least he is breathing. I decide to intervene and ask this guy to back off. I tell him not to disturb Francisco as it is obvious he does not want to get out of bed. The other guy will not give up. I ask him again to back off, he will not. I then clench my fist and warn off this other guy. This leads to ill-feeling and this guy is now trying to provoke me by making fun of my trading activities. I ignore him.

I file a grievance and two Kites about this situation with Francisco. I say that he should be under medical supervision. His life could be at risk. He stops breathing, usually for up to thirty seconds at a time when he is sleeping. Sometimes it is longer and he is really struggling. I also say in my Kite I want to report abuses at the NWDC to the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

When Francisco awakes, he learns I watched over him and would not allow any further abuse. He shakes my hand and in a strange twist of fate, become friends. In one way, I felt bad that I had to take a stand and try to stop him intruding into my personal possessions. On the other, I got to defend him when he needed defending.

By 4pm, I am taken to Intake and speak to an ICE officer. I am informed that I will be deported next week. I remind the officer of my parole application. I ask him to contact the local director of Homeland Security in Seattle about my parole. He says they work in the same office together and knows nothing of my application. But I make him promise he will try and get an answer. Fat chance of this happening.

28th December and my departure is imminent. Will it be the 29th as I predicted? I'm feeling weak and dizzy today. The idiot who keeps making fun is still up to his stupid games. I had already spoken to a guard about his attitude, and there was some respite. But a change of guard means a return to type. But by blanking him out he just gets irritated that I am not rising to his bait. Why should I cause any problems for myself when I am on the verge of getting out?

It's the 29th December and I am told to pack up my things and get ready to leave. I do so and say a few goodbyes. Konate is elsewhere meeting visitors. It's well before midday and I am taken to Intake to get changed back into my normal clothes. When I get there, I see Joe. Joe is being released as well. But his story is an intriguing one.

Joe, as I previously noted, is from Jamaica. He's also done some time in prison in the US. He's being released into the community. Why is he not being sent back to Jamaica? Well, his country says they have no fingerprints or record that he has ever lived there. So, he is 'Stateless'. The US cannot send him to a country that will not provide travel documents. He has done his time in prison. Immigration no longer can hold onto him. The only option is to release him.

Immigrants who come to the US who cannot be traced back to another country can stay in the US. This is even if they have a criminal record. I don't think Joe's offences were that bad, but he had a criminal record regardless. Thus we have a situation where I, who just came to the US to see my wife and collect my possessions is denied the right to stay just a short time. Yet Joe, with his background is allowed to stay indefinitely. What happens to Joe? Once he has been in the US for so long, he will probably get citizenship, or at least a Green Card.

My best wishes to Joe. He has beaten a corrupt system. I harbour no jealousy or hard feelings towards him as a consequence. I also hope he makes a good future for himself and avoids any further problems. Happy New Year, Joe.

There were a couple of other African guys waiting to go out as well. I'm not sure, but one of those may also be staying in the US. The other guy, I don't know.

It's time for me to leave. I am to be taken to SeaTac airport for my flight home. I speak to the ICE officer on the way to the airport and ask what happened to my parole application. The reply was, allegedly, that because I was being flown home today, it was no longer relevant. Essentially, I, and my application, had just been swept under the carpet.

If it were not for other pressing issues back in the UK, I would have refused to board the plane. I would have liked to have resisted and challenged the system. By refusing to be deported, I would have been committing a criminal act. But at least I may have got some legal representation if I was given over to the criminal justice system as a consequence. I will never know if this may have led to me being paroled in some way at a future date.

Conclusion and observations

In my time at the NWDC, I have endured abuses of human rights. I have seen and experienced some bad things. There are questions that need to be answered. Those in authority need to be held accountable for what they are allowing to happen. But I want to speak about the positives I have taken from the NWDC.

I have endeavoured to repay all the kindnesses shown to me. I have been especially impressed by the wonderful nature of the members of the African population whom I have met. To them, and the numerous Hispanic friends I know, and those from other continents, I say good luck. It would be a good thing if we could all try and find a way of changing the immigration system for the better. It needs to be changed. I'm up to the challenge but as a non-US citizen, I'm not sure how much I can achieve. But there must be someone out there who can do something and will listen to what I have to say.

If this person is you, then please come forward and contact me at my email address. I'm waiting to hear from you.

Read my My pre-court statement or go to Part 10 of my story.