



The Arizona Correctional Peace Officers Association

Check and Mate Newsletter

No. 12



A bi-weekly newsletter to inform Union members on important grievance results, trends, procedures and important information relevant to a better quality of work life.

In This Issue:

-Is the Arizona Department of Corrections knowingly forcing staff to be unethical?



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Is the Arizona Department of Corrections knowingly forcing staff to be unethical?

OK.....this is a tough subject! Let's get that on the table right now before we even begin.

My father was of Spanish gypsy descent and as a cultural habit, he loved to express himself through

sayings and metaphors to discuss, at length, a deep subject.

For me, being his only son, it appears that his cultural habits were contagious because I often find that approaching a difficult subject is easier for me if I speak of it indirectly, in lieu of directly, through symbology.

With that said, the Arizona Department of Corrections upper administration really reminds me of a severely bent tree.



Once a tree is bent to this extreme, there's very little one can do to straighten her trunk.

As I reflect on the current situation that staff are now facing in the trenches, from ridiculously low staffing numbers and pencil whipping of staffing rosters to make it appear as if they are operating at a safe level,

to the extreme deliberate indifference that this administration is showing by neglecting to take action against the outrageously high number of assaults that Lewis and other complexes have had to endure, to the blatant disregard of improving safety measures for the staff having to deal with the inmate population, on a face to face basis, and not from the comfort of an office far removed from the reality of this dreadful situation, I have come to realize that by having to endure these conditions, staff are unknowingly being forced to react in an unethical manner and I will tell you why: yearly training always includes the ethical standards of having to report unethical behavior no matter what the circumstances are. If you don't, you are subject to disciplinary sanctions that may even include dismissal from state service. If this be the case, I have to ponder the following thoughts: "If my administration is the cause of an unsafe condition for my coworkers, myself and even the inmate population, aren't I morally and ethically obliged to report this fact? If I am aware that my administration is

underplaying a fact and neglecting, for example, the fact that I submitted an Information Report that could have avoided a potential riot but instead, pretended that the Information Reports didn't exist after a riot did in fact erupt, wouldn't I be obligated to report the bad behavior of the negligent and lying administration?"

"But wait a minute!", you must be thinking right about now, "Policies in place are insufficient to give relief for what you are suggesting because you are limited to whom and what you can report, to include a natural gag order that prevents staff from speaking to the media unless authorized to do so. Not to mention that this department is entitled to investigate itself and exonerate itself from any wrong doing easily because of the internal element involved. This is the equivalent of having a murderer investigate himself and find himself not guilty!"

Ridiculous, isn't it?

However, this form of thinking, the belief that one is not to speak of an incident unless authorized to do so, is

so deeply ingrained in our correctional culture, that we are absolutely convinced that we can't say anything at all without some form of repercussion or retaliation.

Not true.

What is true and is a sad reality however, is that if staff were to challenge administrations oftentimes blatant lying, incompetence, and negligence, more often than not, then administration, by virtue of being a self-contained entity that can investigate itself and thus, again, can exonerate itself, will indeed cover up and retaliate subtly against the employee.

We at AZCPOA deal with this unethical dilemma constantly and are, as we speak, working towards a solution to put an end to this unfortunate situation.

Our beloved department has indeed been transformed into a bent tree by years of constant upper administrations negligence, fear of this director's unapproachable behavior and fear to deploy the authority that they should have

commensurate with the rank they are being payed for. However, it appears that the only service they are being payed for is to keep quiet, be subservient and comply with unethical directions that are taking their toll on our staff.

We ask our staff to stand together and watch each other's backs while we at AZCPOA work towards correcting this poor bent tree that is after all, our beloved profession.

Let us not connect this unethical behavior from those above us with the real profession that is corrections. They are in fact, that bent tree. But corrections, that is, you, the staff, are not.

Your tree, remains unbent.

So, we will work then, towards cutting down "that" bent tree if need be.

Yours in Solidarity,

Carlos Garcia

Executive Grievance

Coordinator

Deeds not words!

