

TRANSCRIPT: 'YOUR BODY IS IN JAIL, BUT YOUR MIND IS NOT'

T-Dog, J-Wow and EJ | April 15, 2021

Judge Patricia H. Clark Children and Family Justice Center | Seattle, WA

Three young men discuss youth incarceration.

[MUSIC FADES IN]

T-Dog: Yo, what's up with it, what's up with it? You got T-Dog in the building. You got my dog J-Wow.

EJ: My name is EJ.

T-Dog: But we're gonna be talking about a day in the life at juvie, man, you know?

[MUSIC FADES OUT]

T-Dog: In the morning, we wake up, eat our breakfast. And we just be chilling with each other playing Monopoly. Just chillin with the gangery, you know?

J-Wow: In the afternoon, we just be going to school. And when there's not COVID, going to gym.

T-Dog: In the evenings is where it get active, though. We got a library if we got it that day. Or we'll have either bingo or movie night, or we have we have video calls with our families and stuff too.

J-Wow: That's really how it be goin' in a day. That's about it.

T-Dog: See now, like, the most most active day out of the week, though, I'm gonna have to give it to Sunday.

J-Wow: Sunday. Sunday.

T-Dog: Commissary, library, we'll be just chilling on Sundays.

J-Wow: So if you don't know, commissary is like just ordering food for the whole week. Cuz we earn a specific amount of stars, depending on our behavior through that week. And like the most stars you can get is 140. And if you get 140, basically, you're good. And so like there's, there's all different types of chips, noodles, candy, hygiene. Whether you want to brush your teeth or smack some snacks, then you need to order you some commissary.

T-Dog: Hands down my favorite snacks at a commissary is probably gonna be either the Takis or the noodle bowl. Those are really smacking. Especially if you put them together...wooooo! That's really the smacker right there.

T-Dog: So like, you see how we're in jail and stuff? What do you want people to understand about your life here?

EJ: I want them to know that, like, even though sometimes they do say that you can use your voice in here, like most of the time, they don't even listen. Just, like, you're just basically talking to nobody.

J-Wow: One thing I just want people to understand is like, I mean, yes-- it's a juvenile place, and they treat us pretty good for the most part. But like, no matter how much library [time] they give us, or all types of fun activities-- it's still jail. Like, we still don't get to leave. Like, that's the worst part about it. Some people just be trying to go home to their families bro. Can't even do it.

T-Dog: What about your mental health? What do you do for joy?

T-Dog: Probably the biggest thing for mental health I do is just staying in contact with family at home. You feel me? You gotta stay in contact with people on the outside. Like, that helps a lot.

T-Dog: When you lose people out there, you start to lose yourself in here.

T-Dog: Most the life skills that I've learned, were like, in here. You feel me? Like, like people, like people telling me, you know, 'you can't change a person that wants to leave you' type shit. I learned that in here. You feel me?

EJ: To be honest, you can learn a lot here, but you have to choose to. Like if you come in here, like, acting some type of way, you ain't gonna learn nothin'. But there's opportunities here, even though you're in jail.

T-Dog: You can go to school, you earn credits, you graduate high school, get your GED...

J-Wow: Get in shape, all that.

T-Dog: It's just, like-- cuz some people in here, they think, because they're locked up, 'Oh I'm locked up so, you know, my life just about to be thrown away' type stuff. Like, nobody, nobody has that choice to throw away your life but you. You feel me? Like you could be locked up-- like, cuz, my brother always told me, like, if you're locked up, you know, your body's in jail, but your mind's not. You feel me? Your mind can wander beyond these walls. So like, it's just like, if you keep that in your head, you know, then it's always gonna be easier to just think, think on the bright side of everything. You feel me? Gotta be optimistic.

J-Wow: Yeah, that's one thing-- I actually read that in one of the books I was reading a few weeks ago-- is that, you know, they can lock you up physically, but they can never lock your mind up.

T-Dog: Yeah, cuz once you realize like, no matter what, you're gonna think beyond these walls, bro. Like you're gonna think-- you can have dreams, you know, that you're not even here no more. You're somewhere on the outs bro.

T-Dog: You know, that was...I'm let you guys know, you know, that was a little talk show with you know, my guy, J-Wow, you know. And T-Dog, you feel me? And you know, we'll be back for another one. Deuces.