# "Letter from Loretto"
## Retaliation

Hello from the Federal "Correctional" Institution at Loretto, PA. Yesterday I had the pleasure of a visit from my friends Jane Hamsher and Kevin Gozstola of Firedoglake. It was two hours of terrific conversation, including, obviously, about my most recent Letter from Loretto, in which I came down hard on a officer here.

(As an aside, I want to tell you that three Corrections Officers (CO), independently of one another, have approached me in recent days to tell me how much they enjoyed that letter, saying it was the most "entertaining" and "fun" one yet.)

Today, my wife, my cousin Kip, and my three youngest children came to visit. Visitation is scheduled from 8:30am to 2:15pm. They arrived at 8:30 and I was called to the visitation room at 8:45. The room was crowded, but not as crowded as it's been on other days they've visited. Indeed, the row behind us had 12 empty seats.

At 11:15am, the prison "Facility Manager," a short, portly, mustachioed middle-manager whom I have never seen before in the visitation room and who usually spends his time checking IDs in the cafeteria, made an announcement that he was worried about overcrowding and he wanted volunteers to leave to make room for other people who may or may not be waiting to come in. Nobody volunteered.

Fifteen minutes later, he called me into the strip search room. My family had to leave, he said. "You get lots of visits, so I'm exercising my authority to end your visit." I said, "You're throwing my family out." "I'm not throwing them out," he responded. "I'm telling them to leave." Semantics. I told him that the regulation said that a decision to ask a family to leave was based on the frequency of their visits and the distance of their travel. They visit once a month and drive 210 miles, leaving the house at 5:00am. He said the regulation related to the frequency of all visits, and they had to go.

The Facility Manager said I could complain through the Administrative Remedy process, a joke of an appeal system that I'll address in a future letter. I told him I would instead write a Letter from Loretto.

I went back to my family to tell them they were being thrown out. When they got up and went to the door, a CO whom I respect came over and told me to bring them back to their seats. She said she thought the Facility Manager had misinterpreted the regulation and she would speak to him. A few minutes later, she returned and said she had been "overruled."

My cousin and the kids left. My 7-year-old daughter and 2-year-old son cried all the way out the door. My wife was able to stay. Of the four seats my family vacated, two were filled with new visitors. Within an hour, another two dozen visitors left, calling it a day.

I normally don't complain about the petty daily inconveniences

that are a normal part of life here. But I have to call this out for what it is: Retaliation for Letters from Loretto. There was no space problem in the visitation room. There were plenty of seats. There were even more an hour later. Only a "troublemaker" from Detroit and I were told that our families had to leave. We were the only ones. Coincidence? I think not.

This is yet another example of the power of the written word. A temporary inconvenience in the visitation room won't stop Letters from Loretto. Nothing will. There's a lot more truth to tell in the coming months.

In the meantime, to learn more about my case, please visit www.defendjohnk.com.

Best regards,

John