

Journalist Spends Four Months Undercover at Private Prison to Reveal Disturbing Details



Source: YouTube/Mother Jones

"You don't know what goes on behind closed doors" is a popular saying. It especially rings true for the doors of private prisons. The institutions have been known for being profit-driven, putting money before the well-being of the inmates inside. When this happens, the prisoners are often ill-treated. Proper mental and health care are scarce, as well as vocational and recreational amenities. There are also stories of inmates facing maltreatment from prison guards.

What better way to uncover the truth than by sending in an undercover journalist for a private prisons investigation? Continue through this gallery to see life within the institution from the viewpoint of an undercover prison guard.

1. Shane Bauer Goes Undercover



Source: YouTube/Mother Jones

"All that matters anymore is action..." wrote Shane Bauer for *Mother Jones*. The journalist went undercover as a prison guard in a 2014 investigation, where he began to thrive on executing his authoritative power. Bauer experienced four months of the job in the United States' oldest medium-security private prison. The journalist documented his disturbing encounters through a hidden camera implanted in his wristwatch.

2. Driven by Profit



Source: YouTube/Mother Jones

Bauer's goal was to uncover daily life in a private prison as well as the controversy that surrounds it.

Private prisons are accountable to shareholders, making them a profit-driven operation. Because they are heavily guarded by law, the truth of what goes on inside the facilities are hardly known and rarely investigated.

3. Easily Undercover



Source: YouTube/Mother Jones

To infiltrate the private prison, all Bauer needed was to be a cooperating employee. No background checks or resumes were required to be part of the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA). A training manager of the operation, which is now called CoreCivic, said to Bauer, "If you come here and you breathing and you got a valid driver's license and you willing to work, then we're willing to hire you."

4. Profit of a Prison



Source: YouTube/Mother Jones

In 2016, the CCA made \$1.85 billion with a gross profit of \$574 million. CoreCivic has been running successfully since its inception in 1983, largely due to the criminal justice system broadening throughout the 80's and 90's due to overcrowding, drugs, and strict sentencing.

CoreCivic currently runs 65 state and federal prisons with a total capacity for 90,000 inmates.

5. Winn Correctional Center



Source: YouTube/Mother Jones

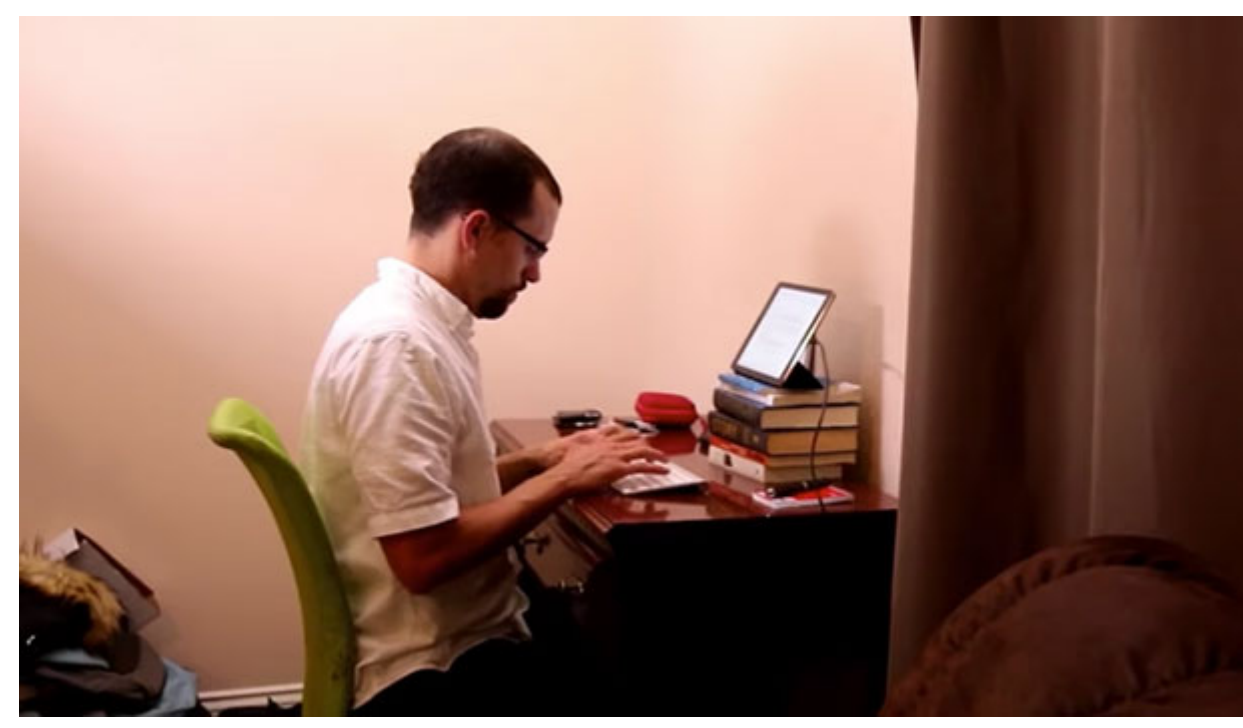
Upon receiving employment, Bauer was appointed to the Winn Correctional Center located in Kisatchie National Forest, Louisiana.

The facility is made up of four "tiers:" Dogwood, Ash, Elm and Cypress, each with its own reputation and connecting to their own control room called "the key."

Dogwood was known for housing well-behaved inmates; troublemakers lived in Ash and Elm, and in Cypress, inmates were segregated in units of private cells.

6. It Takes 30 Days to Make a Prison

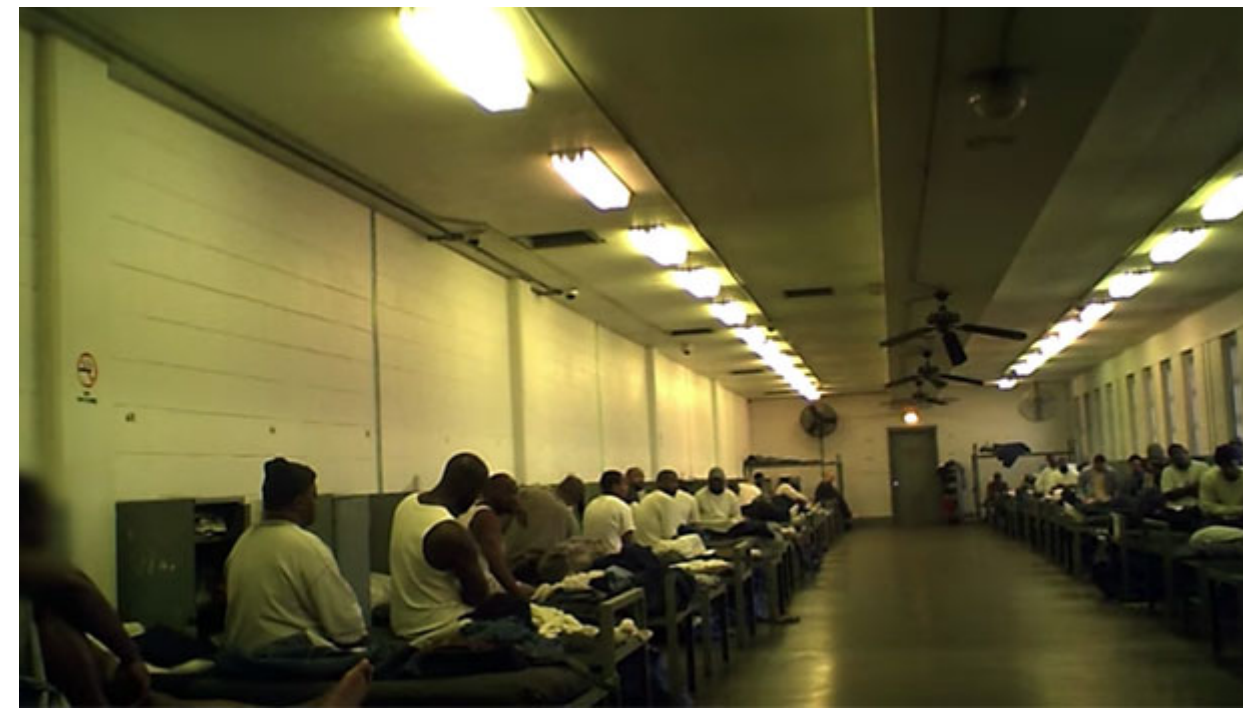
Guard



Source: YouTube/Mother Jones

It took Bauer a short 30 days to become a correctional officer. He received training from the Special Operations Response Team (SORT) for rough-and-tumble. He even had to undergo being tear-gassed.

7. Inmate Issues



Source: YouTube/Mother Jones

The journalist was first exposed to issues within the prison two weeks into his investigation.

Inmate Chase Cortez escaped from prison, stole a pick-up truck, and drove away unnoticed for hours. Eventually, the staff realized his absence and Cortez was discovered by the local sheriff. His unknown escape was probably due in part to the guard towers being unmanned since 2010.

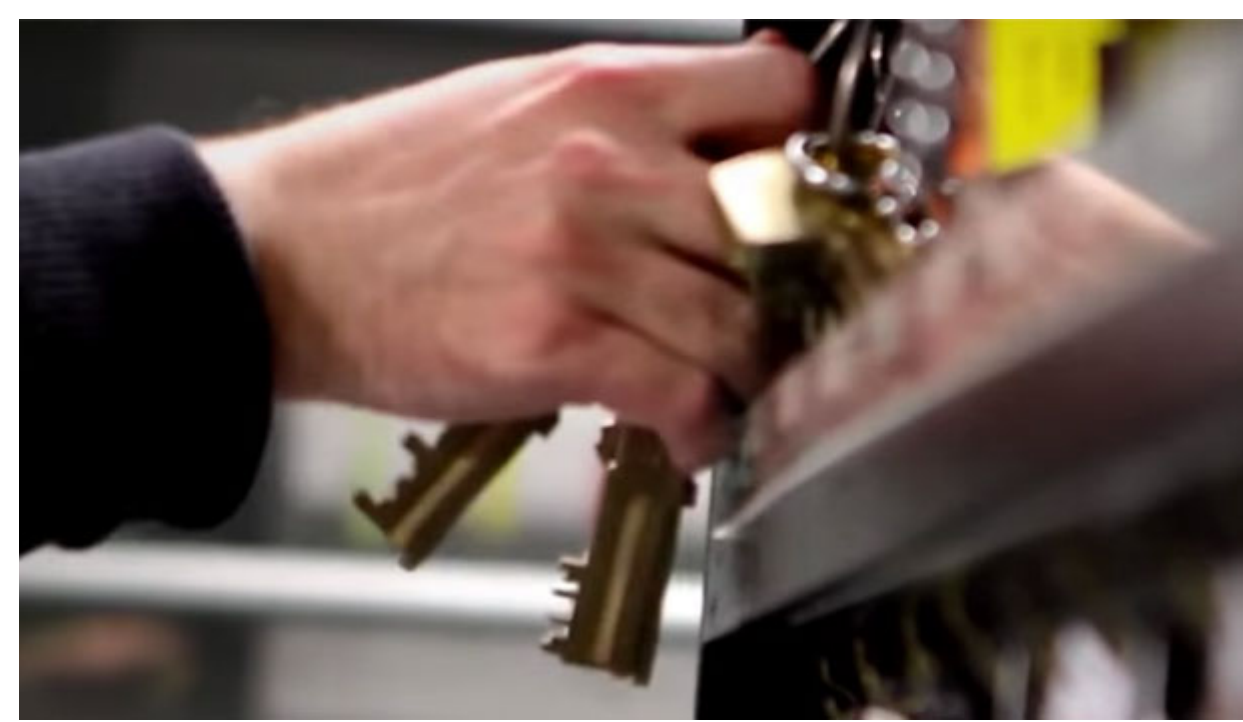
8. Unnecessarily Uncomfortable



Source: YouTube/Mother Jones

When Bauer completed his 30-day training, he began working in Cypress on suicide watch. The rooms in Cypress are made to be extremely uncomfortable for the inmates to discourage any negative behavior. They sleep on steel bunks with no mattresses and have no reading material or other means of entertainment. The inmates also go unclothed, given only tear-proof suicide blankets.

9. Lack of Health Provisions



Source: YouTube/Mother Jones

The prison's social worker, Miss Carter, exposed the reality of the lack of mental health provisions in the facility. She explained to Bauer how 10 percent of the inmates were going untreated for psychological health issues and 25 percent of them had IQs below 70, meaning many could be considered mentally handicapped.

Compared to other facilities, Winn was seriously inefficient at providing for its patients, with other places providing at least three full-time social workers and a full-time psychiatrist.

10. Room for Resources

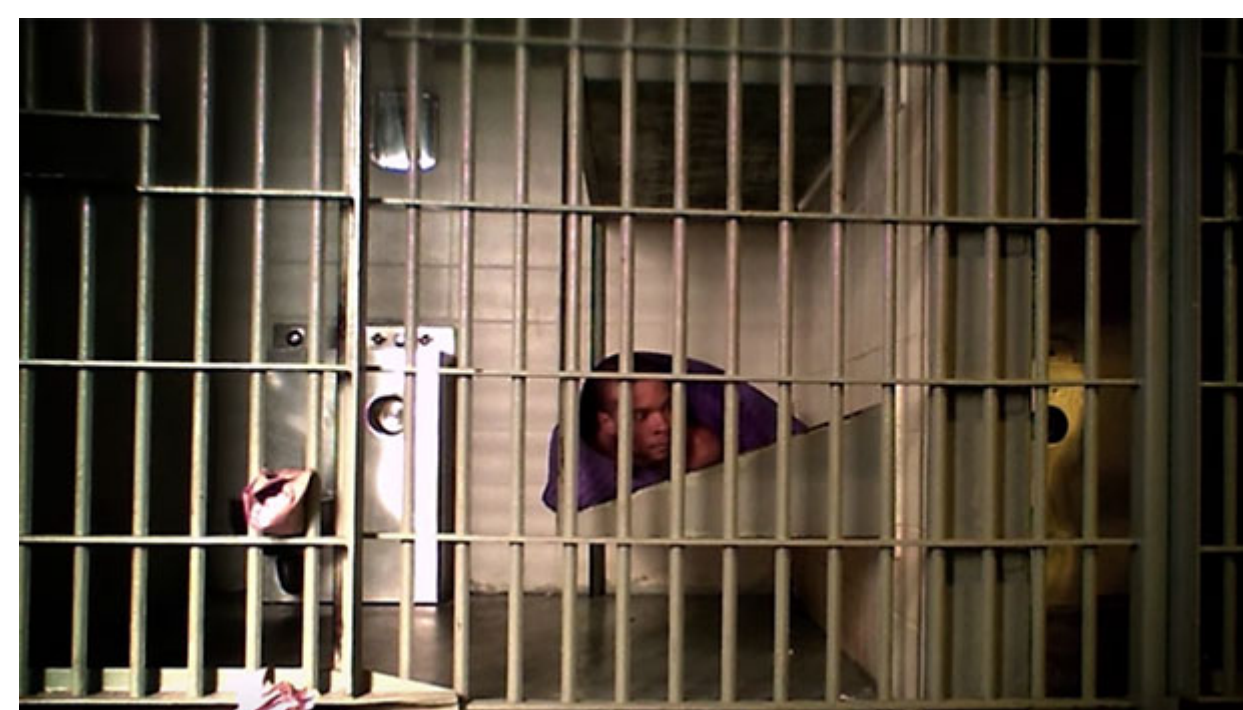


Source: YouTube/Mother Jones

Resources present in other correctional facilities that were completely knocked out in Winn's were work programs and hobby shops, and they had limited access to the law library.

Because the number of guards were scarce, the recreation yard was hardly able to be utilized by the inmates, leaving them with lots of energy with nowhere to put it.

11. (No) Medical Care



Source: YouTube/Mother Jones

Medical care was even worse. Bauer was exposed to an inmate diagnosed with having fluid in his lungs, which requires minor surgery. Instead, the prisoner went untreated to keep expenses low.

Another inmate, Robert Scott, had been at Winn for 12 years. Throughout nine separate occasions of complaining of pain in his hands and feet, Scott went undiagnosed. His toes and fingers turned black from gangrene, and when he was finally emitted to the hospital, he had to have his fingers and legs amputated.

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13. A Violent Institution



Source: YouTube/Mother Jones

Bauer noted the many cases of violence at Winn, recounting frequent stabbings that resulted in indefinite lockdowns where prisoners aren't allowed to leave their tiers.

Bauer hardly went unaffected by the inmates. Feeling victimized by the prisoners, Bauer eventually delighted in the idea of physically fighting them, and took no time to utilize his authoritative position.

14. An Early End to the Investigation

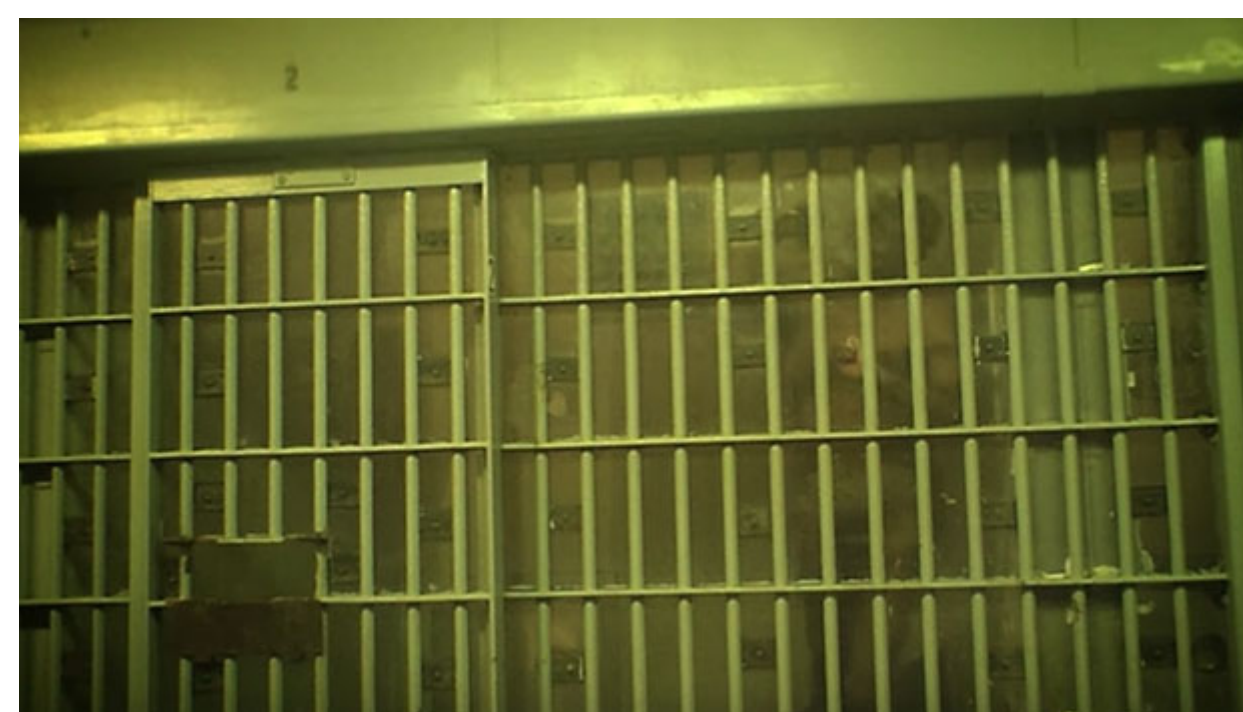


Source: YouTube/Mother Jones

However, the journalist's experience came to an abrupt end when a coworker was charged with trespassing outside of the Winn compound. He was attempting to get footage of the prison.

Consequently, Bauer had to make his escape. He called in sick to work, bailed out his coworker, and took his things and ran out of state.

15. Uncovering the Truth



Source: YouTube/Mother Jones

Bauer's undercover experience exposed the tragedies of private correction facilities. The drive for profit overrode proper health care and vocational services for inmates, as well as allowing violence in the scarcely guarded facility.

Eventually, CoreCivic announced they were ending their contract for Winn after being exposed to its inadequate functionality. Winn was taken over by LaSalle corrections in late 2015.