

and school experience is beyond commonplace, and if you're single, then please act as my temporary boyfriend and come home with me for the New Year. You should not be too old or too young. Your pay will depend on your performance.

[TESTIMONY] "PROBLEM BEHAVIOR".  
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This Harper's article & James  
Ball letter work well  
together for current  
issues. \*\*\*

[Testimony]

## PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

From spring 2007 interviews conducted by ACLU attorney Mie Lewis with teenage girls imprisoned in Texas juvenile institutions. Earlier that year, reports emerged of sexual abuse of boys by staff members at the West Texas State School in Pyote. In June 2008 the ACLU filed a lawsuit against officials at the Texas Youth Commission (TYC), which runs the state's juvenile-prison system, but the suit was dismissed in October on procedural grounds. "Security" refers to solitary confinement.

**I**n security they have the rooms freezing cold. If you get admitted, you wear an orange shirt and black shorts, and they don't care—they leave it freezing. They say, If you don't want to get frozen, don't come down here. Even during winter, they keep the air conditioner on. It's dirty there, too. They hardly ever clean the rooms. There's blood on the walls from students who cut themselves. I remember I was very sick from drinking bleach, and I started throwing up and they made me sit in the room with the throw-up for twenty-four hours. It shouldn't be like that, because when you smell it, you're going to keep on throwing up. I was at the point that I was

foaming at the mouth because they would not let me clean it up and I kept throwing up and there was nothing left to throw up.

—sixteen-year-old, Ron Jackson State  
Juvenile Correctional Complex

I've seen a few times when people would get restrained, and it was too rough, in my opinion. They weren't fighting, but the staff were slamming them around. The last time I got restrained they put me on the floor and held their knee on the side of my head and pushed the other side of my head into the linoleum floor, and I came out of it with a black eye.

—seventeen-year-old, Corsicana Residential  
Treatment Center

We used to wear our pants and our T-shirts off campus, like, say, if we are going to the doctor. Now we have to wear oranges, we have to wear shackles, and we have to wear handcuffs. Say someone dies in your family: you have to wear oranges and shackles to their funeral. I wouldn't want nobody, none of my family, to see me at a funeral with oranges and shackles on. Crying—they think that's a "problem behavior." You're crying because you have low self-esteem or something, and they'll knock your points down for that.

—eighteen-year-old, Corsicana

The staff let the girls fight, and whoever wins stays on the dorm, whoever loses goes to security. They don't even try to break it up. When the fight's over, that's when they decide who wins. Staff will hit students and throw them against the wall. I've had a knee on my hand, my face, or I've been punched, or I've been choked in a restraint. I think they're too rough, because even with the little, little kids, like ten or eleven, they do them the same way they do us older kids.

—sixteen-year-old, Corsicana

It's my understanding they're not supposed to shackle a pregnant girl, 'cause she can fall on her stomach. When I went to the hospital, I was shackled. When I got to my room, they took off my shackles and handcuffs, but when I got in my bed, they put the shackles back on. It's like, Where am I going to go? When you have a C-section, your legs have to be spread so they can make a clean cut across. That's when the doctor told the officer to "take the shackles off or I'll cut them off."

—eighteen-year-old, Victoria Regional  
Juvenile Justice Facility

A staff gave me a pill, and he told me he was going to take me to get my meds. We ended up

in this dirty room. It had pipes, buckets—it was dusty, it was nasty. I was like, I want to go to sleep, and he was like, You're not leaving until we have sex. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know to scream, I didn't know to do none of that stuff. I told him I wasn't going to lie on that dirty floor and he was like, Well, just bend over, and so—I didn't know what he was going to do to me. I don't know if he could've killed me and it would've been on the news: We just found a dead teenager at TYC and nobody knows what happened.

—seventeen-year-old, Marlin Orientation and Assessment Unit

[Meditation]

## JUST LIKE HEAVEN

By Paul Ford, posted in January to the online magazine *The Morning News*, in response to the reader-submitted question "Is there an afterlife?" Ford is an associate editor of *Harper's Magazine*.

1. If you ever need to make your own Grand Canyon, start with a river and lift up the earth. As the ground rises the river will carry some of it away. Wait 7 million years, at which point tourists will come. Some will see eons of erosion at work; others will believe that, a mere 4,500 years back, God dragged His fingernail across the desert. Like the group of evangelical-Christian creationists who rafted through in 2005. "One of the things it says to me," a rafter was quoted as saying, "is I'm small and God and the world He created is huge. This is a man-dwarfing place."

2. Some things to see in the Canyon: rattlesnakes, Buddha Temple, burros, Confucius Temple, condors, Cremation Creek, and, in particular, Darwin Plateau.

3. In Latin, *evolvere* means "to unroll," like a sacred scroll. The word "evolve" implies action. But evolution isn't what happens; it's what's left over. Traits arise in populations, death sweeps through, some traits survive to the next generation. And repeat. Species don't evolve—they erode. And the rock keeps lifting.

4. *Know The Canyon's History, Study Rocks Made*

*By Time*. This is a mnemonic to help you remember the layers of the Canyon: Kaibab limestone, Toroweap formation, Coconino sandstone, and so on. The mnemonic leaves out the Vishnu Schist and makes no note of the Great Unconformity, which is not a layer but the absence of a layer. For an unconformity to form, one stratum is exposed and erodes (in this case, for between 250 million and 1.2 billion years). Then new sediment is deposited and hardens, and the old layer is finally buried, after a gigayear in the sun. Eventually the ground lifts and erosion begins anew.

5. After enough erosion you get tourists, 4.5 million a year, interested in the old rock. They ignore—because it's long gone—the sediment washed away, but visit an old lady in a hogan to buy a blanket, a turquoise necklace, and a kachina doll. Then they go home as citizens of a broader world, simultaneously humbled and embiggened, leaving behind empty water bottles.

6. There is tourism for the body—a trip to the Jersey Shore or Ibiza, water parks and nightclubs. Return relaxed, brain scooped. There is tourism for the mind—a walk through the Louvre, a visit to the Liberty Bell. The Grand Canyon is a little of each.

7. So too, a century or so ago, was Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, then second only to Niagara Falls as a New York tourist destination. Today you can take a trolley tour—but death trips aren't what they used to be. Modern people don't dawdle in graveyards, not unless there's a hook. For instance: Last year I went to a dance performance at Green-Wood. Women in white moved about and struck poses among, and inside, the tombs, as others played accordion. An audience of several hundred walked from scene to scene. "My father and mother are here," said a man to my right. "I'm enjoying this." At the end of the show they asked for donations, and I put \$10 in the box.

8. The neighborhoods around Green-Wood are worn out. There's a bus depot on one side. Last July I was riding my bike there, looking at monuments through the tall fence, when I ran over an empty penis-pump box, canceled postage attached. I stopped, between the graveyard and the buses, and tried to imagine what had happened: Someone pulled his (we can assume a man) car (we can assume a minivan?) into the