

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/07/30/washington-prisoner-subjected-to-solitary-confinement-for-involuntary-protection/>

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | July 30, 2012

A recent *News Tribune* [article](#) highlighted the relatively limited use of solitary confinement in Washington state. Only 2.7 percent of the states 17,800 inmates, or about [400](#), are currently held at the maximum custody level. According to Washington Department of Corrections policy, those placed in the Intensive Management Unit (IMU) are there for either being disruptive to the institution or for protective custody purposes. In the IMU, inmates are allowed one hour of exercise time five days a week and three 10-minute showers a week.

The total number held in isolation, however, is unclear. Aside from the 2.7 percent officially held in solitary, those placed in Administrative Segregation units are not counted. Inmates in Ad-Seg may be there for days or months.

D. has been incarcerated for twenty years in Washington State. While Washington state claims to limit its use of isolation, D.'s experience has consisted of spending all of 2008, 2010, 9 months of 2011 and several months in 2012 in the IMU and Ad-Seg.

Disturbingly, D. has been repeatedly held in isolation for the purposes of involuntary protection.

In 2008, he was sent to the Monroe Correctional Complex IMU. While there, he spent four months in a cell with two uninsulated walls exposed to outside temperatures and no heat in the cell during one of the coldest springs in Washington State history.

We not only froze that spring, but also had to nearly riot to get medications (mine were heart, blood pressure, diabetes and pain) regularly as prescribed, he recalls.

Our breakfasts, every day, consisted of 2-packets of instant oatmeal with no hot water to prepare it, we had use just warm sink water; 2-boiled eggs and a banana. Lunch consisted of the general populations previous nights dinner, placed on trays, refrigerated then reheated. Dinner, served at 3PM, was 1 sandwich, two vending machine sized chips, 1 cookie or cupcake, two pieces of fruit. We would try to save something from dinner for later, but the lunch portions were so small or inedible, we'd be too hungry for dinner to save anything, D. says.

One of my biggest complaints regarding solitary confinement is that its whole intended purpose is being abused. As soon as a new IMU is opened, it is filled with inmates who were caught with tobacco, tattooing, verbal confrontations with staff; also the quickest and most convenient way to resolve a conflict between an unaffiliated inmate and a security threat group member.

D. would be among those unaffiliated inmates punished for being attacked. As he tells it, on December 27, 2009 D., an African-American man, was attacked by a white inmate while he spoke on the phone. In self-defense, D. fought back and knocked out the white inmate. The Shift Lieutenant, after viewing video of the incident, told D. that he should be released back into my living unit, without any disciplinary action being taken against me.

One month later, he remained in segregation. In spite of being all alone in a cell, and no one being able to get out of their cells, I was taken to IMU South where I stay for four more days, not even knowing why I was placed there. Then I was given an Ad-Seg referral, stating that a correctional officer had received confidential information that white inmates planned to kill me (being extremely upset over the injuries my attacker received, during his assault on me), D. recalls.

At an Ad Seg hearing, he was told that he was recommended at a recent classification hearing that he be placed in medium custody. However, he was told that, due to his de facto life-without-parole sentence, his transfer to medium custody would not be a priority.

By placing you on Ad Seg, with a request to transfer, your move will become a priority, the hearing officer allegedly told D.

One month later he remained in solitary. We are still waiting for Olympia to tell us to move you, D. was told. He was finally transferred. To a segregation unit at Coyote Ridge Corrections Center.

For seven weeks, he remained in isolation, waiting for word that he would be transferred to a medium Custody facility. Instead, the

Classification committee in Olympia voted 4-1 to have him sentenced to a six month IMU term at Stafford Creek Correctional Center.

Paperwork he was given from the Classification hearing read: Assign to Max Custody/IMS [Intensive Management Status] Program at Stafford Creek; Earn and maintain six months infraction free behavior, level-4 privileges, complete Anger Management, Offender Change Program, and submit Behavior Modification Plan. Consideration for release to general population after six months.

D. was reportedly told by the Associate Superintendent, who was among those who voted for his placement in IMU, that Im not beingpunished, but being placed in IMU for my own protection.

D. describes his bleak IMU experience. You are not allowed meaningful recreation, just an hour of exercise an empty 15 x 12 cell, no church attendance, real library service or educationalprogramming. All of your personal possessions are denied to you. You will remain in your 712 cell for 23 of every 24 hours five days a week. Two days a week you will not come out of your cell at all. You will eat all of your meals within a few feet of your toilet. You will be in handcuffs each and every time your cell door is opened for any reason.

Though D. is no longer in isolation, he has indicated that he feels prison authorities would place him back into isolation on a whim.

Sal Rodriguez was Solitary Watchs first and most prolific intern. Based in Los Angeles, he served as an editorial writer and columnist for the Orange County Register and the Press-Enterprise, and is now the opinion editor for the Southern California News Group.

Accurate information and authentic storytelling can serve as powerful antidotes to ignorance and injustice. We have helped generate public awareness, mainstream media attention, and informed policymaking on what was once an invisible domestic human rights crisis.

Only with your support can we continue this groundbreaking work, shining light into the darkest corners of the U.S. criminal punishment system.

by [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

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My son is in a CTC unit. He went their directly after his third brain surgery. The CMO said he would be returned to his cell. After three months I stared questioning why he was still in CTC (locked down 23 or 24 hours a day) The CMO said it was for his own protection. My son has been there since FEB. 2011. I do not believe that the guards new that. His treatment is worse than if he were in a cell with no medical attention. The cell mate that he has had for 9+ years is more of a father than a cell mate. He was the one who nursed my son back to health after the first surgery.

Now my son is in paid at a level 9 if he does not move. He has a shunt in his brain and a tube running from the shunt to his stomach, braces on both sides of his body, a back brace and is in a wheel chair. He can no longer sit in the chair more than two hours. I went to see him on 7/28&29 after a 9+hour drive I could not stand to see him in pain after two hours and went back to my hotel and waited for the next day.

I have tried to have him transferred to a medical facility, but the CMO said due to his classification this could not be accomodated. The classification has been modified what could the excuse be now?

The real crime is when a state that can locks you up, cripple you, can keep you in pain.

Torture, cruel and inhumane treatment is what the State prison system has come to.

Whatever happened to rehabilitation? I believe that this was the sole purpose for prisons. When you have a Public defender and he has convicted you what chance does a first time offender have? (LWOP)

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