

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://solitarywatch.org/2013/04/05/video-shows-maine-prisoner-with-mental-illness-brutally-subdued-by-guards/>**

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by [Lisa Dawson](#) | April 5, 2013

A graphic video (shown below) recently leaked to the public shows a team of corrections officers make liberal use of prison torture tactics on a man who was, at the time of the incident, incarcerated at Maine Correctional Center and had been held in solitary confinement for two months. A still of the explicit footage, originally obtained by the *Portland Press Herald*, captures Captain Shawn Welch spraying pepper spray directly into the face of the restrained man as the team of guards use brutal force to thwart any efforts at resistance.

The man, Paul Schlosser, who suffers from mental illness, was at the time taking several medications to treat his bipolar disorder and depression. Allegedly leading up to the incident, which took place in June 2012, was Schlosser's refusal to go to the prison medical unit to be treated for a self-inflicted injury on his arm. Next, in what is referred to as a cell extraction, corrections officers wearing protective gear removed Schlosser from his cell, putting him into a restraint chair. At first, Schlosser was compliant, but, as [reported](#) by the *Press Herald*:

[W]hen one of the officers pins back Schlosser's head, as his arms are being put into the chair's restraints, Schlosser starts to struggle. When he spits at one of the officers, Welch sprays him with pepper spray, also called OC spray.

Schlosser becomes compliant and complains about not being able to breathe. One officer puts a spit-mask on him, trapping the pepper spray on Schlosser's face.

Welch tells him he must cooperate to avoid similar treatment. Schlosser is in distress for 24 minutes before he is allowed to wash his face.

<http://youtu.be/hCnD5ipYt5w>

Welch, who sprayed the OC without warning, held the canister about 18 inches away from his target's face, despite the fact that this particular canister type has the potential to stop multiple people dead in the tracks from over six feet away. After the story broke, Welch was terminated but, following an appeal that took into consideration his service to the Maine Department of Corrections, he was reinstated.

Upon viewing the footage, the investigator assigned to the case made an important observation:

In the 24 minutes between Schlosser being sprayed and when he can wash the spray off his face, Welch strolls in and out of the cell holding the OC spray canister, telling Schlosser that if he doesn't cooperate, this will happen all over again.

You're not going to win. I will win every time, he says.

Welch says repeatedly, If you're talking, you're breathing, suggesting that as long as Schlosser was complaining, he was not in serious medical distress. Welch does call for a member of the prison's medical staff.

At one point, he whispers to Schlosser, Useless as teats on a bull, huh? What do you think now? an apparent reference to an insult Schlosser directed at him two days earlier, according to the investigator's report.

The investigator concluded that Welch's treatment of Schlosser was personal.

Welch continues to brow beat Schlosser and it looks like he has made this a personal issue, said Durst in the report. There is not one incident of de-escalation and in fact Welch continues to escalate the situation even after the deployment of chemical agent.

Welch later defended his use of the pepper spray to an investigator, stating his actions were not out of line since Schlosser, who has Hepatitis C, had spit at an officer.

In detailing what Schlosser may have experienced as a result of the spit-mask trapping the pepper spray, Pete Brook [writes](#) that

Pepperspray instantly dries out mucous membranes in the eyes, nose and mouth causing intense and overwhelming pain. Pepperspray leads to a sensation of not being able to breathe, although a National Institute of Justice study found it does not compromise a persons ability to breathe. Brook continues:

Its just like getting jalapeno pepper in your eye, only multiplied by a bunch, said Robert Trimyer, a use of force instructor and OC trainer with the University of Texas Health Science Center Police Department in San Antonio.

Depending on the concentration, OC spray is roughly 300 times hotter than a jalapeno pepper.

Its painful, but it goes away. The people that have the problem breathing, its really more of the anxiety involved, said Trimyer.

Yerger believes that putting the spit shield on top of the pepper spray would intensify the effect of the spray.

I have never heard of any trainer I have ever worked with as a peer that would ever say, Put a spit hood on someone after pepper spraying them, he said.

Theyre spinning out of control. Restraint, pepper spray, now cover their face youre just escalating the situation. In cases I reviewed when people have died in a (restraint) chair, its not uncommon to see factors like that involved.

Schlossers story is disturbingly reminiscent of an incident that took place in 2000, also involving a leaked video (shown below) of a brutal cell extraction in Maine. The footage, leaked to journalist Lance Tapley, shows the cell extraction of Mike James, who, like Schlosser, suffered from mental illness. The video shows officers forcibly removing James from his cell as he is maced by officers. The corrections officers then remove the incapacitated mans clothing and place him in a restraint chair.

Ultimately, the horrific footage of prison torture and Tapleys ensuing [story](#) added fuel to a growing movement against solitary confinement in Maine, which led to reforms in that state (described in a recent [report](#) from the ACLU of Maine).

In another [story](#) reporting on the incident, Tapley highlights the irony of the U.S. prison systems treatment of mentally ill people who are incarcerated, stating:

Of the four years James had been in prison when I met him, he had spent all but five months in solitary confinement. The isolation is mental torture, even for people who are able to control themselves, he said. It included periods alone in a cell with no blankets, no clothes, butt-naked, mace covering me. Everything James told me was confirmed by other inmates and prison employees.

James story illustrates an irony in the negative reaction of many Americans to the mistreatment of war on terrorism prisoners at Guantanamo. To little public outcry, tens of thousands of American citizens are being held in equivalent or worse conditions in this countrys super-harsh, super-maximum security, solitary-confinement prisons, or in comparable units of traditional prisons

In the supermaxes inmates suffer weeks, months, years, or even decades of mind-destroying isolation, usually without meaningful recourse to challenge the conditions of their captivity

[I]solation is the overwhelming, defining punishment in this vast network of what critics have begun to call mass torture.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jUfK5i\\_lQs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jUfK5i_lQs)

Lisa Dawson served as an assistant editor, social media manager, and contributor at Solitary Watch. She continues to support prisoners and their family members who need help navigating re-entry. She is on Twitter [@endsolitary](#).

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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Mastermeridian. Ignorance is bliss with you obviously. I chose my profession and I enjoy it ! You and aloof Erika have NO idea and really have no opinion unless you have worked there. Erika, you think ALL guards are like what youre stereotyping them as? You liberal pukers are whats destroying the very core of what our country has been formed on. Hey Mater whats your profession? (I cant wait for your answer). Now after you tell me what it is I will criticize you, stereotype you like lil miss I have NOT ONE CLUE what im talking about

Erika and I say afterwards that you should choose another profession! Funny thing is I never said I didn't love my job, so where this is coming from is beyond me other than feeble attempt to avoid the aforementioned facts that you two lame brains are conveniently ignoring BECAUSE you know that there's NOTHING you can say and this is for you Erika that holds water UNLESS you worked in a prison OR were an inmate in a mental ward state correctional unit. Erika do you drive a car? Because you're a woman you must be a nuisance to other law-abiding motorists BECAUSE everyone knows women can't drive!!!!!! Isn't that the most ignorant, narrow-minded stereotypical thing in the world for me to say? Now go back and read your infantile last two posts and see how truly PATHETIC you really sound!

For the last 15 years, I've heard the descriptions of sadistic abuse by prison guards in prisons throughout the United States. I know there are people (correctional officers) who genuinely want to work in a prison to be helpful. Unfortunately, they are driven out of their jobs by fellow guards who ridicule them for treating prisoners with respect and maybe even kindness. I wouldn't be a prison guard because I don't have the sadistic mentality it takes to be successful in this line of work.

No need to abolish laws in our prisons. Prison guards don't follow them anyway. Prisoners are helpless in our prisons. You guards abuse them at will. If they try to file a grievance, it is ripped up by the guard in front of the prisoner's face and not delivered. Of course this is only done while the prisoner is locked away in a solitary confinement cell. If the guards are mad enough, they make a prisoner cuff up and shackled behind a locked cell door. The cell door is open then the guards beat the hell out of the defenseless prisoner. Don't know why you can't understand that people in our prisons are cruelly brutalized by prison guards everyday.

Police officers and prison guards are completely different. I do thank the police. But, prison guards spend their whole day enjoying the control they have over prisoners.

Mastermeridian, You have not a shred of common sense. First off (only addressing the things I will even entertain to reply on) ALL COs get blasted in the face with pepper spray as part of their training. We also get tasked as well if that makes you feel any better. Do you know what the ratio is to inmates killed WRONGFULLY to the number of COs killed across the country every year? Look it up genius. And like I said to Erika, if you feel that this is wrong, spearhead a movement to abolish all laws across the country ok? No then spearhead to abolish all prisons. No again how about no COs in those prisons then. Have ANY of you morons even mentioned the VICTIMS of these folks' crimes? Thousands that NO LONGER have a voice..well, because they're dead? NO you haven't! You are correct about one thing it IS Shocking, disturbing and unacceptable what this inmate did by assaulting the staff, so thank your police officers and COs next time you see them. We have a tough job and put our lives on the line EVERY time we walk into work! do you?

My first reaction to the line do you know how many guards are being killed by inmates is:

So what? It is the hazard of the job, choose another job or profession!

We all know why these inmates are inmates, crimes that were serious, shoplifters are not imprisoned like the ones we are talking about, and those who have chosen to be guards of these people should be well aware of the dangers of being around these inmates!

Don't go about as if these guards are all saints and angels, proof has been given often enough that a lot of these guards enjoy ill-treating the inmates, love being in power, enjoy torturing these inmates!

Again, the guys who are guarded are not the nicest people around, guards know that and should not be screaming like little babies when they are attacked.

Yes, that was my first reaction, and in fact it is my second reaction too.. though I will add that were these inmates aren't the most revered members of society, and probably are not the ones who hold the highest standards of moral or ethics, on for instance a human being's life, a guard must be aware of the fact that he or she can be subjected to attacks, leading up to being killed. Or choose another profession!

Just my opinion!

Erika, maybe you could spearhead a nationwide movement to have ZERO laws, with ZERO accountability (including detainment) for those that break the law. And if you say that there should be laws and prisons, spearhead that there should be NO COs there so they can kill off one another one by one right? I CAN'T believe YOUR denial that you think there's something wrong with what these COs did. I'll applaud and respect your feelings and emotions if you tell me ONE just ONE thing that this video shows that you think is abusive by the COs. ok? And, jumping back to what I said at the beginning of this post, if you think that men should govern themselves w/o laws or accountability, and something happens to you or your family (God forbid), would you continue to feel the same?

Yes Erika, I feed into everything I read on the internet and jump on the bandwagon whether or not I know EXACTLY what transpired before this tape was shot too! LOL. THIS tape was filmed BY THE PRISON to protect themselves and thank God they did, because they did everything by the book. What is your definition of abuse? Mine would be say like what this inmate could or DID do to get into prison like sexually assaulting a minor, or killing someone's mother, or raping an innocent woman etc. Cmon, Erika, all you saw was a violent inmate assaulting staff and him getting a VERY brief spray of a (less than lethal) pepper spray. There's NO assaultive behavior on this video by the staff. There IS by the inmate however. Don't feed into what the band wagoners have to say.

Larry, I can't see the state of denial you're in about brutalizing prisoners. I'm sure if you google prisoner abuse by prison guards you will see countless articles about this

Erika, et al I work in a mentally ill ward at my prison. You and the folks here alike are delusional. Go work in a prison and see for yourself. Why does it have to be what the COs did? You're watching a video of a combative prisoner, as I've said above who was either being released or exercised from his chair and then assaulted a CO by spitting on him. Where on this video do you see any misbehavior by ANY of these COs? You DON'T!!! I do my job to the letter of it and this video is almost textbook protocol. People should NOT comment on situations they have NO clue about what they're talking about! If you worked in a prison and made sense or you can define where you see ANY misbehavior by ANY of these COs let me know but you won't BECAUSE there IS NOT any! I'm proud to be a Christian man, be a CO, have a job, and work and behave like the BRAVE men did in this video!

Shocking, disturbing, and unacceptable!

Shocking, because it obviously was not the first time and occasion that this sort of treatment of prisoners by guards happen, and that it thus is a structural matter!

The system has made it possible that guards structurally treat prisoners with unacceptable methods to keep in line, and that makes the system not only rotten, but equal to practices that happened during Ww2 in the concentration camps by the nazis!

These US-prison guards would well fit in with the SS-guards at camps like Auschwitz, Bergen Belsen and other extermination camps!

Disturbing because these guards show a total lack of respect for those that are put into their care, they treat the prisoners as animals, were these prisoners are (for whatever reason) sentenced to imprisonment, and deserve a treatment according to the standards that have been set out by the Department of Correction and the Department of Justice, were judges are responsible for upholding those standards!

Unacceptable because were the USA claims to be a civilized country, these sort of treatment of prisoners belong in countries were there is no law, were there is just simply the desire to torture and kill people, third world countries!

America and every American as well as every authority should, must be ashamed that individuals like these guards are allowed to be referred to as guards, payed by the tax-payers, and were these individuals are given the opportunity to maintain their position the American People should be ashamed of the authority that keeps this sort of individuals in their position!

I suggest to subject the guard who sprayed the prisoner to the same treatment, and the guards present and assisting the specific guard to be subjected to the same treatment, as the American justice system is not based on justice, but on revenge!

(and yes, I am one of the American citizens who feels ashamed, and I condemn in the most serious manner this sort of treatment of prisoners, were I demand from the authorities to intervene and correct these sort of situations, to that effect I have contacted my representatives as well as the relevant ultimate responsible authorities at the DoJ and DoC)

Bless you. I couldnt agree with you more. The cruelty of prison guards is comparable to the Nazi SS mentality you spoke of. Like you, Ive spoken out. Ive submitted a 4 page report and copies of all emails, letters etc concerning my mentally ill friends suicide to the ACLU. Thank you for helping those who cant speak out or who have been permanently silenced like my friend was.

I am a correction officer, and a fellow God fearing Christian and have been involved in almost 50 cell extractions in my career, and I am shocked by some of the comments Im seeing here. Let me first say, that this is NOT a cell extraction! This man is in a restraint chair, so he will not cause harm to himself or to others. Keep in mind the video does NOT show what this man did to be placed in this restraint chair, It mentions he took his dressings off and that could potentially cause life threatening issues for himself, other inmates and the staff there, not to mention that he could have assaulted someone with a bandage that has Hep C, HIV, or other blood borne pathogens on it. These COs were either giving him the opportunity BY law keep in mind to exercise every two hours once placed in a restraint chair or removing him from the restraint chair to peacefully go back to his cell. Now what the video DOES show is him assaulting a CO by spitting at him (yes, that;s assault in ANY state) These COs did NOTHING wrong at all. They used OC (pepper spray) which is less than lethal form of control AFTER he spat on the CO, and it was a small blast to the face (right where you wanna spray him). Too many of you are feeding into the I cant breath statements and feeling that this is torturous! Trust me its not. The captain said it right! If you can talk you can breath The video was taken not only because it is required by law but to protect the COs and the commissioned officers, and theres NO court that would say they did anything wrong. The only thing that they could have done to be better prepared was (if this inmate had an assaultive record of spitting) was to have placed the spit hood over his face prior to their attempt to release him, but they did not so im assuming he did not. By the way, ALL spit hoods like the one he had on (which is what we use at our prison) are air permeable, which means air does NOT get inhibited from entering his lungs. And the nurse probably should have been standing by on the scene with a gas mask on and a bottle of distilled water to flush his face, but keep in mind, he just spat on a CO. Im all for proper treatment of inmates, but this video is almost textbook how to deal with a situation like that.

Larry, you will never convince me that c/os are decent to the mentally ill in prison. I wonder what the c/os did to this poor fellow to make him act in a way that made these c/os brutalize him. Generally, mentally ill people are not aggressive. But, when they are tortured with solitary confinement and constant taunting (encouraging them to commit suicide, forcing them to drink out of the toilet for the c/os amusement etc), they mentally decompensate. Its easier to brutalize them than to provide humane medical care according to our prison system.

An update to the post I wrote. My friend committed suicide 3 weeks ago at Wallens Ridge State Prison in Virginia.

A friend of mine with Dissociative Identity Disorder in a Virginia prison was confined in solitary with no blanket, no mattress and no clothes. He froze because the cement floor of his cell was very cold. The guards have encouraging him to commit suicide. Its appalling. I will be spending my day advocating for my friend today.

Would be nice if one of these other cops, put a stop to this shit. Chickenshits.

pj i am so sorry this had to happen to you ur a great kid just got fucked up in the wrong things in life i know u personally and i know that ur not an asshole i cant beleave this c/o did this to u and then talks to u like everythings ok and u should have followed the rules kid i know that when i first saw the video u wasnt acting up so he made u upset and u did what u could do to protect urself i love u kid and karma is a motha fer and his will come to him as u see this isnt really the way it should have went ur in a dam cell and all u can have is food ur meds and books whats wrong with this systeam ???

wolf above

In the vast majority of Countries through out the world the punishment to those who break their Countries laws are never human, anywhere I know (I know the exceptions) I am talking about the vast majority here Only man is a wold unto man..

The question that begs to be asked here, how many inmates will have to die before the prison system changes their ways? We are an

incarceration nation.

Has anyone here seen the 1985 movie Brazil? The police in the movie resemble the armored bunch in this video. At the time the movie was released, they were intended to be farfetched and vaguely ridiculous (the actors wore football pads to give them exaggerated shoulders). What a difference 30 years can make.

Welsh should never work in a prison system or law enforcement again. When did the USA become a Nazi State?

The question becomes the justification: who is to be punished? How severely are they to be punished? Does the punishment turn the criminal into a victim? For it appears our system is turning all its criminals into victims? Which is not the point of a social punishment

There is no moral conscience to punishment. That is the problem for punishment is suffering delegates inflicted by a penal authority upon a criminal for his crime, insofar as he is responsible for that crime Punishment is a horror

madalleyreport In New Mexico solitary confinement is extremely common (for your own protection) they are told. It can go on for months or even years. Brutality is common especially to those with a sex offense.

I have to wonder what result prison authorities expect after they put a mentally ill person in solitary confinement for a prolonged period. Do they expect the persons condition to improve, or for them to become calmer? Perhaps each of the officers here should have a two-month stint in solitary. It probably wont make them kinder and gentler, but they might learn something.

Every one of the officers involved here should be charged with felony assault. It takes six (or more) men in armor with weapons to watch over a sick man who is strapped and chained to a chair? This is not discipline. This is not control. It is pure and simple sadism.

All that was necessary was for one member of the squad to speak up, and the torture might well have stopped. But none did. Invoke the Law Of Parties. Charge all of them equally. These men belong on the other side of prison bars.

My heart bleeds .. how can people be punished this way, its torture and its horrible

You dont have to be a psychiatric professional to have common sense and a sense of decency. Welch is an amoral animal. And thats insulting the animals that I know personally.. The officers standing by doing absolutely nothing are equally and appallingly guilty. There is zero justification for this behavior. These men are bullies. They got tired of a rebellious (and very ill) prisoner and became abusive, egotistical maniacs themselves. All of them should be jobless at this point. All of them should be pepper sprayed from 18 feet, and left to suffer with spit-covers for 24 minutes before any relief is rendered. American prisons are nothing more than legalized chambers for the torture of criminals. Who the hell gave Welch back his job? Shame on Maine, The citizens and the government and the Dept. of Corrections should all be ashamed. They are a disgrace.

I dont know the back-story to either Schlossers or Tapley but question whether or not it matters. They are in prison; thereby I have no choice to believe they broke the law. However; whatever either of them did that led to the actions against them tells us there is no legal system once someone is incarcerated. Why is there no governance within the prison system an in-house hearing or trial with representation? Rather, they are the mercy of their captors, many who are sadistic. Are the captors subject to periodic mental health evaluations? Granted, we are only seeing what has been done to them, not what caused them to be in these situations. But in Schlossers case, we hear his capture define his crime spitting at a guard. Does the punishment justify the recourse? I thought our legal system was dictates the punishment is supposed to fit the crime. Aside from humiliation & frustration (who cares after all theyre prisoners, right?) its blatantly obvious . And Tapely, we see no resistance when the guards are at his cell door, yet he is sprayed with mace nonetheless. Why? He starts to show resistance when they cut off his clothing. WHY was removing his clothing necessary? For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction Sir Isaac Newton. You cannot treat a human being like a caged animal and expect them NOT to react. All of the captors in the videos, either by order or desire, need some serious psychological investigation. No one who receives any kind of pleasure from enforcing control should be permitted to BE in control of otherwise helpless people who have no choice but to do their bidding. Its as though the tactics used are intentionally to produce the reaction they full-well expect to justify (in their own minds) their reasons for enforcing their will. As much as I believe prison systems are necessary and people who break the law need to be incarcerated and pay for their crimes, allowing treatment like this inhumane and overwhelmingly appalling. Just like a child, we cannot expect anyone to learn the right thing when they are shown the wrong way do as I say, not as I do. What foolish, stupid, ignorant and sadistic people these guards are, most especially their supervisors all the way up to the top who allow these things to happen.

There is not only this tape, but several, that you want to cry over what they are doing to these poor individuals, you can tell they have mental problems and should be in a hospital versus prison.. Guards are not psychiatric personal, do not have the training or the skill for what is needed here.. On my TV show, next Wednesday night we have a psychiatrist on as a guest, to talk about this stuff.. He deals with our local Sate Agency What I have, is people that come out of jail, are homeless, need psychiatric care; they do not get it, they end up back in jail, over and over (jail to homelessness and no treatment back to jail and no treatment, no managed care, all bull shit..

Your right of course Russ, But it is not hard for me to imagine the panic this man felt.

After a recent mini-stroke or TIA, I had a MRI done where they place a kind of hockey mask over your face and insert you into a hole not much larger than I am. Even knowing that I could stop the process at any time didnt help me and as illogical as it was I just couldnt handle it. They had to put me to sleep in the end. This captains words wouldnt have helped me either.

Now Ive also been pepper sprayed while I was in the CYA during a serious fight between me another ward at the school house classroom. Not cool.

I dont think I could have handled being held down, sprayed and have a mask placed over my head any better than this young man.

Hard to watch this video and think about my own little brother. I still dont know why my brother was in the hole in the first place or why he remained there for almost his entire sentence. Dont really want to know now for it doesnt matterthey killed him whether directly or

indirectly he was murdered as far as his family is concerned.

We have had this video on our Web for some time what is so disheartening is that so few care. I ask myself daily, where are the Christian the Humanitarian. Do you not see what is happening to another human being? Do you not see? And by not seeing you are the same as those who are metering out your will, for the guards and the system is everyones If you, vote or not, you are the Sate, you are the community, where are your voices, where are your eyes and where is the Mercy?

How has the US become a nation of torturers? Torture is promoted on TV. Prisons are run for profit, not as a service to the people. What will it take to humanize this supposedly Christian nation?

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