

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2011/09/01/pawns-in-a-failed-experiment-testimony-of-dr-craig-haney-on-solitary-confinement/>

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | September 1, 2011

Dr. Craig Haney, Professor of Psychology at the University of California at Santa Cruz, testified before the California Assemblys Committee on Public Safety on August 23rd, 2011 regarding the issue of Californias Security Housing Units (SHUs). Dr. Haney provides a historical overview of the use of solitary confinement, litigation and research on solitary confinement, and comments on the current state of the California prison system.

A Word Document of this testimony can be downloaded here:<https://solitarywatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/statement-of-professor-craig-haney-to-california-assembly-committee-on-public-safety.docx>

### Statement of Professor Craig Haney at Hearing of California Assembly Public Safety Committee, August 23, 2011

My name is Craig Haney. I am a Professor of Psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. I have been studying the psychological effects of prison confinement, including the effects of solitary confinement, for well over 30 years. That research has included in-depth analyses of the conditions of confinement in many if not most of the facilities in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), including the Pelican Bay Security Housing Unit. I have testified as an expert witness in most of the major prison conditions lawsuits that have occurred in California over the last several decades, including ones directly pertinent to todays hearing *Toussaint v. McCarthy*,<sup>[i]</sup> *Coleman v. Gomez*,<sup>[ii]</sup> *Madrid v. Gomez*,<sup>[iii]</sup> and the most recent case of *Brown v. Plata*.<sup>[iv]</sup> In the 10 short minutes I have available to me I want to make several brief points that hopefully will put todays important issues in a somewhat larger context.

The first is some historical context. It is that CDCR officials certainly knew or should have known at the time they created the Pelican Bay Security Housing Unit in the late 1980s, that it would expose prisoners to psychologically dangerous conditions of confinement. Indeed, as a society we have known since at least the *mid-19th century* that the practice of solitary confinement was psychologically harmful and could significantly damage those persons who were subjected to it on a long-term basis. Indeed, a hundred or more years before Pelican Bay was designed and built, public figures like Charles Dickens and Alexis De Tocqueville wrote eloquently about the evils of prison solitary confinement and its power to drive prisoners mad.

Our own United States Supreme Court acknowledged as much in an 1890 case known as *In re Medley*, when Justice Miller wrote that this form of imprisonment had been universally abandoned because, in his words: A considerable number of the prisoners fell, after even a short confinement, into a semi-fatuous condition, from which it was next to impossible to arouse them, and others became violently insane; others still, committed suicide; while those who stood the ordeal better were not generally reformed, and in most cases did not recover sufficient mental activity to be of any subsequent service to the community.<sup>[v]</sup>

If CDCR officials were unaware of these vivid historical precedents, they certainly were aware of many more immediate ones. Indeed, for the 10 years preceding the construction of Pelican Bay, the Department was engaged in continuous and contentious litigation from the late 1970s through the 1980s that focused on exactly these issues: the harmful effects of solitary or isolated confinement and the wrongheadedness of attempting to use it as a technique to control prison gangs. Both issues were at the very heart of a federal court case in which federal judge Stanley Weigel repeatedly chastised the Department of Corrections for the inhumane conditions that were being operated in the so-called lockup units in San Quentin, Folsom, Soledad, and DVI. I know this personally because I provided much of the testimony that helped to establish many of those facts.

Instead of taking that expert information and those judicial admonitions to heart, CDCR officials simply and cynically ignored them, and moved on to create yet another lockup unit, this one on a vast, unprecedented scale that was explicitly designed to impose hitherto unimagined levels of isolation in the supermax prison at Pelican Bay. There can be no doubt that they knew the risks they were taking with the psyches of the prisoners who were confined there; as I say, I and many other experts, and at least one federal judge, had clearly and repeatedly told them so throughout the *Toussaint* litigation. In fact, in the entire 10-plus year period of that litigation, the Department never presented one single expert witness to dispute the facts that we presented about this potential to do great harm. They just deliberately and indifferently ignored them.

Indeed, notwithstanding the clear and undeniable evidence that long-term solitary confinement exposed prisoners to extreme psychological dangers, and despite the unprecedented and uncharted levels of nearly complete isolation to which they knew Pelican Bay would expose prisoners, there is no evidence that CDCR officials ever bothered to consult with any other psychological or mental health experts about the design of the facility to obtain advice about what the effects of the kind of isolation they were planning to impose might have on the prisoners in order to determine how those effects might be ameliorated by one or another design feature or approach. As one sign of how little they appeared to care, CDCR officials chose to open Pelican Bay prison and operate it for well over a year with only one single masters level psychologist on staff to administer to the needs of the entire population of approximately 4000 prisoners at the entire prison, including the 1500 who were housed under truly dangerous levels of isolation in the SHU.

When those isolated and deprived conditions and their psychological effects were finally scrutinized in federal district court a few years later, Judge Thelton Henderson acknowledged that, in his words, the Pelican Bay SHU may press against the outer limits of what humans can psychologically tolerate.<sup>[vi]</sup> As you no doubt know, Judge Henderson ordered some significant changes in certain practices that took place at the prison, most notably in its use-of-force policies and the screening and removal of the most seriously mentally ill prisoners. He did not shut the prison down, although perhaps in retrospect wonders if he should have.

What is important to keep in mind, however, is that although he did not shut the Pelican Bay SHU down, the facility had only been in operation for a few years at the time of the hearing in *Madrid*, and had been operating for a mere 6 years at the time of he issued his strongly worded *Madrid* opinion. Back then, in 1995, as Judge Henderson himself noted, [we could] not begin to speculate on the impact that Pelican Bay SHU conditions [might] have on inmates confined in the SHU for periods of 10 or 20 years or more.<sup>[vii]</sup> Of course, it is now *more than 20 years* since the facility was opened. Unfortunately, we no longer need to speculate. Indeed, some of the men who were on that first busload of prisoners brought to this stark, barren, and desolate place in the late 1980s are still there, never having left.

It is critically important in this hearing that we not lose sight of the fact that all of the men confined at the Pelican Bay SHU and in other housing units like it in CDCR continue to be treated very badly, routinely worse than prisoners in any civilized nation anywhere else in the world are treated, under conditions that many nations and international human organizations regard as *torture*. They live their entire lives within the confines of an 80 square foot windowless cell, which they leave for an hour a day when are allowed to enter a concrete encased but otherwise barren outdoor exercise pen. Save the small glimpse of overhead sky they have when they look directly up inside this pen, they have no contact with the natural world, not even to touch or see a blade of grass.

They have no contact with the normal social world either. Indeed, the only regular physical contact they have with another human being is the incidental brushing up against the guards who must first place them in handcuffs and chains before they escort them out of their cells and housing units. They visit loved ones through thick glass and over phones, and are thus denied the opportunity to ever touch another human being with affection. This has gone on unabated, for years and years, for some of these men for several decades now.

Not surprisingly, this mistreatment has had terrible consequences for many of them. In our studies of prisoners at Pelican Bay, we have documented the multiple ways in which they are suffering. The list of symptoms is far too long for me to recite in the short time available to me (but it is contained in the written material I have provided to your staff).<sup>[viii]</sup> In short, prisoners in these units complain of chronic and overwhelming feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and depression. Rates of suicide in the California lockup units are by far the highest in any prison housing units anywhere in the country. Many SHU inmates become deeply and unshakably paranoid, and are profoundly anxious around and afraid of people (on those rare occasions when they are allowed contact with them). Some begin to lose their grasp on their sanity and badly decompensate. Others are certain that they will never be able to live normally among people again and are consumed by this fear. Many deteriorate mentally and emotionally, and their capacity to function as remotely effective, feeling, social beings atrophies

These prisoners are paying a terrible price as pawns in this failed experiment, a price in terms of the pain they feel during the time they are housed in isolation, and a perhaps an even greater price when they are released and find they are unable to cope with the demands of a normal social life outside prison. To my mind, there is now clear and convincing evidence that this misguided attempt at managing California prison gangs simply does not work: when Pelican Bay came on line in the late 1980s California had a serious prison gang problem; it now has the worst one in the entire nation. Indeed, do not believe the CDCR can present one single shred of reliable evidence that its gang-control-through-isolation policy is effective. In fact, I believe that a compelling argument can be made that the SHU units actually have made the state prison systems gang problem much worse rather than better. Thus, the suffering of the SHU prisoners is not only in vain, it is counterproductive.

The specter of gangs is being used as a justification to continue to impose these draconian conditions, but it must not be allowed to. People join gangs in prison for the same reason that they join them on the streets because they believe their own safety and self defense depends on it, and because they have no other way to gain access to things they need (like a sense of belongingness and purpose in a world that seems to deprive them of it) and things they feel they want (sometimes illicit things, ones that are made more attractive by the deprived circumstances under which they live). But this also means that gangs can be effectively controlled in prison in much the same way that they are effectively controlled on the streets. To be sure, steps have to be taken to make the neighborhoods in which prisoners live as safe as possible, by limiting access to the worst aspects of gang lifeweapons and drugs. (In prison, frankly, this also means doing a better job of policing correctional officers as well as prisoners.)

More importantly, however, gangs are effectively controlled on the streets by providing members and potential members with meaningful and hopeful alternatives, pathways to genuinely better futures that they can choose instead of gang life, and which their gang involvement would sacrifice. In prison, just as on the streets, gangs flourish where these kinds of alternatives are limited or non-existent. The overcrowded wasteland that the California prison system has become over the last 30 years, one almost completely lacking in meaningful rehabilitation programs, vocational or educational programming goes a long way in explaining the proliferation of the gangs.

In 2002, for example, only a little more than half of all prisoners in California were employed in prison jobs of any kind.<sup>[ix]</sup> By 2006, the situation had gotten worse rather than better: more than 50% of California prisoners were released from prison that year without having participated in a single rehabilitation or job training program nor having had a single work assignment throughout their period entire prison sentence.<sup>[x]</sup>

The gangs have stepped in to fill this void. Because the CDCR offers most prisoners little or nothing in the way of programming or pathways to a better future,<sup>[xi]</sup> many feel they have little or nothing to lose. In the same way that gang abatement programs on the street that focus entirely on punishment and suppression are doomed to fail, the CDCR's SHU-based isolation- and deterrence-only model will never work in the absence of genuine, meaningful pathways for prisoners to do productive time.

Finally, I am aware that the CDCR intends to make some due process modifications in the procedures and practices that are in use in the Pelican Bay SHU (and presumably the other SHU units in the state), and that we are going to hear about them momentarily from Department of Corrections officials who will testify next. As best I understand them, these changes represent first steps along the path of creating a system that is fairer and more humane. For this, the Department is to be applauded. These new procedures suggest that the CDCR has come a very long way since those early days when it insisted on stubbornly ignoring the warnings that many of them give them about the path they had embarked on. It has taken a long time far too long, in my opinion but at least the process has begun.

However, as a veteran of the process of trying to create improved prison conditions and practices in California, I have to remind you that announcing intentions are not the same thing as solving problems or actually making changes. Moreover, these first steps are not final solutions and they do not begin to effectively address the core injustice and inhumanity of the Pelican Bay the profound isolation it imposes and the sheer lengths of time to which so many men are subjected to it.

I have no reason to believe that Department officials are insincere, and I am willing to take them at their word that they are trying to improve this notorious facility. But Pelican Bay's legacy its history of mistreatment, misery, and willful neglect is long-standing. It will take a great deal of effort, and oversight to overcome the atmosphere of distrust and abuse that has surrounded this place. I am hopeful that this Committee will remain vigilant in this regard, and help the Department follow through on its new commitment, a commitment to at least *begin* the process of meaningful change.

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<sup>[i]</sup> Toussaint v. McCarthy, 553 F. Supp. 1365 (1983); 722 F. 2d 1490 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1984) 711 F. Supp. 536 (1989).

<sup>[ii]</sup> Coleman v. Gomez, 912 F. Supp. 1282 (1995).

<sup>[iii]</sup> Madrid v. Gomez, 889 F. Supp. 1146 (N.D. Cal. 1995).

<sup>[iv]</sup> Brown v. Plata, 131 S.Ct. 1910 (2011).

<sup>[v]</sup> In re Medley, 134 U.S. 160, 168 (1890).

<sup>[vi]</sup> Madrid at 1268.

<sup>[vii]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[viii]</sup> In my own study of a representative sample of prisoners in the Pelican Bay SHU, for example, every symptom of psychological distress that I measured but one (fainting spells) was suffered by more than half of the prisoners. Many of the symptoms were reported by two-thirds or more of the prisoners in this isolated housing unit, and some were suffered by nearly everyone. Well over half of the Pelican Bay SHU prisoners reported a constellation of symptoms: headaches, trembling, sweaty palms, and heart palpitations that is commonly associated with hypertension. I also found that almost all of the prisoners evaluated reported ruminations or intrusive thoughts, an oversensitivity to external stimuli, irrational anger and irritability, difficulties with attention and often with memory, and a tendency to socially withdraw. Almost as many prisoners reported a constellation of symptoms indicative of mood or emotional disorders: concerns over emotional flatness or losing the ability to feel, swings in emotional responding, and feelings of depression or sadness that did not go away. Finally, sizable minorities of the prisoners reported symptoms that are typically only associated with more extreme forms of psychopathology: hallucinations, perceptual distortions, and thoughts of suicide. See Craig Haney, Mental Health Issues in Long-Term Solitary and Supermax Confinement, *Crime & Delinquency* 49, 124-156 (2003). [Previously provided to Committee staff.]

<sup>[ix]</sup> Specifically, only 53.6% of the more than 150,000 California prisoners were employed in any type of work assignment at the end of the year 2002. California Department of Corrections, *CDC Facts*, January, 2003 (<http://www.cdc.state.ca.us/cdcfacts.htm>).

<sup>[x]</sup> California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Expert Panel on Adult Offender Reentry and Recidivism Reduction Programs, *Report to the California State Legislature: A Roadmap for Effective Offender Programming in California* (2007), at p. 7.



Sal Rodriguez was Solitary Watch's 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.

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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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@Carl

Have you read this book?

<http://www.peteeearley.com/books/crazy/>

Deals with issues of the mentally ill.

I haven't myself but I have read the Hot House by him. Maybe you can find useful info in it to continue to advocate for the mentally ill.

@Alan Bingo.. that is why I have not accepted any money up to today.. Its been all free of choice and sharing just like the information I write on these blogs.. truthful and insightful but free of influences thanks for understanding it is indeed a Catch 22 as much is on this matter of prison reforms.

@Carl well I doubt any of the kids working on these cases with no idea of what they are up against get paid. Oh they probably get money to travel say to the prison to consult but I wouldn't know. So there is the contest kids still in school with their over extended mentor up against a tight nit, well financed, secret society.

No wonder they lose more than win.

Sometimes you just fight the good fight without compensation. I do what I can for nada. But then no one would pay for what I know. ha ha

And at least you have a retirement many do not. It is scary huh?

Them 99%ers are out there stirring the pot. I felt it coming. should be 99.9%ers though.

I hope there is money for your testimony but then that would bring questions as to its truthfulness huh?

Catch 22.

@Alan besides, I am on a fixed income (retirement don't pay much) and the last thing I need is to spend money on traveling and other expenses LOL. nothing is free my man nothing for nothing. so it will have to come to me via the internet or email.. just saying out loud what my parameters are today regarding the matter of joining any groups for discussions and depositions.. life is good though, no complaints..

@Alan, I think it is wrong to solicit or advance this matter with attorneys unless its the other way around. For example, I have been approached by numerous attorneys on behalf of their clients in wrongful death law suits, ACLU investigators, Amnesty International and others to discuss solitary confinement, policy regarding housing etc. I helped co-write the Arizona SMU double bunk MAX CUSTODY policy with some reservations that were ignored but never the less, a better policy than they wanted in the beginning of the project. That's why I know these policies evolved rather than researched and developed.

I have never turned down an attorney who wanted to ask me questions, I am retired and owe no loyalties to anyone especially those who resisted, frowned, scoffed or laughed at my strategic approaches to keep things safe AND cost effective.

If you [or anyone else for that matter] take this as an invitation for them to call me, then so be it.. I hide from no one and easy to find. As you can see, I am an advocate for the mentally ill and agree, they should not be housed inside a SHU or SMU. I suppose case by case, I could in fact agree with you on many situations [or most] that are not appropriate for isolation or deprivation of SOCIAL contacts. I will continue to write the truth about my experiences inside these units and the detrimental impacts it creates on the human mind and spirit. Not because I am a prisoner advocate but because I am a person who still believes in the US Constitution as it applies to all, incarcerated or free especially the 6th, the 8th and 14th Amendments.

@Carl Excellent points and I still say you need to hook up with like minded professionals and form a group to give testimony when a case goes to trial.

Why not give one of the lawyers a call or email?

Laura Rovner in Denver for instance. In about a year there will be an appeal on Brimmers recent decision.

If decades of isolation is wrong for some then it is wrong for everyone.

Right?

Solitary Confinement, An Experiment Gone Wrong



According to a speech made by Professor Craig Haney at the California Assembly Public Safety Committee hearings on August 23, 2011, the California Department of Corrections is out of control in their management of special housing units inside their prison system. Taking notice of what the renowned professor has outlined for all public officials to see and understand are the severe mental limitations that have been imposed on those incarcerated and housed inside such units. In short, Professor Haney states that prisoners in these units complain of chronic and overwhelming feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and depression. Rates of suicide in the California lockup units are by far the highest in any prison housing units anywhere in the country. Many SHU inmates become deeply and unshakably paranoid, and are profoundly anxious around and afraid of people (on those rare occasions when they are allowed contact with them). Some begin to lose their grasp on their sanity and badly decompensate. Others are certain that they will never be able to live normally among people again and are consumed by this fear. Many deteriorate mentally and emotionally, and their capacity to function as remotely effective, feeling, social beings atrophies.

Beginning my career as a correctional officer back in the mid 80s in a place called Santa Fe, New Mexico, I was primarily assigned to a new SuperMax unit in called the North Facility that was designed to hold nothing but death row prisoners, disciplinary and protective segregation prisoners and high escape risks. My mentors, training officers and co-workers worked hard to change my mentality when working with these offenders as it was the end of the road for many with nothing else to lose. Most assigned there were serving either death sentences, life without parole sentences or long terms that would ensure they would die inside prison walls at the end. Rising through the ranks and attaining the position of deputy warden and assigned to these special units, I encountered numerous cultural setbacks that gleaned to me the obvious cultural barriers that exist within these facilities. The problems are endless and personnel conduct is a constant challenge to maintain a peaceful balance in the place. An attitude of us versus them dominated the place and was hard to control. I am sure this led to deliberate indifference in many cases and unintentional punishments for many who were either mentally ill or unable to cope any more under such strict living conditions.

Managements philosophy which was piece meal at best, was based on behavioral modification models or methods not clearly outlined in any formal training or orientation blocks. They changed daily to meet the need accordingly by different individuals or administrators. These tools were provided recklessly and indiscriminately without references of impact or consequences. There were no boundaries to establish precautions, prevention or assessment tools in this solitary confinement concept. The first major mistake was to house the mentally ill mixed in with lifers, gangsters and death row prisoners. The second mistake made resulted in a conceptual void of professional mental health services provided for prisoners who were suffering from borderline mental issues to cope with this solitary non contact prison world creating a more doomed or hopelessness within the setting. This included treatment and medication needs.

This condition of confinement was based on a day to day routine that had no structural foundation in either written procedures or deliberately ignoring those written procedures. The facts were quickly determined to be a ad hoc operation that required changes and adjustments daily in order to meet the needs to maintain a safe and orderly environment.

Experimental to every extend as New Mexico had never operated a SuperMax before, they copied templates from other states including California. The trend was easy to follow for staff but difficult for the prisoners to anticipate their expectations within such a structural design to create solitary isolation and deprivation conditions to control their conduct. From day one they were treated as prawns that had no rights, no feedback on living conditions and no exposure to the outside in order to maintain a tight control over this experiment that was ongoing and flawed with structural guidance or direction.

Today these prisoners are caught in a web of deception, mismanagement and disorder because of the failed foundation that never created a sound baseline for prison management or prisoner expectations. The fact is, these prisoners are pawns in this process that is rightfully identified as being a failed experiment of societys efforts to reform the incorrigible and labeled worst of the worst in public press releases. Thus, having shared approximately 7 of my 25 years of life inside prisons and these special housing units, I can conclude that Professor Haney's evaluation that Californias prisons, just as others worked in Arizona and New Mexico were flawed from the beginning and that there is now clear and convincing evidence that this misguided attempt at managing California prison gangs simply does not work.

Sources:

Professor Craig Haney at Hearing of California Assembly Public Safety Committee, August 23, 2011

<http://freedetinees.org/14104>

<http://www.solitarywatch.com>

like i siad he siad we should have lerned from esp it should have ended thare may thare be light in the darknes of justice

From a sociological and psychological perspective: The goal and objectives under the Department of Justice, and especially the State of Californias Department of Correction, is strictly centered around killing the body and soul of the individual supplied by the SHU and SuperMax prison units.

Any time an inmate kills himself, these units has produced a lynching. In other words, this form of lynching has morphedized itself into a state form of capital punishment without a court order.

Perhaps one is wondering at this point, what does the system of capital punishment add up to be?

In response: first, it adds up to be in-total a form of pseudo-castration. It adds up to this form because, it is one of the legal ways of cutting off a much larger segment of the populations relationship to family, and procreation.

For example, one in every five Black men between the ages of twenty to thirty-six years-of-age, are incarcerated in prison. On the other side of this coin, one can find that for every thirty-six Latinos over the age of eighteen, one is incarcerated within the prison system: they are in Ag-Seg and/or total lock down for months after months, here in the state of California.

In between these two coins, if one so chose to do so, they would find that one in every one-hundred Black women between the ages of thirty-five to forty years-of- age is incarcerated within the prison system.

The consequences are: future generations are being denied a parent and/or both parents, whilst being de-valued and marganized by a

system that strictly does not care.

At the same time, our current generations are disrupted, and denied access to resources that could benefit and enhance their position in life. As a result of this consequence, one in every fifteen Black youth, has at least one parent and/or both parents incarcerated.

James Cones stated within his literature *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* that the crucifixion and lynchings are symbols for the destruction of peoples humanity. For example, Black people makes up over fifty percent of the United States Prison Systems population, is lynching it is a form of legalized lynching: because the courts and the prosecutors, which includes the prison officials, administrators, and guards, are trying to control the un-wanted population through their rein of terror and intimidation.

The bottom line here is: we have the prison system, the welfare system, including the foster care system, all working toward the promotion of, negative behavior, as oppose to, positive behavior modification. For example, negative behavior can be found within the social effect of African-Americans imprisonment, because it has become entrenched within their communities, this in and of itself has a tendency to add creditability toward the arena of non-positive behavior.

In conclusion: one can say that slavery is well advanced from its by-gone era. It has not ended, it is a solid extension, supplied by the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which is centered around the word except. For example; men shackled in chains at their feet, a chain at their waist, their hands handcuffed to the chain going to their feet, shuffling along, and guards at their back with rifles. The prison has now become the plantation.

<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/feature/65735-prisoners-are-the-best-audience-the-challenge-of-at-folsom-prison/>

I had watched a documentary on Johnny Cash's work on prison reform awhile back but I couldn't find a link to it today.

It is an example of why the good doctor has reason to be skeptical about making much progress on prison reform. I toured these two institutions during this same time period (1968-69) on an adult prison bus filled with adult prisoners. This was a very impressionable experience for a 17 year old juvenile thus my interest in this documentary. I did find this piece however on Johnny Cash's role. I quote:

Released four months after the show in May 1968, *At Folsom Prison* was a piece of history unto itself. Eventually, the Library of Congress would include the album in the National Registry. After following up with another prison-concept album, this time at San Quentin in 69, Cash hit the top of Billboards country and pop album charts.

Having made a point to portray prison life on his albums, he soon became a champion of prison reform. As turbulent as 1968 was for American society in general, Cash saw a microcosm of it in Folsom and a system that was even less even-handed and harmful than outside reality meant little to an institution with its own set of rules and where time stopped and seemed endless.

Cash himself had mixed feelings about issues admitting that not all criminals are necessarily innocent. But riots and murders at Attica and San Quentin prisons in 1971 helped push the issue of reform to the forefront and Cash was up at Capitol Hill the following year, lobbying not only a Senate committee but also Richard Nixon on the need for change.

Cash would play one final concert at Folsom in 1977. He ultimately gave up on lobbying for reform and doing prison shows at all by the end of the decade. His daughter Rosanne Cash thought that he was frustrated by the lack of progress on reform.

Whatever the reason that Cash withdrew from anything to do with the penal system, nothing could erase his accomplishments.

If someone were to take up the cause again, then that might be Cash's greatest legacy related to the famous Folsom concert. Surely there are a few gangsta rappers out there who don't just give lip service to offenders, right?

In the book *The Rise and Fall of California's Radical Prison Movement* Cummings writes on Page 91:

In the mid-1960s at San Quentin the treatment era ended in riots and Draconian prison crackdowns subverted by permissiveness on the part of treatment staff. By the end of the decade the prisons' famed Adjustment Center, that quiet oasis where it was promised the most difficult prisoners would get intensive psychiatric counseling, had been transformed from a symbol of reform-age progress into a cruel new dungeon filled with radical Muslims and other political troublemakers. In this prison-within-a-prison inmates received far fewer treatment programs, not more. The AC came to represent the failure of treatment, not its glorious future. Prisoners kept there were the discarded refuse of the inmate population, the growing heap of convicts that could not be saved. Such was the final harvest of rehabilitation.

Not much progress huh?

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