

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2021/07/27/voices-from-solitary-house-of-destruction/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

close

Search

close

close

by [Voices from Solitary](#) | July 27, 2021

Troy Hendrix, 38, is serving a life sentence at Attica Correctional Facility in New York State. Originally sentenced at 19 years old, he has spent the last 15 and a half years in solitary confinement.

In the letter he wrote accompanying this piece, Hendrix reminisced about how Solitary Watch's late founder and co-director, James Ridgeway, first reached out to him just to send me sunlight and remind him that he was not forgotten. This correspondence with Jim inspired Hendrix to write his first piece, [Your Imagination but My Reality](#), which was published by Solitary Watch in 2013. In it, he detailed the day-to-day conditions he endured in the Elmira Correctional Facility's Administrative Segregation Unit.

After reading the collection [Hell is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement](#) earlier this year, Hendrix empathized strongly with the sentiments expressed in the essays and was inspired to write the following piece. Sara Rain Tree

I am approaching my 19th year of incarceration, after being sentenced to life imprisonment for crimes that I am actually innocent of. I proclaimed my innocence then (2003), and I continue to declare it now. Prison is a stark, uncaring, and inhospitable place, where souls become lost, and hearts become hardened. A place that is crowded and congested in a hostile environment, where love and privacy do not exist. A place where the air is toxic, and with each breath that you take, you breathe in the choking fumes of hatred, hostility, revulsion, and bitterness. Prison is an abnormal environment that does not offer any real reform, it's a place that was meant to deform you psychologically.

I approach my 15th and a half year of being held captive in the bleak confines of solitary confinement. Referred to by prisoners as the box or coop (as in chicken coop), solitary confinement is extreme isolation. It is essentially a prison within a prison. In the coop you can practically smell the misery, hatred, and anger oozing out of people's pores. This is a place where overflowing thoughts overwhelm you, and unbearable loneliness cripples you. A place where hearts become frozen, minds become decayed, and helplessness replaces hope. Solitary confinement is a burial ground for souls and is the flower that blooms mental anguish and emotional devastation.

I approach my 38th year of existence, and throughout the years that I spent on this Earth, I have endured many hardships and harrowing experiences. I became a captive of the prison system at the age of 19, and the unfortunate reality is that I've spent half of my life in servitude. Prison offers no comfort or compassion, so whatever innocence I had left has been shattered and reduced to rubble. Prison is agonizing enough, yet my corrupt overseers decided to bury me deep within the desolate confines of isolation.

Even though some things have changed in recent years, it does not erase the distressing times I've endured. For many on the outside, it's hard to fathom the fact that I've spent my twenties and mostly all of my thirties in a box, or the fact that I went close to a decade without using a phone or watching television. There was also a period of time when I spent four years indoors, without ever going outside. So despite the few reforms being done to solitary confinement, nothing can be done to unbreak my heart, unshatter my spirit, and unrattle my mind. Nothing can be done to erase the lonely days I've experienced or the sleepless nights I suffered. Nothing can be done to undo me becoming desensitized, angry, bitter, irritable, or socially withdrawn, because the damage has already been done to me within this House of Destruction.

The Voices from Solitary series publishes dispatches from people surviving the lived experience of solitary confinement.

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 [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 30, 2022

by [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 19, 2022

by [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 6, 2022

Solitary Watch encourages comments and welcomes a range of ideas, opinions, debates, and respectful disagreement. We do not allow name-calling, bullying, cursing, or personal attacks of any kind. Any embedded links should be to information relevant to the conversation. Comments that violate these guidelines will be removed, and repeat offenders will be blocked. Thank you for your cooperation.

P.O. Box 11374
Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

Solitary Watch

Copyright 2022, Solitary Watch

Read about [rights and permissions](#).



Solitary Watch News