

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2010/07/13/children-in-lockdown-lgbt-kids-in-prison-face-rape-beatings-and-isolation/>

Campaign and Advocacy

close

Search

close

close

by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | July 13, 2010

CHILDREN IN LOCKDOWN

Across the United States, the brutal and dysfunctional juvenile justice system sends queer youth to prison in disproportionate numbers, fails to protect them from violence and discrimination while they're inside and to this day condones attempts to turn them straight, writes Daniel Redman in [a powerful article](#) on LGBT youth behind bars, which appeared last month in *The Nation*.

LGBT youth reportedly make up 15 percent of the juvenile prison population, and report 12 times as many sexual assaults as straight youth do. In addition to being raped, beaten up, bullied, and shunned, these kids often end up in solitary confinement. Redman writes:

Sending LGBT victims of violence into isolation, instead of punishing their attackers, is common practice across the country, even though a federal court has held the practice to be unconstitutional and the American Psychological Association opposes it. And once the youth are put on lockdown whether to punish or to protect they miss out on crucial educational opportunities. In 2006, a bisexual youth in California petitioned the court to be removed from his facility because staff members had kept him in isolation for twenty-three hours a day. At 20 years old, he had missed so much schooling that he was only halfway to his high school diploma.

Besides using isolation to purportedly protect queer youth, guards also use lockdown as punishment. We had one kid who wouldn't go to school because he was afraid of the other youth in the facility, says Wesley Ware [of the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana]. And because he was on the mental health unit, a certain amount of social interaction was required as part of his rehabilitation program. For refusing to leave his cell, he was put on lockdown for noncompliance, and his chances for release diminished yet again.

Often, queer youth face as much hostility from prison guards as they do from peers. When a youth faces bullying or violence from another kid, staff can be reluctant to intervene. The staff views it as [the kid] deserves it, or he's asking for it so they don't intervene or they'll egg it on, Ware says. They view it as good for the kid; gotta teach him and have it beat out of him. Then when the gay kid finally breaks, then he faces the disciplinary consequences.

Guards are often bullies themselves. Krystal [a transgender teen in Louisiana] reports that staff called her a disgrace to mankind, a punk or fucking faggot on a daily basis and threatened her, saying, I'll beat your fucking ass. When staff called Krystal faggot or other names, sometimes she talked back. Sometimes I would even say, I'm proud to be that, Krystal says. She would receive more tickets for talking back.

Redman talked to several teens in Louisiana, where the Juvenile Justice Project has just released a comprehensive and disturbing report, [Locked Up and Out: Youth in Louisiana's Juvenile Justice System](#). But as he clearly states, anti-gay policies aren't just a problem in the Deep South or rural regions. Nor do prison abuse, rape, and solitary confinement happen only to LGBT kids. As Matt Kelley pointed out yesterday in a [post on the subject at Change.org](#), The problem of abused LGBT youth in prison forces us to think not only about broader issues of sexual assault in prison, but also on alternatives to locking up juveniles.

Meanwhile, as the [Sentencing Project noted](#) last week, Three major juvenile justice initiatives remained stalled in the Congress. One of these is the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), which promotes the use of effective community-based alternatives to detention, keeps youth out of adult facilities, reduces the disproportionate involvement of youth of color in the system, and promotes other research-driven best practices in the juvenile justice system. Sounds like a good thing, right? Too bad it's currently three years overdue for reauthorization.

James Ridgeway (1936-2021) was the founder and co-director of Solitary Watch. An investigative journalist for over 60 years, he served as Washington Correspondent for the Village Voice and Mother Jones, reporting domestically on subjects ranging from electoral politics to corporate malfeasance to the rise of the racist far-right, and abroad from Central America, Northern Ireland, Eastern Europe, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. Earlier, he wrote for The New Republic and Ramparts, and his work appeared in dozens of other publications. He was the co-director of two films and author of 20 books, including a forthcoming posthumous edition of his groundbreaking 1991 work on the far right, *Blood in the Face*. Jean Casella is the director of Solitary Watch. She has also published work in The Guardian, The Nation, and Mother Jones, and is co-editor of the book *Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement*. She has received

a Soros Justice Media Fellowship and an Alicia Patterson Fellowship. She tweets @solitarywatch.

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

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.

A video on NY citys homeless LGBT youth which could lead to prison.

<http://www.therawfile.org/stories/invisible.html>

And this one is related to prison.

A Gap Life, the short film about Andy as he comes to terms with young adulthood is a testimony to the long-term effects of public policy on Andy and generations of young people who will come of age as America perpetuates segregation through our criminal justice system.

At 23, Andy himself is the father of a three year old. Andys daughter was born while his own mother was in prison and after the five-year anniversary of his fathers death.

Andys childhood, fraught with intervention from the child welfare agencies and the criminal justice system has been the foundation for his wish to do better for his own daughter.

Days turned into years and searches for employment and engagement in the larger world lead Andy on a cross-country journey with a trucker friend from the neighborhood and on to a brief stint living with relatives down south.

Vowing not to hustle on the block any more, has displaced Andy from the only life that was truly familiar to him.

http://www.therawfile.org/stories/backontheblock_tataandandy_agaplife.html

The FBI has defined a hate crime as a criminal offense committed against a person, property, or society that is motivated, in whole or in part, by the offenders bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity/national origin. LGBT prisoners are disproportionately targeted for sexual abuse because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and as such, this form of violence constitutes a hate crime.

Quote taken from Just Detentions web site.

Let me first say I abhor rape in all its forms especially against women and children. That said I get quite frustrated by articles that single out certain groups with well organized powerful political groups behind them over others. It seems no one has the internal fortitude to use the actual statistics on male rape in prison. So what are they you ask? Or maybe you know and are gritting your teeth because you cant believe I would actually put them out here.

Read this from the Human Rights Watch 2001 report No Escape.
Doesnt that title grab your attention? Well hold that thought.

<http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/2001/prison/report4.html>

The elements of race and ethnicity have a complex and significant bearing on the problem of prisoner-on-prisoner sexual abuse. As previously discussed, racial and ethnic distinctions are nowhere more salient than they are in prison: all social interaction is refracted through the prism of these group differences. Inter-racial sexual abuse is common only to the extent that it involves white non-Hispanic prisoners being abused by African Americans or Hispanics. In contrast, African American and Hispanic inmates are much less frequently abused by members of other racial or ethnic groups; instead, sexual abuse tends to occur only within these groups.

Past studies have documented the prevalence of black on white sexual aggression in prison. These findings are further confirmed by Human Rights Watchs own research. Overall, our correspondence and interviews with white, black, and Hispanic inmates convince us that white inmates are disproportionately targeted for abuse.

So why wouldnt the left leaning media draw attention to this? I like Landers book titled Stuff White People Like. In an interview with

CNN he was asked.

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/SHOWBIZ/books/01/29/stuff.white.people.like/index.html>

CNN: Whats some stuff white people dont like?

Lander: Other white people. Thats it. The wrong kind of white people.

CNN: Who are the wrong kind of white people?

Lander: Anyone you blame for everything thats wrong in America are the wrong kind of white people. Not only do they hate them because they create all of these problems, but if those kinds of people start liking anything on this list, they immediately become unacceptable.

CNN: Stephen Colbert made the list, and hes renowned for making fun of the right wing. Do you consider yourself a type of Stephen Colbert for the lefties?

Lander: I dont know because Stephen Colbert, in his heart of hearts, is a lefty and so am I. I consider myself a self-aware, left-wing person whos not afraid to recognize the selfishness and contradictions that come on the left. I think a lot of people who are on that side really fail to do that a lot of the time.

I think the people I write about here are very, very self-righteous and believe that everything they do is right, and they are very resistant to cast a critical eye to themselves.

A case in point:

<http://www.mydd.com/story/2008/2/10/115059/914>

The inventor of the game Dont Drop the Soap sold his sick game out of the state of Kansas Governors mansion. The mans mother Kathleen Sebelius was the democratic Governor of Kansas and was considered as a possible VP candidate. She is now the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Villains in the game are the one prison gang everyone hates The Aryan Brotherhood. This shows that he is either unaware of the statistics or is just showing his good business sense. Can you imagine the uproar if he had used the Black Gorilla Family as the villainous gang instead?

Now to continue here are some more statistics.

<http://www.justdetention.org/en/factsheets/TheBasics.pdf>

In a 2007 survey of prisoners across the country, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) found that 4.5 percent (or 60,500) of the more than 1.3 million inmates held in federal and state prisons had been sexually abused in the previous year alone. A BJS survey in county jails was just as troubling; nearly 25,000 jail detainees reported having been sexually abused in the past six months.

Unfortunately, the data provided by the BJS still represent only a fraction of the true number of detainees who are victimized, especially of those held in county jails. The number of admissions to local jails over the course of a year is approximately 17 times higher than the nations jail population on any given day.

Now I would be willing to bet that the LGBT victims do not even begin to approach those astonishing numbers. They are just the low hanging fruit for the predators. It is straight white males that are the majority of the rape victims. One reason for this is simply because it is not PC to tell the truth. So let not keep feeding the mindset of victimization to these illiterate rapists so they can justify their inhuman acts.

<http://www.justdetention.org/>

Here is a quote from the Supreme Court?

The horrors experienced by many young inmates, particularly those who are convicted of nonviolent offenses, border on the unimaginable. Prison rape not only threatens the lives of those who fall prey to their aggressors, but it is potentially devastating to the human spirit. Shame, depression, and a shattering loss of self-esteem accompany the perpetual terror the victim thereafter must endure.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmun, Farmer v. Brennan

Here is one memorable experience I had at the age 10 which is related to this story.

In solitary I passed the day reading comics with frequent interruptions from others locked up nearby. There were the please let me out type crying and banging on their doors to no avail. Then there was the occasional angry inmate cursing and threatening the guards while also banging on the door or throwing his bedding about.

At times the guards would feel the need to rush into a cell to subdue an inmate and the sounds of their keys rattling on their hips would mix with the sounds of the struggle to subdue the inmate. One could hear the demands of the guards countered by the shouts of defiance by the inmate.

With these sounds and a little imagination you could then visualize the struggle in your head without ever being able to see it. The struggle would invariably arouse other inmates to yell in support of their fellow inmate like babies in a nursery are lead to cry in support of one another.

The most memorable character during this stay was the resident African American transvestite who was kept there for his own protection because of his wildly flamboyant behavior. He would sing out loudly the following lines Oh Im the queen of the hoes! I can suck a baseball up a garden hose. Give my ass a try and youll know why Im the queen of the hoes. Come on baby dont be shy. Be my guy. Other African American inmates nearby would chuckle together and try to get a commitment from him/her for a blow job at their first opportunity.

It was as if I was in a mad house and Im sure that a good percentage of the inmates did indeed have mental problems that were only being aggravated by their surroundings.

I have witnessed both the vile act of male rape and have seen the after affects on the inmates. I fought against it at great personal risk. Only by gods grace did I escape it myself. My heart bleeds for all of those who right now are having their face pushed down into a pillow and abused with NO ESCAPE.

P.O. Box 11374
Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

Solitary Watch

Copyright 2022, Solitary Watch

Read about [rights and permissions](#).



Solitary Watch News