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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2011/10/21/on-the-row-you-never-see-the-stars-oregon-prisoner-wants-to-die-to-escape-death-row/>

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | October 21, 2011

Oregon death row inmate Gary Haugen has been scheduled for execution on December 6th. He will be the first Oregon inmate to be put to death in over [14 years](#), provided the execution proceeds which is likely, since Haugen has chosen to [waive all remaining appeals](#) of his death sentence. He has asked for an expedited execution date, insisting that dying is preferable to a prolonged, dreary existence on death row, the [Statesman Journal](#) reports.

On [October 8th](#), a court ruled that Haugen was competent to waive his own appeals. The decision was the culmination of months of legal wrangling, in which Haugen's own attorneys have argued that he is mentally incompetent to make his own legal decisions.

The Oregon Capital Resource Center [filed a request](#) on Monday, October 17th, to block the execution. Arguing that the court ignored neuropsychologist Muriel Lezak's opinion that Haugen is delusional, they are asking the Supreme Court to establish a new competency hearing.

Haugen, 49, has been in prison since he was 19 following the murder of his girlfriend's mother. Sentenced to life imprisonment, Haugen was convicted in 2007 for the 2003 murder of a fellow inmate and sentenced to death.

According to the *Statesman Journal*, Haugen sums up life on Oregon's death row this way: fatty food, stagnant cell time, mind-numbing routines. Haugen told the paper that it kills your spirit.

[Oregon's death row](#) inmates are segregated from inmates in general population and are placed in single-celled units. Every day of the week they are allotted 40 minutes of inside exercise, which includes time for showering. Five days a week they are allowed an additional one hour of outside exercise.

Haugen told [Oregon Public Broadcasting](#):

Hey, its hell. Be away from your family, be away from your loved ones. Watch all your people die while you sit in this little 9 by 8 cage. The difference between the row and population is that you're stuck with the same 30 some odd people in the same spot for however many years you're on the row fighting.

Haugen's day starts at about 5:30 in the morning. He'll have breakfast, then perhaps do some orderly work sweeping or mopping. Then he'll read, watch TV, listen to music or lift weights. He's allowed outside for an hour each day. But he used to be able to spend more time outdoors, when he was in the prison's general population.

You can actually be out under the stars at a certain point of the year like right now for a time being. Whereas on the row, you never see the stars, Haugen said.

Some have argued that Haugen may be enduring what has been called the [death row phenomenon](#), which refers generally to the long-term psychological effect of living on death row, facing an uncertain execution date. A subset of the death row phenomenon is a set of psychological issues arising from death row conditions being isolated and thus open to the range of negative effects related to [solitary confinement](#) in addition to the uncertainty of one's death. [Some psychiatrists](#) have claimed that the conditions of death row and the amount of time spent there can lead to delusions, violence, and suicidal behavior.

Dr. Stuart Grassian, a psychiatrist and expert on the effects of solitary confinement, has argued that on death row, the conditions of confinement are so oppressive, the helplessness endured in the roller coaster of hope and despair so wrenching and exhausting, that ultimately the inmate can no longer bear it, and then it is only in dropping his appeals that he has any sense of control over his fate.

Whether or not Haugen is psychologically unfit to make legal decisions will have to be decided before his December 6th scheduled execution.

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.

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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Justice in OREGON is an assumption. Other say wishful thinking. So DP or LWOP sentences come from the same design. Better discuss Separation of Powers and reforming the system.

@Holt Senseless murders like the killing of his girl friends mother, (but then again many a man has wanted to strangle his mother in-law) are one thing but in prison it is possible to be put in a position in which you are forced to kill in order to survive.

Take the time and read this article. It will give you insight into the dark corners of prison life.

<http://www.westword.com/content/printVersion/214446/>

There are people who will say that Haugen is right where he belongs, for having committed murder while serving time for murder are they right? Depends on whom you ask.

Clearly, he's a dangerous person, & society needs protection from him & his ilk. He was already serving a sentence when he murdered another inmate. That, for me, deserves the harshest of punishments, if he was correctly charged & convicted. I have to say that I support his being on death row & being executed; he certainly cannot be trusted to live in the population, & there's nowhere else for him to be confined.

Death just may be what will finally give this man the peace & serenity he lacks, & is seeking.

I pray for this man. This is not a Christian Nation anymore.

It's hard to believe that execution still exists in this country not proud to be an American anymore.

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