

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2014/09/26/voices-from-solitary-a-day-in-the-life-part-vii/>

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close

Search

close

close

by [Voices from Solitary](#) | September 26, 2014

This post is the next in a series of pieces Solitary Watch is publishing as part of a project calling for people held in solitary confinement to write on various proposed themes. Our first suggested theme, A Day in the Life, calls for writers to describe a day in his or her life in solitary confinement (read previous entries [here](#)).

The following piece, entitled Exiled in Purgatory: Creating Mental Illness in Florida Supermax Facilities comes from Jacob Barrett, who is held in Close Management (CM) at Florida State Prison. He writes, I receive anonymous letters and cards from time to time Those communications are rare, but they do happen. I know I get these because my name and address are on websites like [realcostofprisons.org](#) and [solitarywatch.com](#). Without my name out there I would be like most prisoners, isolated and alone. In his piece, Barrett describes his life in solitary confinement at FSP.

View more of Barrett's writing and artwork on the website of the Real Cost of Prisons [here](#) and [here](#). He can be reached by writing: Jacob Barrett C07320, Florida State Prison, 7819 NW 228th Street, Raiford, FL 32026. Lisa Dawson

In the Florida State Prisons (FSP) Close Management (CM) Florida's version of supermax prisoners are prohibited from talking to each other. Not about religion, politics, family, nothing. They are not allowed to speak a single word.

Of course, we find ways to have brief exchanges. At our cell doors we can see the prisoners in the cells across from us. We've developed a prison-style sign language. At the back of our cells we have a window which opens and closes. We can whisper to prisoners in the cells next to us. But we have to be very careful. If prison guards catch you using sign language or talking it means trouble.

Trouble can mean a variety of punishments. During the summer when the heat index is 110 degrees the guards will turn off the air vents to prevent air flow. Because the cells have two large 4 foot fluorescent lights the temp in the cell can go as high as 115 degrees when the outside temp is 90 degrees. Staff will say: If you want to talk bitches, talk in the heat. In the winter the staff will turn off the heat. A cold prisoner is a quiet prisoner as their saying goes.

Unlucky prisoners may be sprayed with pepper spray without warning. Others are taken to the disciplinary unit where they face physical abuses. Others may be subject to sleep deprivation where prison staff will pound on their windows every 15 minutes to keep them awake for days.

Prison guards walk the unit yelling shut the fuck up and lay down, shut the fuck up bitches! That's every day.

Attached to this essay is a copy of an [Inmate Request](#) I wrote requesting the policy be changed. It was denied.

The policy creates mental illness. Prisoners become detached from reality. They become aggressive. They lose communication skills. What communication skills they do retain become blunted. Many become so detached they become suicidal. Prisoners attempting suicide at FSP is a regular occurrence.

I notice the effects myself. I catch myself talking to myself. I invent conversations to pass the time, until I realize I've gone from an imaginary friend into retreating into the created world. I look out across the hall to the other prisoners pacing in their cells and I see them having animated conversations with themselves, too. It feels like a mental ward.

Florida took away TVs from prisoners in CM. The one thing that gave them some mental stimulation. Prisoners are not permitted art such as art paper, markers, pens (for drawing), etc. Prisoners are expected to shut the fuck up and lay down.

I bought a chess board. I play myself a few times a day. I want to play chess with someone else but there is no talking. I wish I had someone to play with through the mail. But I don't. So I play with my imaginary friend. And he's not very good at that.

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

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All of this is very true. I was just in CM for almost 2 years. Their tactics non stop DRS property restriction everything comes out of your room but sheet and blanket is a new over used toucher tactic I can go on for ever

Guards, it seems they are allowed to run free, with torturous intention. Making them, I suppose, feel powerful. It also seems to be that it is all about revenge by these guards and prison authorities..and of course the US Government.

Yes, Evil is he who holds the key to another man's freedom, for his reward shall be in Hell. I remember that being said, to me as a child.. and it was an alleged Christian whom said it. Let's hope it's true. Well spoken Edward..I was a prisoner for 21 solid years, here in England.

I wonder if all the fine Christians who clamor for bigger and better prisons have ever stopped to think that NOWHERE in the Bible does God call us to imprison our fellow man for his crimes. There are distinct punishments spelled out and incarcerating people is not one of them.

With the privatization of the prison system, we are beginning to see widespread and rampant abuses as judges find reasons (with a wink and nod to those who own the prison) to send more and more to prison and forgive less and less. Money talks.

Our country is falling apart and we must figure away to help our prisoners from this unreal treatment and atrocities out here. I think we would probably treat war prisoners better than our own.

Is the book, The American Prison Business still in circulation anywhere.? By Jessica Mitford..

I just wrote Jacob, but he's not listed in the Florida DOC inmate locator. Anyone know why?

It shows the sheer inhumanity and torturous nature of the American Penal and Prison Business. The USA is quick to slander other countries relative to Human Rights yet they have a System so evil..where solitary is used as a definite torture. The world is now fully aware of The American Prison Business..meant to be a country of Christian values..amazes me that the Churches over there are not protesting the Corporations control the USA

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