

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://solitarywatch.org/2011/09/17/california-teachers-union-letter-of-support-for-educational-programming-in-solitary-confinement/>**

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | September 17, 2011

On August 22nd, the Pajaro Valley Federation of Teachers, an affiliate of the AFL-CIO, drafted a letter in support of expanded educational program to inmates in the Security Housing Units across the California prison system. Jenn Laskin, a grievance officer and teacher in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, formally submitted the letter from the PVFT and spoke during the public comments of the August 23rd hearing of the California Assemblys Public Safety Committee hearing on solitary confinement.

Click [here](#) for a PDF of the letter from the Pajaro Valley Federation of Teachers.

### **Public Commentby Jenn Laskin at Hearing of California Assembly Public Safety Committee, August 23, 2011.**

Aside from the fact the CDCR segregates all inmates based on gang affiliation, a root cause of gang issues and violence is indeed, poverty. Spending \$56,000 a year per inmate and approximately \$6000 a year per K-12 student exacerbates the problem. I believe it is public policy and the mis-allocation of resources to expensive prison guards contracts and prison bureaucracythat is a major cause of increased violence both in the streets and out in the community . Without more resources allocated to rehabilitation, public services, and related resources such as job development, education and healthcare it will remain a challenge to find a lasting solution to gang violence.

I am here today to present a letter signed by most members of the Executive Council of the Pajaro Valley Federation of Teachers. We represent over 1100 teachers, psychologists and counselors in South Santa Cruz County. This letter supports a call for expanded educational programming to SHU inmates. We believe that the cuts to public services exacerbates the school-to-prison pipeline. Expanded access to educational programs would give inmates the education they need to improve their moral and the horrid, negative psychological effects of the SHU. Ultimately this will keep staff, other inmates and the general public safer upon these inmates release.

Thank you for your time and for holding this hearing today.

Sal Rodriguez was Solitary Watchs 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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cooperation.

We are not animals.

@Carl: Well said and as I wrote to SW they should ask you to do a guest piece. You have valuable insight into how this system works. Your writings confirm most of what the prisoners say is the norm. The evil doers run the show and it is a horror show.

now thats is a kind and just bout time they see that even those who teach are behide helping teach those inside and that everyone has a right to lern and if anyone has a wish to lern they should never be told they can not may thare be light in the darknes of justice

I welcome you to read this:

[http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/8404881/the\\_bad\\_versus\\_the\\_good.html?cat=7](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/8404881/the_bad_versus_the_good.html?cat=7)

In my normal weekly search for the progress being made on the California SHU situation, I came upon this letter from th Pajaro Valley Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO) regarding their unwavering support for more educational programming to inmates in the Secure Housing Unit [SHU] of the California prison systems (CDCR) in particular the Pelican Bay Unit that recently made the news because of the hunger strike and their requests to the prison system officials to moderate their living conditions and allow changes to be considered for a better and positive environment. Conditions I support in an previous post with conditions that are reasonable and suitable for such lockdown situations.

Needless to say, I was elated to see teachers getting involved in this process as it adds credibility and rational applications of thought to this matter rather than the hate and rampant insignificant comments made by persons who obviously do not have any empathy for those incarcerated whether they are family, friends or just human beings.

Community schools are linked directly to the prison pipeline and must be taken in consideration and equation of resolution of mass incarceration. These kids have parents, relatives or close friends who are asking for help to be treated better than they allege they are being treated today. Prisoners are humans. They deserve dignity and respect. Society has forgotten many of them and discarded them like waste taking no responsibility for their placement inside prisons to begin with. Social conditions are flawed and many fall down. Those who get caught go to prison; those who get away with it are the ones flaunting their arrogance at those behind bars essentially laughing at them and bragging they have gotten away with beating the system.

Regardless, prison officials need to recognize the voice of this teacher organizations as there I am sure many more willing to support educational programs but refuse to come public for fear or retaliation and criticsim for standing up and telling the truth. Sharing many common beliefs in the treatment of human beings incarcerated one must never forget that those sent to prison are serving their punishment for their crime. They are not sent to prison to be exposed to more punishment or excessive control mechanisms that impede their civil rights [those they retained] and their dignity as a human being.

True, those individual who chose a way of life inside the penitentiary that included violence, extorting others, gang warfare or activities and other violations of the instutional rules have allowed them to be abused by the power structure because they knowingly put themselves in a position that warranted isolation and deprivation of those common privileged given inside lesser custody level units. For that, they should be remorseful and work on a solution to address their anger, their hate, their evil thoughts to extort man and to learn how to follow rules just like everybody else, whether free or imprisoned. We all have to follow rules. Telling the public they have to live by a code is a cop out and they know it. Excuses for their attitudes, conduct or actions warrant corrective actions. Unfortunately, that is exactly what the SHU is designed for and used. Those wanting to stay out of the SHU must follow their own courage and make their own decisions.

However, now is the right time for the California prison system to review, revise and amend their SHU policies to allow variances that would contribute towards rehabilitation and not retribution hence their agencys name. The time is now and someone must have the courage to say enough is enough and begin to mold a new concept that is filled with due process and human considerations for respect and dignity for all mankind. People are directly impacted by the social and moral standards of those prisons that exist within their communities. There is a direct corrolation and must not be ignored. It is afterall is said, recipocal and beneficial to all that are impacted by prisons and their purposes. This group hs found the courage to express their social awareness of right and wrong, of good and evil and are willing to put it in ink.. Perhaps the CDCR can do the same and act in good faith with their actions to change the culture, the attitudes and the procedures of the SHU.

Amen! Glad to read that there is still intelligent life left in Cali.

And as Bloomberg points out we need the jobs before riots break out on the streets.

Read his take on jobs here:

[http://money.cnn.com/2011/09/16/news/economy/bloomberg\\_jobs\\_riots/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/2011/09/16/news/economy/bloomberg_jobs_riots/index.htm)

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