

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/09/11/total-isolation-solitary-confinement-in-oregon/>

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | September 11, 2012

David Joey Pedersen was arrested in 1997 for armed robbery. He was 16 years old, had been taking the antidepressant Zoloft for years (which he continued to take throughout his incarceration), and was determined to have a slight potential for violence. Due to Oregon's Measure 11, he was charged as an adult. Pedersen joined prison gangs and received dozens of disciplinary write-ups. As a consequence, he would spend 11 of the next 14 years in solitary confinement. Much of that time was spent in Oregon's Intensive Management Units (IMUs).

Pedersen was paroled in May 2011. Months later, he and a girlfriend would go on a murder spree, killing four people.

I knew Pedersen personally. I know all too well the horrors he went through in prison as a juvenile up until his release and how isolation in supermax slowly changed him until there was so much pent up inside he turned into a person who would kill four innocent people within months of release from Oregon's IMU, writes M.O., an Oregon inmate who has spent over 18 years in prison, over 16 of which have been spent in solitary confinement.

Corrections officials, M.O. writes, are unwilling to consider other alternatives to meet their legitimate concerns. In the case of Pedersen, supermax produced exactly what it has been designed to create.'

Oregon has a prison population of 14,109 as of June 1, 2012. Of them, approximately 390 are classified as Security Level 5. Inmates in Security Level 5 are held in one of several solitary confinement units in the Oregon prison system. The units have a variety of names: Intensive Management Units, Administrative Segregation, and Behavioral Health Units for inmates with mental health issues. There are also Disciplinary Segregation Units, which are generally used for shorter terms in solitary.

According to Oregon Department of Corrections Spokeswoman Elizabeth Craig, We recognize that it is not a long-term solution for behavioral problems. Given that, we have made changes over the years that focus on helping inmates improve behavior so they can return to general population.

Inmates in solitary confinement can expect to spend up to 24 hours a day in a 712 cell [Dr. Stuart Grassian](#), who has worked with hundreds of inmates in solitary confinement, has reported that such conditions can produce feelings of paranoia, hallucinations, obsessive thoughts, and increased impulsivity. Such prolonged terms in isolation have been [linked](#), by the bipartisan Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons, to higher recidivism rates.

A large percentage of inmates in Oregon's prison system will end up in isolation at some point. In 2010, approximately 4,704 inmates were sent to one of Oregon's Disciplinary Segregation Units at least once. In 2011, the number fell slightly to 4,498. On average, an inmate sent to disciplinary segregation will spend 20.83 days in the DSU. The housing records of one inmate show DSU terms ranging from five days to over a month.

M.O. described the DSU this way: Its lights are sunk deep in the wall and the cells are dark and you have nothing but a bunk, toilet, and sink. There are no conversations with other prisoners as you're in a cell inside a cell. There were no books, no reading materials at all. It is, and was, a sensory deprivation chamber. It was my first experience of total isolation.

For inmates who are deemed to consistently pose a security risk, there are the Intensive Management Units. Each of the four inmates in this article have records involving assaults on correctional officers and/or fellow inmates; some of these incidents go back over 10 years.

Approximately 210 inmates are currently housed in IMUs, primarily in Snake River Correctional Institution in Ontario, Oregon. According to the Department of Corrections, it is policy to assign maximum custody inmates to special security housing and programs in a designated intensive management unit or cells separate from general population housing in Department of Corrections facilities to provide the maximum level of inmate security, control and supervision.

IMU programming is based on four levels, with increasing privileges. IMU-status inmates start at Level Two; promotion and demotion is based on behavior, with more than one minor disciplinary infraction preventing promotion to a higher level. Inmates in Level 1 cannot receive visitation and are only allowed out of their cell three days a week for showering. Those in Level 2 are allowed recreation time five days a week for forty minutes, as well as two one-hour visitations a month. There is a classification review every 30 days to determine whether IMU placement is justified. Participation in programming is considered an important factor.

B., who has spent the majority of the last 14 years in solitary confinement comments on the programming in the IMU: The programming was and is a joke. They give you packets like anger management but nobody goes through them with you or anything. As long as you circle answers, they don't care.

The Intensive Management Units began in 1991 at Oregon State Penitentiary in Salem, Oregon; the first Oregon supermax unit. OSP's IMU was a dark dank place, poor lighting. It really messed with your mind, writes B., OSP's units were infested with mice. It was dirty, loud. The worst pieces of crap were there in the IMU, masturbating to every staff that walked by, playing with or throwing poop on the tiers.

Violence was also common. Back in the day at OSP IMU we would bust the sprinklers and flood out when the cops fucked with us, writes M.O., I got beat bad back in 2001 so bad in the OSP IMU I was taken to the ER in Salem. They broke my nose and split my head open. I had to get the back of my head stapled up. After they beat me they stripped me naked and dragged me to the IMU infirmary.'

For those inmates who are determined to be in need of this maximum custody program unit (through a review process), they are placed in IMU after the inmate completes his/her DSU sanction. The program targets inmate behavior and focuses on getting them stabilized so they can transition back to general population, says the DOC.

The IMU was relocated to Snake River Correctional Institution in Ontario, Oregon in 2009.

According to the Oregon Department of Corrections, in 2008, a total of 784 inmates were assigned an IMU status. They were there an average of 112.5 days. Of the 784, approximately 145 spent more than six months in the IMU. Over the next three years, approximately 47.2% would return to the IMU, sometimes within a month of release from the IMU to general population.

B., like M.O. and Gary, are among the many Level 5 inmates sent out of state, where they remain housed in solitary confinement. Since 2007, over 20 Level 5 inmates were sent out of state through the Interstate Corrections Compact; currently, there are 11 Level 5 inmates out of state.

Gary, who has been incarcerated since he was 14, writes that between 1998 and 2005, he did time by and large in IMU and the hole (DSU). I did two short stints [in general population], first at Snake River during the summer of 1999 and last at Two Rivers from late 2002-early 2003 the two short stints combined for perhaps six months, and were my only reprieves from the IMUs.

He reports receiving very little in terms of rehabilitative programming: Back when I first started out in the IMU I was 16 years old, so they were required by law at the time to offer me more educational programming. I got my GED in 1999 there at OSP-IMU. But after that, and generally speaking, its really a joke.

Like all the other inmates who have corresponded for this article, Gary has reported feelings of anger and rage rather than reform. However mentally tough you may be, years of sensory deprivation, total isolation, lack of mental/physical stimuli, and otherwise enduring the struggle that is a part of it all, takes a tremendous toll. Nearly without fail it instills a bitterness and hatred in you. After a number of years it often becomes difficult to do any other type of thing; being around people in typical or normal environments becomes uncomfortable and even unbearable, he [writes](#).

This is a sentiment echoed by W., currently in Administrative Segregation at Snake River Correctional Institution, who reports that he has felt himself becoming more anti-social and misanthropic.

I've been in prison for 16 years, and ten of them have been in solitary, W. writes, my first stretch was when I was 14 (in a juvenile hall) in which I did about six months where I wasn't allowed to talk to anyone except staff a couple times a day. I think that really messed with my head at the time. By the time I came to prison when I was 16 I was used to solitary confinement. It doesn't really bother me anymore. Its all I know. I've seen other people have their will broken or begin to lose their minds.

Administrative Segregation (Ad-Seg) currently holds 70 inmates, who can expect to spend an average of 185 days in single cell units. It is slightly less restrictive than the IMU. We get 60 minutes of recreation, 7 days a week, and a shower. Were allowed to go to recreation with one other person. Out in the rec area are some weights, pull up and dip bars. We are still handcuffed every time we leave our cells, just like in IMU or DSU, writes W.

W. has been in Ad-Seg for over four years, following a two year long IMU term. I've had 10 hearings thus far, and in each of them the same thing is said and no matter what I do I'm always given six more months. They haven't even said what I could do to get out. They claim this is not a permanent thing, but every time they say I may get out to general population they change their minds, he writes, The idea that lock down units correct anything is absurd. Everyone that is honest with themselves has to admit that.

The negative psychological effects of isolation are well documented. Between 1998 and 2007, 14 of Oregon's 25 [prison suicides](#) took place in the DSU or IMU. The strict conditions of the isolation units create hostile environments that aggravate problems.

According to documentation sent to me, M.O. was placed on food restrictions for two weeks (amounting to receiving only 1/3 of meals), for refusing staff directives about [being] properly dressed at door to receive meal. M.O. has [written](#) about his subsequent diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder related to his experiences while incarcerated; he reports frequent nightmares and being easily startled by sudden noises.

B. says that years in isolation have harmed his psychological well-being: I've spent so many years isolated that I can't function right around people. I have anxiety attacks, I get paranoid. I've stood at my cell door looking out into the tier for hours not knowing what I was doing before snapping out of it.

According to the Managing Mental Illness in Prison Task Force report in 2004: Thirty to forty-five percent (30-45%) of the more severe mentally ill population in DOC is housed in the most restrictive security units, Intensive Management Unit (IMU) and Disciplinary Segregation Unit (DSU).

With more than 1 in 3 Oregon inmates diagnosed with a mental illness, Oregon took the step of expanding [mental health services](#), including turning the OSP IMU into a mental health unit.

Recognizing that mental health can play a factor in behavioral issues, we also recently revised our hearings process so that mental health case managers can weigh in on misconduct hearings for inmates who have serious mental health issues, according to the DOC. Included at OSP is the Behavioral Health Unit, in which Level 5 inmates with a psychiatric diagnosis receive services. I spent a year in the BHU unit, B. writes, I wasn't in the program but for the most part I did everything they did and got most of the privileges. It's a new thing and probably evolved. They change OSPs IMU to it. More privileges, more time out of the cell, with up to two others. The mental health case managers see people all through the week on an individual basis. The overall feeling of the place greatly improved.

However, the mental health unit at OSP hasn't been without [criticism](#), particularly due to the reality that the unit remains structurally the same as when it served as the supermax unit. B. also notes that there's still a lot of problems with staff treating people like it's still IMU, playing head games, messing with mail, etc.

There is a growing movement to limit the use of solitary confinement. On June 19th, the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Human Rights and Civil Rights held a [hearing](#) on the matter. We also must have a clear eyed view of the impact of isolation on the vast majority of prisoners who will one day be released, said Illinois Senator Richard Durbin.

It remains to be seen whether Oregon will follow the growing trend against solitary confinement and place tighter limits on its use of solitary. The Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is reportedly in talks with the Oregon DOC officials, who claim that they are conducting an internal review of their segregation policies with the potential goal of reducing the current use of solitary confinement. No further clarification was provided by the ODOC at the time of this writing.

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

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.

@ Ben..regarding the rights of victims:

Here's the truth about how much this society cares about the rights of victims: I was attacked by a sub-renter in my apt and after three failed attempts to get police protection (they didn't see it therefore it supposedly didn't happen, duh) the maniac went to the police and perjured himself, saying I had attacked him. They believed him. Instant warrant. But before I knew that I consulted my therapist, asking him to help me get him arrested so I could get him out of my apt and get some legal protection. Duh again. Problem was the guy had already completed his own illegitimate consultation with same counselor (state employed) who had thereupon told him he didn't mind if he went and pressed false charges against me. So then I got angry at the counselor and supposedly slapped his face. Lie. I DID flail my arm in an attempt to reiterate my story and remind him who was in danger here. No matter. So now I was up on 2 charges and the roomie was free. At that point I was put in cuffs and brought to the stationhouse, and booked. And then instead of being jailed right there I was taken to the county nuthouse to be supposedly locked up, but they freed me cause they actually heard my story and believed me. Then I made my only mistake. I called the state therapists workplace and said I was free and now would he help me get some protection. But instead of doing the right thing, he called the police, giving them clearance to illegally kidnap me on sight. And before I had left the cop station I had asked the judge when could I finally ask for some protection and he said after I was sprung (paraphrased) So I went back, and instead of getting some protection I was immediately kidnapped and this time hauled off in handcuffs to the state snakepit and thereupon locked up illegally on a forged warrant. State law requires a separate proceeding for any desired result, but what really happened is the first nullified proceeding was revived (forged) to make it look like it was the second one. And the facts bore out the illegality. I was kidnapped by the cops with no evidence of wrongdoing and locked up without any further official proceeding and that made it illegal. But no one cared even though everyone knew why it happened..and that was to shut me up and shut me down and make their job easy.squash the evidence and problem disappears. Nice. So I was abused in that place for months while the roomie stole my apt and trashed my pets and every day I lost a hundred dollars in quarters on the phone frantically trying to get any lawyer who would listen and believe me. I never did get a shred of justice. AND if I had screwed up on ANY one point subsequently..i could have EASILY landed in something like a real prison for god-knows how long and whatever happens there would have happened to me. The state mental-health institution broke every law on their own books to punish this victim, and the city judge and DA and clinic director AND hospital directors and patients legal services (both of them) arbitrarily judged me guilty why..cause it was easier and more convenient, and I was a woman who was beaten up without a witness (neighbors and friends all turned their backs on me that night while I frantically called out for help) so why not. This is what REALLY happens to get people like me interested in reforming/abolishing the present meme known as protecting society from wrongdoers. Where are the discussions re: how society CREATES wrongdoers out of victims for its own convenience and what are the politics behind that?????

I was traumatized for life from that experience and from all the screaming-silence feedback I have received in the 25 years since it happened. I never did get a lawyer but 3 years later plus three months..I finally got the NY ACLU interested in my case only to tell me I couldn't sue because the statute of limitations had expired 3 months back. But he also told me it was one of the most outrageously illegal commitment cases he had ever seen. This was the Assistant Director speaking. I can understand why other people in even more outrageous situations would be interested in some solidarity with similar such people. The minor misdemeanor charges on me were supposed to disappear after 6 months, but interestingly enough, followed me illegally my whole life up until a few months ago when I went and got myself fingerprinted just out of curiosity, because I was having so much trouble getting work. Then found out.

It is stereotyped, biased and outrageously ignorant attitudes such as yours, sir..that allowed this to happen to me. And I daresay the same mechanism springs into action in an obscenely frequent way, regarding people who end up in the hole and get destroyed..you only have to be in most cases a poor person or someone of the wrong color, or the wrong sex or marital status or unlucky enough to trust another wrong person because they put one over on you. I desperately needed friendship and I thought that guy was a friend. Actually he was also a victim of an abusive psychiatric system that had earlier sent him packing with a bunch of pills guaranteed to turn him into a monster if combined with alcohol. He didn't know enough to pay attention and apparently was not sufficiently educated as to such dangers. Duh. And I was not his caretaker, only the prime tenant of the apartment.

Oh BTW the landlord took his side too and evicted me instead of him.Duhdeduh.

But most people find this all totally unbelievable until it happens to them too, and then they too. find out they are here all alone.

Is that the way it is on this discussion board too??????

@Ben

Not every person that is sent to the hole is the predator.

Any person that stands his ground and meets the predators violence with violence of his own is also sent to the hole.

I for one never preyed on anyone but I also refused to be a punk or a snitch.

Inmates are held in check by the system like tethered animals in a slaughterhouse.

Your only viable choices are to Fuck, Fight or Flee!

Which would you choose?

As a sergeant who runs a DSU unit in an Oregon state prison, I can honestly say this report is extremely inaccurate. Inmates in DSU earn every bit of their sanctions. They are put there because they are assultive to staff and other inmates. They trade drugs, extort weaker inmates, and commit all the same crimes they did on the streets. They spent their time talking to other inmates housed close to them, playing chess, and getting 3 meals a day, not the 1/3 as stated above. Solitary might not be the perfect answer, however it is used when needed and an inmate goes through a hearings process similar to a standard court. It is easy for many people to forget that these people had the chance to do the right things in society. Many people come from broken homes and don't steal, rape, and murder innocent victims. Its time the rights of victims are held in higher regard than the offenders who now use the system to continue their criminal behavior. These inmates are not the victims walk a day in any correctional officers shoes and I guarantee the view of this article would change 180 degrees.

Thank you for your input. It is rare that someone from the corrections side of things is willing to go on the record about this world. For clarification, the 1/3 meal issue was referring to an inmate placed on food restrictions for two weeks for refusing staff directives about [being] properly dressed at door to receive meal. I have the documentation proving this.

At no point have I suggested that the individuals in these shouldnt be held accountable for what they were convicted of, they certainly should be, and that is why they are deprived of their freedom and incarcerated. What I did write about was the perspective of those who have been in these types of units for many years. As I indicated in the article, the DSU is only a short-term housing unit, with average terms of about three weeks. The more challenging point is the lack of rehabilitative opportunities and particularly the prolonged terms in segregation units that seem to only serve as incubators of rage and mental deterioration.

I would be interested in discussing things further with you, feel free to contact me at: sal.solitary@gmail.com

First of I want to say that I seriously question the validity of the claim that Ben Akana actually is a sergeant at a DSU unit in Oregon State Prison.

Why?

Firstly because when he would be sergeant in a DSU unit in Oregon State Prison he would not disclose info on inmates, as when he would it would cost him his job.. and he be prosecuted for breach of confidentiality and privacy!

Secondly, because there is no record of a Ben Akana in a Oregon State Prison (as far as my information reaches.)

Secondly, even when one would have attacked an inmate or an guard, solitary confinement is internationally considered to be torture, and is thus illegal.

I openly question your records, feel free to contact our public relations officer at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla, Oregon. They will certify that I do work there and do in fact supervise DSU. As far as disclosing information on inmates, I have no idea where you were told this costs us our jobs and since everything we do is considered public information, we don't get prosecuted for speaking about the scope of our job duties. We provide tours to the general public several times a month upon request and I would be more than happy to do so for anyone who wishes to see first hand what takes place in DSU. Privacy and confidentiality comes into play when a crime has been committed or someones health status is in question, anything else is open for discussion.

Sgt. Ben Akana
DPSST # 48822
Oregon State # 18010
Two Rivers Correctional Institution
Umatilla, OR.

First, are you registered with the National Registry of Law Enforcement Officers?

Secondly, disclosing any(!) information on or about inmates is reason for prosecution and firing from the job. It would mean disclosing private information of individuals, and that would be breach of privacy rules.

Within the limits of talking about or on your job duties does not include information about behavior of inmates with or between each other!

No. Torture is not what I would view as an answer. Solitary is not a option. Think. What would be? Certainly you must draw the line somewhere, but where? You have to use your brain and no easy option exists! THINK.

The quote is from Warden Clinton Duffy T. Duffy from an April 18, 1957 California Eagle newspaper article:

<http://www.fultonhistory.com/Process%20small/Newspapers/Newspapers%20%20Out%20of%20NY/Los%20Angeles%20CA%20California%20Eagle/Los%20Angelse%20CA%20Californial%20Eagle%201957%20Grays%20John>

Awe if only we could go back to the golden age of the executioner.

Read about the experiences and thoughts of Frantz Schmidt in his own words. During his life time, he executed 394 individuals by various methods, and also flogged, disfigured, or tortured many hundreds more.

A must read for like minded individuals. The title is:

The Faithful Executioner:

Life and Death, Honor and Shame in the Turbulent Sixteenth Century

by Joel F. Harrington

and then you can solve the problem of these few localities hogging all the fun.

<http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/documents/TwoPercentReport.pdf>

In 2009, only six counties accounted for 96.6% of death sentences. Even more startling, just three counties Los Angeles, Orange and Riverside accounted for 83% of death sentences in 2009.

Only 41% of Californias population lives in these counties. Together, these three counties sentenced more people to die in 2009 than the entire state did each year from 2002 to 2008. It is the increase in death sentencing in just these three counties that accounts for the high number of death sentences statewide in California in 2009.²⁹

At the start of 2013, the counties that had sent the most inmates to death row across the nation were

Los Angeles, 228 (the most populous county at 9,962,789); (2012 census)

San Diego, 40 (5th at 3,177,063);

Orange, 61 (6th at 3,090,132);

Riverside, 76 (11th 2,268,783);

San Bernardino, 37 (12th at 2,081,313);

Alameda, 42 (22nd at 1,554,720);

and Sacramento, 35 (25th at 1,450,121). (All county above are located in CA)

Harris (Houston), Texas, 101 (3rd at 4,253,700);

Philadelphia, 88 (22nd at 1,547,607);

Maricopa, Ariz., 81 (4th 3,942,169);

Clark, Nev., 61 (13th at 2,000,759);

Duval, Fla., 60 (59th at 879,602);

Nine of the top counties for executions were in Texas or Oklahoma.

Harris was first with 115, followed by Dallas County, Texas, with 50 (9th at 2,416,014).

Houston had 8% more murders than Dallas, but 324% more death row inmates; 15% more murders than San Antonio, but 430% more death row inmates.

The outlier is Cook County, IL which has only 5 on death row yet is the 2nd most populous county at 5,231,351.

On second thought maybe we should ask how fair the process really is. Hummm

As one San Quentin ex-warden who oversaw 150 executions once said:

I have never heard of a rich man being executed in this state. The death penalty is not equal justice.

If capital punishment was used more often, we would not need solitary confinement as much. If they murder someone then they should be executed. There needs to be accountability.

my son is in prison for a crime he did not commit-iyea I know, everyone says thatI have proof but in our corrupt justice system they dont care . just fill the prisons with anybody and leave the real criminals out for job security for DAs, judges and PD and cops-the real ones that should be behind barsanyways, and the horror stories he has told us are terrible, I agree with 8 forever, they need more positive reinforcement for so many of the inmates because a lot of them never had a real family and only knew violence and crimeso many being put into prisons especially under Measure 11 have no reason to stay out of trouble they get no good time or priviledges, we need to repel Measure 11 and solitary except for the very worst mental offenders

I have not heard of Measure 11 I will be looking that up. If its bad I will be right there with you. And I believe 100% if u say your son didnt because I have been a victim of the justice system not crime. There is an issue for everyday of the week.

thank you for believing that my son is innocent, not many people do. the lies of a bad cop and a corrupt DA put 2 hardworking young men in prison for a tragic car accident. my son was only a witness. they are now listed as violent offenders and will never have a drivers license. because a woman pulled out in front of one and she knew the right people.so sad, her child died because of her but she chose to blame someone else and they are paying a big price, just for driving home after work.how is this justice with all the real criminals that they are releasing here in Lane Co because of budget cuts our prisons are over crowded and a big waste of taxpayer money with the people that are in their that could be on probation or house arrestbut its the judges, DAs, cops and PDs that get to decide. I know it is not just in Oregon but our constitution says innocent until proven guilty but in out corrupt system now,our rights mean nothing..my son was never arrested, never charged, never read his miranda rights, only had a PD for one week and he was still recovering from a serious brain trama and could not comprehend what was going on, DA said he didnt care he was going to prison. he was hand cuffed and taken away, we have been fighting this since 2010..again our appeals system is also corrupteduntil our so called justice system is held accountable for the crimes they commit against the inmates, this corruption will still go on. IMU inmates are treated like animals, he met a guy that had been in there for 10 years and the horrible stories he told of the abuse by guards and the loneliness is so sad. I now write to this man and he tells me that you have no choice but to go crazy because you are your only friend and your worst nightmareso they dont know how to act with other inmates after getting put in with them, they trust no one and always on the defense, who can blame them, its the cruel and unusual punishment that the justice system bestowed upon them to make them this way. Until they limit the time these people have to stay in IMU they are going to continue to create bitter people that want revenge on the innocent for what was done to them. all they have is time to think and the mind has a way of blowing things out of proportion and after awhile they dont know fact from fiction. I thank God my son met this man so that we could help his recovery and prove to him that people do care and he is a human. he is a fantastic artist and writes me all the time. maybe thats why God put my son with him, to help others to see not everyone is bad and they care about them even tho they made mistakes and are paying for them, which many deserve, but not treated the way our system does. how do we expect them to act when released if this is all they know. thank you for your site to expose what is going on with this inhumane treatment to human beingsIMU is wrong!

Isolation is wrong. Prison is the punishment. I am at a loss as to how to console you Donna my heart goes out to you. I know once dragged into the system theres little if anything that can be done. There is a movie called Convicted with Sam Rockwell a true account of what prosecutors and cops will go thru to get a conviction. When I speak to people about our horrendous system they say Dont break the law I say not everyone in prison has broken the law a friend of mine her husband has been in jail awaiting trial for 2 years on a crime he didnt commit the DNA proves it yet the prosecution is going ahead w/ it. I am sorry, I read measure 11 and I do not understand.

My husband is Tommy Silverstein he has been in isolation for 3 decades, this unending isolation goes unchecked many many go insane many many are kept for their entire sentence. Indefinite isolation needs to be outlawed as a civil rights violation.

If youd like to read his (Tommy)story Solitary Watch did a good article.

Thank you for writing Id love to hear a good update from you! Godspeed your son home My link is here. I think if u click my name.

If a parent made a child go to their room or stand in the corner for say, one entire week and deny them human contact as punishment, what would happen?

I am against solitary period. I fully understand how some people can be very very difficult to contain. But i believe that there are so many ways to reach people. If someone is out of control, find out why. Our humanity matters or we are all to suffer.

I agree with Inquistive child and will add There used to be something called positive reinforcement, gaining priviledges for staying out of trouble. Being able to work make money go to school visit family and friends; isolation is counterproductive, breeds insanity, is torture, is cruel, nothing good comes from it. Prison is the punishment, that makes isolation torture!

Prisons are some of the most violent places in our society. What would happen if solitary confinement did not exist? The prisons would be even more violent and out of control. Inmate control, safety and security should be the dominant attitude.

John,

Your point that solitary confinement might be necessary for controlling dangerous inmates is a sensible one. It is a position well argued in a recent Corrections One article:

<http://www.correctionsone.com/products/corrections/articles/6176725-Segregation-A-necessary-evil/>

However, there are a few points in which the reasoning you've provided doesn't match reality.

Is long-term segregation a necessary component of maintaining security in a corrections system? The reduction of segregation in Mississippi would suggest otherwise:
<http://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/beyond-supermax-1.pdf>

Other states such as Maine and Colorado have made critical assessments of their use of segregation and have been reducing their reliance on it, while reserving it for particularly disruptive inmates.

That said, you might very well be right that segregation might be the only tool for managing some inmates. But for how long? Should they be denied constructive outlets?

If the inmates were not dangerous to other inmates and staff, then solitary confinement would not be needed. Dangerous inmates should be locked up. Even other inmates want the nutjobs locked up.

A finite amount of time for correction but indefinite isolation for decades is cruel.

Please don't speak on behalf of people in prison without data to back it up. They already have little enough voice without people making up stuff and attributing it to them.

If you do the crime, you will do the time. If you stick a gun in someone's face, you are a big disgrace. Just say, No to drugs and violence. Birds of a feather flock together. As a man thinks so he becomes.

Thank you for doing all you do to bring this issue into the light.

For sure forced solitude is torture. It is also torture when you sleep in a dorm with people who want to kill or abuse you. In the end I was happy I was placed in Sequoia Lodge for the most violent wards at Preston because I had my own room (they wanted to limit the time we had to kill each other).

Of course other than the times I spent in solitary for fighting the door was opened in the morning. :)

I found it hard to sleep when listening to someone being raped two bunks down (first time I heard this I was 9 years old). Or in Baton Rouge where we slept four to a room the size of many isolation cells listed on here where I not only heard but felt the rape taking place on the other side of the sheet metal wall that our bunks were welded to. Kind of like a 3D movie.

Hell can be other people if those people are out to harm you.

I guess fear of rape is not a good enough excuse to defend yourself, or a death threat from another prisoner it's all such bullshit. When I speak to people (the straights) they say don't break the law and you won't go to jail omg geniuses problem solved.

As Jorge Antonio Renaud, wrote thousands of men leaving the system with a predator mentality or a raging racism buried so deep it might never be eradicated. Reducing barriers to reentry is one thing understanding and relieving the trauma this unceasing violence leaves on the thousands of Texans returning to our streets is another.

Aggravated by solitary and mental illness,

Tens of thousands across the nation,

Sometimes it is just as bad to be in the room with people who see you as the devil and be unable to escape. Sometimes Hell is other people. quote from Jean-Paul Sartre's play No Exit.

I was lucky to have served my time when these gangs were just being established and even then I was marked for death. I reached the exit first.

I might have ended dead or like up like Tom or this guy if I was forced to stay.

I bet there is early history we may never know about here.

Hell is other people. quote from Jean-Paul Sartre's great quote and I will add instincts even an animal will fight if there is no flight. Take other dynamics into consideration T had said in the interview you can't blow off any steam of any kind you can't have a beer, pet the dog, make love; I think if trapped then if you are threatened or your pals are threatened if you do nothing you become the victim, there will always be a victim in these situations. The biggest thing with smu/rhu/seg/whatever is so many don't get due process and are locked down for what they might do. And it is an indefinite amount of times its torture.

If folks had any real idea of what happens when people go to prison, maybe just maybe they would care some. If you are a black man and you were not ever in a gang, when you arrive at the prison door you are mandated to claim allegiance to a gang. If you are white, the same is true. The courts have ruled this de facto segregation is illegal but it has not changed. So men who go into prison, who on the streets would get along with all people are now forced to align with a group. Then, there is over crowding, no programs, no counseling, therapy, basically zip...and here is the part that stymies me: How do we expect these men and women who get released to be once they are out? Suddenly all cured? Suddenly made whole? Basically, the under class goes to prison color does not matter. Read Michelle Alexander's book The New Jim Crow. It explains things. I just fail to understand why it prevails.

with sista and exacerbate the problems going in with isolation; goes in a person convicted of a crime comes out of isolation to the street as sista says w/ no correction, a crazy person having committed a crime degraded and treated like an animal. Think they will act like an animal.

oh dear.. was Pedersen born that way? I say no. He was shaped by everything that happened to him from the time he was born. My heart breaks for all the souls who are born into situations that are fraught with violence, sex abuse drugs, etc. Then, when these people act out and get sent away, they come out worse. Then, we send em back in, this time in Solitary. We throw away the key, the care, and then walla, presto! They do something horrific.

Solitary messes human beings up period. I know many who are in solitary for decades some can still write cogent letters, others are feeble. Why do we do this?

@sista I agree why is this being done? I think because not enough of us speak out to our elected. I don't want it, you don't want it who is making these decisions and not why but how, how can we stop it. My cousin was 17 first time he went in when he got off the bus at Holman the CO said boy, you are pretty you gonna need a knife well wtf is that?

@Sal Yeah. Thanks I caught that afterward. Not surprising he started young the stats are not good for a 16 year old in prison as all those studies and comments I posted show. I do not believe people are born this way as lady Gaga sings but are created.

If you read my Voices from Solitary story I too was forced to fight to maintain my manhood and I was only 10 years old. They also labeled me a violent inmate and much later on placed me in the unit for the most violent held in Preston. My crime was disturbing the peace, a parole violation, while my best friend and so many of my enemies were convicted murderers.

The choices while incarcerated are fornicate, fight, or flee.

I chose to fight.

However I never joined a gang but stood my ground alone.

People need to know how these damaged people are created.

Rape or the fear of it forces people into alliances in a vicious circle of violence.

More people in the media need to take up where these studies left off to prevent more nut cases like this guy from being created.

Please read the facts in those articles and come to your own conclusions.

,

@Alan, the speculation you provided is based on a misreading of the (horribly written) ABC article. Pedersen murdered his father because he claims his father molested his sister. At no time have I ever read anything to suggest that Pedersen was ever molested as a child. Pedersen joined skinhead gangs very early in his time in prison and was a known violent inmate who explicitly told prison officials that he would murder people if he got out of prison (as told to me by various inmates who knew him as far back as his teens).

What kind of shit did this guy encounter in prison to make him into this monster? What made him a criminal in the first place? Sista comment made me wonder. Let me say this up front I in no way believe what he did can ever be justified only that we need to ask how someone can become so messed up. Here are a few answers.

http://abcnews.go.com/US/west-coast-white-supremacist-couple-tied-fourth-murder/story?id=14706262#.UE-M_41IT_k

a spree that police now say may have been sparked by anger over alleged sexual assaults by the father of the male suspect.

The tattoo around his neck is common on members of a prison-based white supremacist gang, the Nazi Low Riders, according to the Anti-Defamation League, which monitors the group.

The Southern Poverty Law Center writes:

...a youthful and remarkably violent neo-Nazi gang, the Nazi Low Riders, or NLR, began to emerge behind the prison walls of the California Youth Authority.

In recent years, the NLR has spread from the California Youth Authority into the adult prison populations of California and several other states.

1970 was actually the year the NLR was formed at the CYA facility of Preston School of Industry shortly after my release in July of 1969.

Edward Bunker wrote this article in Harpers Magazine Feb. 1972

War Behind Walls

Page 4, a religious doctrine of hate:

what increases racial polarization in prison beyond conciliation is the mutative leap in black militant rhetoric. This rhetoric is heard within prison walls by unsophisticated minds and gives those blacks that already hate whites a rationale for murder.

Everyone understands that blacks have been brutalized by generations of institutional racism, and recently by inertia and indifference. What the sympathetic fail to grasp is that sometimes the psychological truncation is so great that it cannot be repaired. Nothing is left but hate. They have no desire no motivation for anything but revenge and a license for what they desire. Additionally they have decided that they are political prisoners. The

black realizes that he has committed a crime, or has acted against the statutes. However, the claim of political prisoner comes from the argument that he was formed by a corrupt system, that his acts are a result thereof, and therefore he cannot be held responsible. Secondly, he feels he has never been a part of this system, but is still in slavery, and consequently the white laws do not apply to him. Such personalities are often found in prison, where the flower of black racism is blossoming, virulent and paranoid. Many white convicts are equally dangerous and intractable, but they at least intellectually accept their acts are wrong. And even white racist recognize their attitudes are no longer approved, to be shouted, whereas blacks are open in their racism.

Just last year the following article was written by Jorge Antonio Renaud, a graduate student in the School of Social Work at UT Austin, he has spent 27 years in Texas prisons. This post is part of a Know series on the Texas prison system. Excerpt:

Relieved of the certainty that random violence might result in deadly retaliation, incoming gang bangers overwhelmingly black and Hispanic brought their street codes into prison: the drive-by mentality took hold, and it was visited against Anglos. These cons didnt limit their violence to enemies they adopted the attitude that any white boy was fair game, and that he could and should be broken by continual, unexpected gang beatings administered regardless of whether he fought back, or whether he showed heart. The unwilling joined white supremacy gangs for protection, while those men weary of constant beatings became sex slaves and cash cows.

This aspect of Texas prisons results in thousands of men leaving the system with a predator mentality or a raging racism buried so deep it might never be eradicated. Reducing barriers to reentry is one thing understanding and relieving the trauma this unceasing violence leaves on the thousands of Texans returning to our streets is another.

Still not convinced:

Justice Justice of Texas wrote in 1999 in the Texas Observer Cruel and Unusual Still

Texas prison inmates continue to live in fear a fear that is incomprehensible to most of the states free world citizens. More vulnerable inmates are raped, beaten, owned, and sold by more powerful ones. Despite their pleas to prison officials, they are often refused protection. Instead, they pay for protection, in money, services, or sex. Correctional officers continue to rely on the physical control of excessive force to enforce order. Those inmates locked away in administrative segregation, especially those with mental illnesses, are subjected to extreme deprivations and daily psychological harm. Such practices and conditions cannot stand in our society, under our Constitution.

Here is a quote from the Supreme Court?

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

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.

Reflecting more generally on this imbalance, Knowles (1999: 268) remarked that: This racial inequality may be the largest in any violent crime committed in the United States. As he saw it the question to be answered was: What are the social forces that drive blacks to repeatedly and exclusively rape whites?

Human Rights Watch published a report about this: No Escape: Male Rape in US Prisons

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 a 16 year old previously sexually abused white boy goes to prison where ____.

From what you just read fill in the blank.

the entire article can be read here <http://www.thecrimereport.org/news/inside-criminal-justice/2012-08-gop-platform>

adding whats up with politics on the subject from from Common dreams and The crime report The Republican Party platform adopted this week at the partys convention in Tampa backs mandatory prison terms for gang crimes, violent or sexual offenses against children, repeat drug dealers, rapists, robbers, and murderers, declaring that, liberals do not understand this simple axiom: criminals behind bars cannot harm the general public. So the GOP is on board. To stop the insanity. Thank God! GOP

I am familiar with this case because Pedersen killed a black man from my community. He killed a man who was kind and gentle. I am a strong advocate for eliminating Solitary wherever it exists. But nowhere in the local reporting was the back story of Pedersen, which really is the front story. We could have much different outcomes if we had an ounce of compassion and half a brain to help people with mental health problems. Where is Herald Rivera now?

ELY STATE PRISON in Nevada is just as bad if not worse. Inmates are found dead in their cell, and they often are young, and the ruling is always died from Natural Causes.

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