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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2013/07/10/faces-and-voices-of-the-california-prison-hunger-strike/>

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | July 10, 2013

Today the massive California prison hunger strike enters its third day. Below are six individuals in Pelican Bay State Prison and Corcoran State Prison SHUs. All have been held in the SHU for over a decade, and participated in the previous two hunger strikes. All have indicated their intention to participate in this July 8th hunger strike, despite some of them having medical conditions.



Kijana Tashiri Askari (Marcus Harrison), 41, Pelican Bay SHU. Following validation as a Black Guerilla Family member, he has been in solitary confinement since 1994.

[With](#) regards to the revisions that were done to SHU management gang policies, well, that is exactly what has taken place (revisions (e.g. reform). Hence, more of the same in that, the revisions have only strengthened CDCR officials power and ability to label and validate every prisoner in CDCR as belonging to a Security Threat Group (e.g. prison gang). At the crux of the revisions is a lack of a definitive and behavioral-based criteria, as to what actually constitute as being gang activity. Meaning, any and everything can and will still be considered as gang activity, in spite of how innocuous the activity may be.



Mutope Duguma (James Crawford), 46, Pelican Bay SHU. Incarcerated since 1988, Duguma has been in the SHU since 2001, following his validation as a member of the Black Guerilla Family; a charge he claims is false. I was involved in gang life as a young man in South Los Angeles, like many other young black men from broken communities, but I was never a member

or associate of the BGF. I never even met a member of the BGF during my first decade in prison, he has written. He claims he was targeted for political activity, and last year won a [lawsuit](#) against CDCR for withholding his mail on the basis that his political writings constituted gang activity.

Duguma is known for having authored [The Call](#) in 2011, initiating the first round of hunger strikes. The purpose of the Hunger Strike is to combat both the Ad-Seg/SHU psychological and physical torture, as well as the justifications used of support treatment of the type that lends to prisoners being subjected to a civil death. Those subjected to indeterminate SHU programs are neglected and deprived of the basic human necessities while withering away in a very isolated and hostile environment.



Michael Zaharibu Dorrrough, 59 , Corcoran State Prison SHU. Dorrrough has been in the SHU since 1988, following validation as a member of the Black Guerilla Family. He has subsequently been kept in the SHU for reasons including writing for black nationalist newspapers and eulogizing a deceased inmate who was a BGF member.

I was diagnosed with severe depression several years ago.

I dont know which is worse.

At some point you know that the isolation has affected you. Perhaps permanently. It involves so many different factors. Particularly the isolation itself.

Over the years you have seen other people snap. Human beings cutting themselves. Eating their own waste. Smearing themselves in it. And sometimes throwing it at you. Human beings not just talking out loud to themselvesbut screaming at and cursing themselves out.

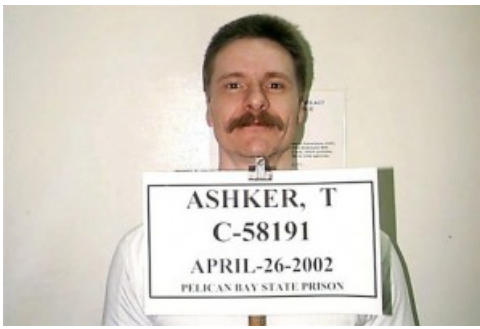
How could you not be affected by this kind of madness?!



J. Heshima Denham, 41 , Corcoran State Prison SHU. Denham has been in the SHU for over a decade following validation as a member of the Black Guerilla Family. As evidence of gang activity, he has reportedly has his cell is generic phentermine effective raised by prison guards for Japanese artwork involving dragons; the dragon is a symbol of the BGF.

[Solitary confinement](#) must be defined by the effects this isolation and the torture techniques used to break men has on those so situated. We should know. All of us have been both with and without cellies over our periods of indefinite SHU confinement. Despite our level of development and continued advancement, it would be the height of hubris for us to contend this isolation has not adversely affected our minds and bodies. For anyone to consider these conditions anything less than torture could only be a prison industrialist or some other type of draconian public official.

In the final analysis, torture must be defined by the effects it has on its victims. And no one who has been confined to these indefinite torture units for any length of time, either single or double celled, has escaped the psychological and physical devastation of the torture unit.



Todd Ashker, 50, Pelican Bay SHU. Incarcerated since 1984, he has been in the SHU since 1986, after prison officials deemed him a member of the Aryan Brotherhood, a charge he denies. He is one of the leaders of the hunger strikes.

According to a [UN Petition](#) filed by the Center for Human Rights and Constitutional law: Mr. Ashker's outdoor time is in a small, concrete enclosed dog-like yard 1 hour a day with no exercise equipment other than a hand-ball recently given to the SHU inmates as a result of a hunger strike. He claims his yard time is always cancelled due to staff training, and from the years 1989-2011 he received zero time outside, other than when he was allowed to go into a small enclosed concrete yard. He spent 24 hours a day 7 days a week in a small concrete cell for 22 years. Mr. Ashker's meals are under-portioned, watered down, under-cooked food is spoiled, cold, no nutrition, salad is rotten, trays are always dirty and covered with dirty dish water.



Arturo Castellanos, 52, Pelican Bay SHU. One of the leaders of the hunger strike, he has been in the SHU after validation as a member of the Mexican Mafia.

During our last meeting of May 23, 2011, Warden Lewis and CDCR Deputy Director Stainer dropped in. The reps asked Mr. Stainer several questions about the revisions to the STG. He was vague in his answers and then said although they are on his I-pod, he hasn't seen them yet. And they should be out in two weeks. Bottom line, it was the same old CDCR evasive tactics and the guy just basically wasted our time. Oh, he did say that the STG will replace the 6 year Inactive Status Program. Big Whoop! Yeah, it will but it will have the same end result. Only this time, we'll all be bouncing back and forth like a ping-pong ball between step-1 and step-2, all while we're in the same cell until we die. Thus, I personally don't see any real change coming in their revisions to the STG that we already rejected in March. I hope I'm wrong but with CDCR's track record, I doubt that I am.

Those with photographs of their loved ones in the SHU are encouraged to submit them to the author at: Sal.Solitary@Gmail.com

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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The SHU is very inhumane and should not be legal. These inmates are humans and deserve to be treated like so. More than half of them are not getting out and all they are asking for is more time with their loved ones. A contact visit a couple times a year or even to be able to call out would be nice. The amount of time that is listed that they are kept inside this hell hole is not right. This is the United States of America for crying out loud. Give them what they want and treat them like humans. No matter what someone has done they are still

human.

these men are not asking to be let free, most of these men will never go home. This is where they will die and they know it. All they are asking for is to be let out of solitary confinement after a certain amount of time. They are not even asking to be let out to the mainline with other inmates, all they are asking for is to be given a few more freedoms. Is that too much to ask?????. Maybe a contact visit a few times a year, A phone call if a family member should pass away. Thirty years is a long time to spend in a small cell. Lock yourself up in your bath room for a couple of days see how it feels. Now do that for twenty or thirty years. This is America not China Iran or some other off the wall country. We treat our own people with dignity no matter what they have done.

Stop FREEZING inmates & put an end to solitary confinement. It was originally intended to protect other inmates from dangerous inmates, but is now being used as permanent housing for anyone who upsets guards and/or is considered validated as a gang member. Our relative is in there just for associating with Mexican mafia members, but after 3 years, isn't that enough punishment, no light 23 hours a day. That's inhumane. They can't get family visits except through a phone call for one hour if they are lucky. I have also witnessed shivering inmates walking through freezing cold/snowy weather with shoes that were thin as paper and no jackets. I do not understand where our tax money goes. THIS IS INHUMANE TORTURE. Many of these inmates are in prison for crimes that are not violent and do not deserve such torture. Treating these men like animals will result in them acting like animals and severe psychological damage. Please put an end to this torture.

Thank u for this article. My husband has just been in solitary. Enough is enough! how cruel our country has become-and we fight wars to spread our American values. No wonder the rest of the world is looking at America in shock. How can we do this to our own people?

Solitary confinement is a human right violation and is cruel & unusual punishment. Gerry Brown do your job and find some qualified administrators. After all, I am paying for this so you DO need to do what I say! END SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

Very informative article. Now to get it on fox news. Limbaugh, orally. Hannity.

At other times as the Chairman of the Prison Council at the Norfolk Prison in MA. Warden Teddy Ristanno would say; and did say, before the Mass. legislative body, in 1971, that I ran the prison not him I would say it was a compromise most of the time. Some thing that could be accomplished by men that were willing, on both sides, to compromise and understood there were lines in the sand.. Walpole, is another example that you do not read about where we ran the prison when the guards walk off the job.. (1973) going from at the time the most violent prison in the country, to over night the most tranquil.. For a short time we had men, on both side, who compromised

There is always a bottom line. Who runs the prison? The prisoners or the Administration? There are prisons that are really run by the prisoners. Most all there are doing their time and looking to get out. Then there are prisons in total conflict. The prisoners are trying to run them and the Administration is saying no! We run the place, and you do as we say. Well in that conflict you have real problems, with a guy like me. If I can't do my own thing, my nature is to give you problems, and I can give you problems for the rest of your life. Classification is a needed objective from the administration side. Nevertheless, if I do not want to be classified, you're going to have problems. So what do you do? You lock my rear up, and try to bend me to your authority.. There are some of us, who would die rather than bend a knee.. So I say who is at fault? I survived at times by understanding. When in Roma, do as the Romans.

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