

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2011/07/24/voices-from-solitary-letter-from-a-tehachapi-hunger-striker/>

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | July 24, 2011

The following letter was sent by a hunger striker at California Correctional Institution (CCI) Tehachapi, one of three state prisons containing an all-solitary Security Housing Unit (SHU). The letter was written by an SHU inmate to his girlfriend, who forwarded it to Solitary Watch for publication. It is dated July 21, after the writer had been refusing food for three weeks.

The letter was written hours before a reporter was allowed to enter the SHU and show print news stories to the strikers regarding the end of the hunger strike. Inmates at CCI Tehachapi have since begun to eat again.

I am glad the word is out, I'm just saddened that I don't see anything on the news of our struggle. As far as we last heard it's been like 12 prisons that are involved. Here there are a lot of people on strike all races, Pelican Bay and Corcoran for sure.

As far as commissary, that's negative. It is CDC policy to search our cells and remove all stores when hunger strikes begin, and they did so here.

All they do is weigh us and take our vitals (blood pressure, temp., and heart rate), but of course they weigh us in chains to weigh us down and they allow the C/Os to operate the scale. I am at 171 on my last weigh-in, down from 185. They attempt to take my blood, which I refuse; I'm weak as it is, if I do that I'll fall out.

They truly don't care and they are perfectly content in watching us pass rather than admit fault and make changes to a policy that is brutal and baseless. I can't take my medication anymore because I have to take it with food I asked for help and they just ignored me.

They also took my shoes when I got here and my feet hurt. [*He had only been at CCI 2 weeks before the strike started, and he was never given any shoes!]

Help get the truth out there. I pray some attorneys get involved. Let them know the CDC is without truth and will lie to keep this issue from ever getting coverage. I am here validated for no actual action. This policy of validating people for no reason robs us of our lives, so we are on a hunger strike in which we could pass because in this environment we've already passed. This is not a life.

I have no food and no meds (that I can take). All they do is weigh me. They don't treat us (example; Ensure, Gatorade, nutrients of some sort). Nothing.

So I remain strong in the hopes that change will come. I get sad when I watch the news and they talk about stuff with no meaning and ignore us. I am an American citizen and when enemy combatants in Guantanamo Bay had a strike they covered it, all networks, beginning to end, but we are just forgotten.

Contact all media networks and let them know this is a peaceful protest and we have been given no other option for relief rather than to hunger strike in the hopes that someone, ANYONE, will care enough to step in and help us.

One might think that us as prisoners must be held under duress and extreme conditions in order to refuse the most basic necessity; food. I choose to remain on strike for I have been robbed of my life, my ability to be a father to my son, a son to my parents, a lover to my love, a friend to friends, and to experience life in the minimum of its meaning.

I was sentenced to life in prison at 18 for an action I committed, but now I am validated for no actual action committed by me. And I'll be held here in the SHU until I die or debrief. Just imagine if anyone out there could be put in jail just for someone's accusation. It's unheard of. But in here it's common practice for we are forgotten. We are the tragic aftermath of an angry committee.

Some believe we don't deserve common decency or compassion because we didn't show any when we committed our crime. To those people I say, in life wrongs are committed. I don't justify anything. But this country was founded on mass genocide and yet that is forgotten.

Now that civil rights have passed the oppression that must behas moved behind these walls of the new concrete slave ship.

I am only a man who prays that I will be judged by my actions and my disciplinary file, *not by the words of faceless informants and a confidential file that I cant see*. We must defend ourselves against the unknown. Its literally impossible.

My feet still walk the trail of tears. I am in my soul still a believer in justice and the good in people. I believe if society really knew what happened in here theyd be appalled.



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 [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 30, 2022

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September 19, 2022

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September 6, 2022

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I really pray my husbamd isnt starving im n a nad way myself put here without him but finding this out just males it worst i love u chase keep ir head up Daddy myself amd the girls pray for u every single day please. keep ur head up and lets get u home honey i love u

I cant fathom the over-statement of the cost of our wars, in which we rescue those who are treated, as we treat our people. I can listen to the media and agree, its disgusting what they do to their people, from a blind perspective to what occurs here. Sadam Hussain had all the palaces, here, we have a diverse and complicated system of dispersal. I can only hope that there is more good to what we cannot know.

We are dealing with a political situation, as a result, we are now looking at the hunger strikers as political prisoners within the United States, which in reality, is a Civil Rights issue. Yet, one is constantly being told that the United States does not hold its citizens as political prisoners.

J Miller; I concur your statement is one-hundred percent correct: Thank you, it saved me from posting that bit of information here.

My son is in Tehachapi: I have not heard from him since July 10, 2011, when he told me they were on a hunger strike, and that he was a participant. I keep praying for him and the rest, that they will make it through without any deaths.

Prisons, especially here in California has a history of mans inhumanity to man.

Second, places like the SHU and the SuperMax prisons (prisons within prisons) is a place where one is placed based on guards accusations, no investigation by an outside entity. Third, it is my belief that these type of inhumane units is used to test conditions for the military. For example, a person must stay in solitary confinement for six years to be cleared is in reality a violation of the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution,

Fourth, not to allow family members to see these particular inmates for years, is the same as slavery in a way (in slavery, they took away members of a family, and no one never heard of them again).

I also believe that, when a court sentences an individual to prison, that individual should not be subjected to inhumane treatment by the prison staff and it administration. Second, I do not believe that guards should be able to accuse people of doing something, just to get them placed into this sort of inhumane situation.

The questions I propose is this: When a State and/or a nation condones this type of situation, what is one to surmise about the treatment of all citizens under its jurisdiction?

Why hasnt California prison administrators, been made to correct this situation (it was one of the serious recommendations made over four decades ago)?

As I always ask of our criminal justice system. How does it help to take a mans hope away? If anyone knows how I can write to this inmate please let me know. I can be contacted at info@davidshopeaz.org

Slavery is still alive and well in the United States, and it is protected by the Constitution.

The 13th amendment to the United States Constitution provides that Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment

for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

So yes. These prisoners are living in concrete slave ships. Millions of American citizens are! If you research a little more on the 13th Amendment, and discover WHY this clause is in it, you will (or at least SHOULD) be horrified!

Jim- According to the 13th Amendment, slavery of prisoners is STILL LEGAL! So yes, it is a concrete slave ship AND it is also an American concentration camp, with torture thrown in, to boot.

Where is the ACLU, the Prison Law Office? Where are the Civil and Human Rights Attorneys??? There have been reports that hundreds, even THOUSANDS of prisoners participated in this hunger strike yet the only ones that had legal representation were the men at Pelican Bay. I hope for the sake of limited retaliation by prison officials that the men striking in all the OTHER prisons will also be protected from the powers-that-be.

Civilizations are judged by their prisons.

No, its not a concrete slave ship, its an American concentration camp.

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