

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2013/07/12/voices-from-solitary-this-place-is-nothing-more-than-a-torture-chamber/>

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by [Voices from Solitary](#) | July 12, 2013

The following was written by Tony, 35, who is engaged in the statewide hunger strike against long-term solitary confinement and related issues at Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, California. Incarcerated since he was nineteen years old, he has been in the Security Housing Units (SHU) for over nine years, longer than the average term of 6.8 years. He writes about the mental challenges that he faces while locked in what he calls a tomb box, and makes an important, practical appeal to the reader: Ask yourselves do we want a rehabilitated person with an education and job skills who can contribute to society? Or do we want an angrily, hateful, uneducated, and unskilled person who was mentally tortured back on the street? Sal Rodriguez

My letter to family and friends

I am a prisoner, have been since the age of nineteen. I am now thirty-five years of age. I was placed in the S.H.U without Due Process, originally. Not for infractions of rules and regulations. Rather hearsay and embellishments. The California Department of Corrections, rather than provide me educational/ rehabilitation programs, instead simply warehouse me in a tomb box, windowless cell, with no human contact, I am basically sensory deprived. I live in the worlds infamous security housing unit at Pelican Bay State Prison. For us in the Security Housing Units (SHU) this place is nothing more than a torture chamber.

I have been in the S.H.U. for over nine (9) years . I was placed in AdSeg. in 2003, and I havent been able to touch or hug my loved ones since then. Every single minute feels like being under water trying to gasp for air. Day in and day out, confined , isolated within a concrete box. The space is the size of a large bathroom. This is my daily existence. Isolation gnaws at the brain. Imagine yourself in your own windowless bathroom, day after day, with no human touch or able to see the sun, much less feel it. I am keenly aware of every single minute. Time weighs heavy. What is at stake? My sanity.

Who invented this type of punishment? Who thought it was a good idea to place a human being in a confined space, deeply isolated. Until, to the point, a human breaks and becomes mentally unraveled. Who? Only in an institution or group of people that have lost their humanness.

The use of isolation as a tactic to break humans was practiced by the once Soviet Union KGB and the North Korean government and Vietnam Government as a torture method. More recently, The United States of America on terrorist at Guantanamo Bay. P.O.Ws from the United States, would attest to the fact that this was a tactic to break a soldier who were prisoners of war. Senator John McCain of Arizona was subjected to this tactic for four years, as a P.O.W, in the Vietnam War. Is isolation torture? YES

Long term isolation may not leave physical scars, but it scars the mind. With its timed, methodic, sinister, daily isolation, to break

Mental torture methods are being practiced everyday within our nations borders! You might say, WHAT?! Yes, everyday imprisoned humans, just like myself , all across civilized America are being subjected to long term isolation. NOT just in the state of California, but also, Colorado, Chicago, Ohio, New York, etc. Which most American people do not even know. Within the walls of the prison, I am in their: Security Housing Units. This is a cover up name for what is more suitable and should be called: Mental Torture Chamber.

Many people think that its okay to torture prisoners because we have been dehumanized by the system. That we are nothing more than criminals. Worst of the worst. That we are monsters. That we are shot-callers, violent to the core. We have been called this and that long enough. They have conveniently convinced themselves and everyone else that this is to be true. for that, now, they can treat us anyway that they want. We are less than human to them.

Its understandable that in a civil society there is a rule of law and justice must be served, but where within the functions of justice did it become acceptable to inflict the injustice of mental torture. Prisoners, criminals, convicts, we are still human. Are we not? We feel. We love and are loved. We have hope. Goals. We even dream.. We eagerly ask for rehabilitative programs, to be taught skills, to better ourselves, and to be educated. Its a proven fact that prisoners who are provided such programs, have a greater chance of not returning to prison. That is a good thing for everyone. Even with the fact, prison administrations still fit to spend tax dollars not on rehabilitation programs, but rather to simply isolate us in a windowless concrete box. We are placed in long term isolation where we either develop a

mental health condition, or naturally begin to hate our captors.

Our prison system has simply boiled down to a policy of: **LOCK THEM UP AND THROW AWAY THE KEY.** This, however, only works against the interests of society. Because the reality is simple; a large percentage of all people imprisoned will someday be released. Ask yourselves do we want a rehabilitated person with an education and job skills who can contribute to society? Or do we want an angrily, hateful, uneducated, and unskilled person who was mentally tortured back on the street? Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (P.T.S.D.) is badly enough. Now, imagine some-thing equal or greater than that. The answer is quite simple. We can achieve this. Its not impossible: all that needs to be done is to employ the human element of treating prisoners like human beings. That is all have ever requested.

It is up to us all to demand that the prison system spend tax dollars on rehabilitation programs, Not on employing long term isolation. Call and or write your Governor, Senators, Congressman, Congresswoman, and stress to them the importance to end long term isolation. They have your vote(s) and best of interest to listen. Its been said that the humanness of a civilized society is measured in how it treats its prisoners.

The Security Housing Unit with its current policies and practices is an entity that does nothing else but breeds hate and despair. the Security Housing Units should be shut down. Nothing good is gained from long term isolation.

Every human being imprisoned within the confines of SHU wants nothing more than to achieve the complete closure of the mental torture chambers. It is why on July 8th, 2013 inmates who want better treatment of our human rights will be participating in a state wide, peaceful, non-violent, hunger strike. Others in other states similar to our situation are encouraged to participate. We will be demanding that the human element be the governing part of how prisons are run. We will sacrifice our health and or lives for this belief. The frightening part of it all is, that we the so-called MONSTERS. and not our captors, demand this. We are on the side of human rights.

When you the readers out there hear about our peaceful protest dont think, SHIT, ITS JUST A BUNCH OF SNIVELING PRISONERS . Rather know, get informed, and realize , its a group of human beings, from all races: Black, Brown, White, and Red, within a concrete box risking their health and lives to end the inhumane treatment being inflicted upon us. Especially to my younger cousins and younger family members whose support I didnt have in the two hunger strikes in 2011. Hope this letter to you has opened your eyes and mind. It is one my reasons to write this letter. Therefore, we dont want to spend another minute that feels like a year in mental torture chamber. We hope. We believe that justice and humane treatment should go hand in hand.

Tony Date: 6/16/13

Imprisoned now for 17 years and still full of hope.

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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Just another illustration of the so-called American system of JUST US! believe that it was George Bernard Shaw who said that the criminal may well be a low sort, but there is one far lower yet, and that is his keeper. In any excuse for a civilized country, a person is sent to prison AS punishment,,not FOR it.

john McCain squelled like a bird in a hospital wing in a pow camp his buddies suffered get your story straight libtard

not even close to the torture one will experience in Hell apart from Jesus. atleast these guys have a chance to to possibly walk with Jesus their victims maybe not so so to all these bleeding hearts reading this ? the heck with what theyre feeling

To all of you YES! It is happening, to innocent people, as well. What the majority of the public does not understand is that is a way to control !! I am here due to racial profiling, and God knows what else, we still dont know why I was chosen. I am an American citizen, with no priors, no evidence against me, not even allowed a forensic expert on my behalf, and the jury was bullied. My wife was not allowed to testify, and she had all of the information about the therapies, inhome treatment of my kids from a previous marriage, they threatened to throw her in jail if she testified! Read my blog, it tells our story. Now, I have been in isolation since Aug.31, because there was no air on our unit and we were being locked down with no air! Terrible things are happening to all sorts of people, many who do not

deserve to be in here. Please help.

I HAVE 3 WORDS IT IS WRONG!

this is what we need : real stories from real people . while some of us have know for a very long time about this abuse in prisons, others are still fast asleep, or actively believe its acceptable to torture people because they broke the law once

k kissel, if you see this, please email me this id at this id dot org

It is absolutely INCREDIBLE to me to hear about this Dark Ages Decadence talk about sick and twisted? I just got my associates degree in business administration/visual communication, I graduated on the deans list. I am currently going for my bachelors degree in visual communications but Monday Im doing a dead stop and I dont care what it takes IM GOING INTO LAW!!! Something must be done and done NOW! There are SOO MANY INNOCENT PEOPLE THAT ARE GOING THROUGH THE SAME THING AS TONY? And what an EPIC truth be told story of reality! My god from what I have researched and read this inhumane treatment comes very close to an fn witch hunt? WTF are the powers that be thinking or not thinking if you want to get real? I have 2800 friends on Facebook and I am going to do some SERIOUS SHARING! Theres always save the this animal or that animal going on , lets put the animals who are behind this TOTALLY WRONG instilled INHUMANE AND UNJUST form of imprisonment in their place! Wow, UNBELIEVABLE! I WILL NOT REST UNTIL THIS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE ISSUE IS ADDRESSED AND SOMETHING IS DONE ABOUT ENDING THE TORTURE CHAMBER! I GIVE YOU MY WORD ON THIS and my honor is my loyalty.

Que onda primo sorry to hear about Ad-seg, We as taxpayers need to look or find out what is going on in the state prisons, To have that right to vote on the conditions you and every other human spending there time in ad-seg. I know what you mean I worked at juvenile hall Kern county and it was nothing but how the JC1,JC2, and 3 would treat the kids. some would get slapped,punched and even peppered sprayed for no reason. some of these kids were mentally challenged.

C.Z. ~I must say it was a very interesting article.. I do have to agree with the writer .This is Pure Torturethey are human-beings that have made mistakes,and some more major and Im sure they are aware of that, and will answer to the God of their understanding who are we to judge!! I would rather perfer a rehabilitated & educated sane Man/Woman versas a insane to be released in my community on my street my or as my neighbor. The history from decades says it all Torture is not the answer I will continue to support and pray for all men and women

I like this article a lot. I read it over and over my husband just been boxed for something that was found in his cell. I know he was set up because he has been putting in appeals and furlows to come home to take care of things and now all of a sudden he is boxed and this isnt right.My husband has been keeping to himself and dont get involved in anything.He just wants to come home.If any one knows of a good lawyer that will help me out on this please contact me.

Awesome article. While I agree with what he is saying, I have to say, why was he sent to prison for in the first place? Why was he then placed in Ad-Seg? Before I would totally agree< I would have to read and see the other sides information. Did he hurt staff? Did he cause or be in fights? Did he hurt or kill another inmate? While I agree solitary is not the way to go for rehab, he is prison for a reason. And if he can not go along with the rules or policies in that prison, what then should be done? If solitary was out, what then do you do with prisoners that do not follow the rules? Life has rules, no matter where you are. Follow the rules and you have no problems..

it is a wonder that this is so well written as the author has spent so many years with the slow torture of total isolation. The animals in this case are those who are outside the cage. This is not rehabilitation it is extreme victimisation.

This was an excellent article. Solitary Confinement is an experiment, it is to aid the military in umderstanding how much a perskn can endure before they fully go mental inclmpant.

Second, it is also part of a plan to destroy competition within the workforce as-well-in the arena of education.

Third, to break a person mentally and physically, destroys self-worth.

Beleive it or not, all of this is race based.

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