

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/12/09/profile-of-an-adx-prisoner-just-half-crazy-and-trying-to-hold-on-to-the-other-half/>

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | December 9, 2012

J. has been incarcerated for 12 years, the last eight of which have been in solitary confinement. Initially convicted of robbery and sentenced to a five year term as a juvenile, he was returned to prison in Mississippi on a parole violation. He was caught drinking beer at a beach. Admitting that he was at war with the guards and engaging in both physical and verbal attacks on guards, he was placed in the infamous Unit 32 at Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman.

In 2007, he killed a death row inmate at Unit 32 and was sent to the United States Penitentiary, Administrative Maximum Facility (ADX) facility in Florence, Colorado, where prisoners spend 23-24 hours a day in their cell.

His record at Unit 32 included the stabbing of multiple prison guards. I admit, I was at war with the guards, he says. Disrespect, he says prompted the attacks. For these incidents and his frequent verbal berating of guards, he was kept in isolation in the once infamous unit.

One prisoner has [described](#) his cell this way,

The confined space that you are housed in is a 7-by-9 foot sound proof cell that comes with a concrete slab and a thin mattress for a bed, a shower within the cell with a timer to conserve water and prevent flooding, a sink with no taps, just touch buttons a toilet with a valve that shuts off the water after two flushes automatically for an hour, an immovable concrete desk and concrete stool, a polished steel mirror riveted to the concrete wall and a thirteen inch black and white television encased in plexiglass to prevent tampering.

J. has spent five years in this bleak environment, except without a television. He has not seen or been able to speak with family for the five years that he has been in the federal supermax.

Were poor folk, he says of his family, and coming to visit is too expensive from what I can tell very few people get visits this place is too far from anyone's family.

He is currently looking forward to a visit from his sister next year. My younger sister has been saving up to come visit me, he writes.

J. is allowed one hour of exercise in basically another cell five days a week. The rest of the time he spends confined in his small cell. He spends his time meditating, reading, and exercising. He says of his self-described vicious workout routine as being a consequence of being just half crazy and trying to hold on to the other half.

While reading writers such as Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, and Machiavelli, he spends his time in isolation listening to screaming inmates around him. The crazies, he calls them.

The food he receives is very, very small, just enough to stay hungry. He writes, When I first came here they fed really good, the last couple years it's been dropping off, now it is horribly small. It hurts to be so dependent.

Solitary affects a person's mind, you can become anti-social or hate filled and murderously angry, he writes.

He argues that the death penalty is a more humane punishment than solitary confinement.

He describes the psychological torment of his situation:

I hate living in a cage, handcuffed, chained, no contact with family. It hurts the soul. It is a pain my words do no justice. To be treated as if I'm dangerous and need to be caged and chained hurts. And no matter how long I've been in this situation or will be, never makes me prefer it. This whole reality is unnatural, but solitary is above and beyond. Humanity escapes this place. Men lose their minds. This whole scene is ugly. Year after year alone in a cage affects the strongest mind. This is why I tell you death is more humane. I'd never take my own life, but I'm not at all in fear of death. This, what I'm living in is torture. Believe that. Words do nothing in explaining the truth of it.

J. is unsure of when he'll ever be able to get back to general population and be able to interact with others. Sentenced to life in prison, he

will likely remain in solitary confinement for many more years to come. He is currently awaiting charges for an incident with another ADX inmate, whom he attacked eight months ago.

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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Because of their disruptive and deadly behavior, these type of inmates cannot function in a regular general population. They pose a grave threat to staff and other inmates. You bleeding heart liberals should spend a few days in a special housing unit and maybe you would understand the reason for these special units.

<http://onthehuman.org/2011/08/when-felons-were-human/>

Then read this article that I already posted.

I would like to share a youtube video of a Oliver Stone movie Killer A Journal Of A Murderer on a man named Caryl Chessman then go to the 40min mark and watch him when he is released from solitary.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mh03ktloDsk>

Excellent movie on how we breed killers in prison.

He began in a place called Red Wing at 11 years old.

I recently learned that Red Wing is the twin of Preston School Of Industry where I did time. They shared both their designed and their methods. They both opened their cells in the early 1890s.

I quote:

Panzram was deemed reformed and granted his release from Red Wing in 1905. I was reformed all right, Panzram later said. I had been taught by Christians how to be a hypocrite and I had learned more about stealing, lying, hating, burning and killing. I had learned that a boy's penis could be used for something besides to urinate with and that a rectum could be used for other purposes.

Before leaving Red Wing, however, Panzram took his revenge upon the authorities of the place by starting a fire that destroyed the school's industrial building, laundry, tailor shop, and other facilities. The source of the fire went undiscovered until Panzram confessed to it late in his life, by which time, according to his own reckoning, he had murdered 21 people, committed thousands of burglaries, and sodomized more than 1,000 male human beings.

Panzram was eventually hanged for his crimes at the Leavenworth Federal Prison in 1930.

John Handy is the program director at Red Wing these days. At the front desk where Handy meets me there is a sign that reads:

Never Grow a Wishbone Where Your Backbone Ought to Be.

My interpretation: You best grow a pair because you're on your own.

Heart breaking there's this book/story as well The prominent writer Roger Dean Kiser, author of The White House Boys An American Tragedy. Even if a kid wasn't a child sent to these places many get sent to adult prisons, My cousin got off the bus age 17 at Holman The CO. at intake told him he was pretty and he'd need a knife. That boy is 60 still in prison. he didn't kill anyone. I do not follow the children as adults the isolation issue is the only one I follow.

Randy,

As Carl writes, the purpose of Solitary Watch is not to ask the readers for feeling sorry for these incarcerated fellows

While it is certainly easier to see whats wrong with the use of solitary in cases where individuals with too many stamps, black nationalist reading material, and drug problems are locked in isolation, I think the more fundamental questions and discussions to have over the use of solitary come from cases such as that of the individual profiled here. Questions such as: When, why, and for how long is isolation appropriate? Of course, thats up for you to decide.

Thanks for reading.

We should put some judges, prosecutors, and lawyers & cops in solitary for a month and the laws would change !

As an American we do NOT every earn torture! Prison is the punishment isolation indefinite is just torture ..but we pay them more money to do it. Whether you do not like the person doesnt matter, isolation has to stop it has no value no correction

And solitary confinement as J. has and is experiencing is UNCONSTITUTIONAL!!! So many seem to forget that there is a prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment in the United States Constitution. Why is this forgotten by so many?!!!

Hanging on the other half is more than telling the truth for those who find a way to cope with the isolation as it is after all a way of survival..

Good insight on solitary confinement. I dont think those that have lived with persons that survived solitary confinement or who have never stepped inside a level 5 facility know what the point is or trying to be made.

Solitary Watch brings to the attention of such conditions by allowing prisoners [still a human being] to express themselves how they were mistreated and exposed to the extreme elements of the human brain and body that does nothing more than inflict more punishment than the human body can take.

The purpose of Solitary Watch is not to ask the readers for feeling sorry for these incarcerated fellows but rather a better awareness and understanding of how type of this treatment destroys a mans ability to live, cope and functions like a human being and not another form of alien life. In fact, I dont believe we would treat an alien being as extreme as we do our own human race.

If there are persons who dont care or feel the wrong in such methods, then they have never experienced the elements imposed that can break a man down. Secondly, many forget that those released from solitary confinement may one day become someones neighbor and through no fault of their own, their mindset has been altered permanently by the manner they were incarcerated.

Some want justice to be served while others just want revenge and think that a prisoner, a murder or an anti social personality doesnt deserve to be kept in general population but rather a psychological cage that is kept dark and empty or reasons.

i think this treatment is torture-or close to it, depending on your subjective definition, but i do not feel sorry for this man. he sounds like someone who earned this treatment. i feel terrible for the prisoners who are put into solitary confinement for political reasons. is sayed hashmi in solitary? i think so. he never killed anyone-not even close.
is solitary confinement monitored by an outside agency? i certainly wd not trust the guards. i bet most guards are low-life thugs themselves-its not exactly a job that draws from the cream of society.

Solitary effects a persons mind, you can become anti-social or hate filled and murderously angry, he writes.

This man already is filled with anti-social behavior , hate and he is a murderer!
I do not feel sorry for this man as a human life meant nothing to him!

I still dont know what the authors intent was writing this article! normally I feel sorry for a person and a human should not be treated worse then animals at the human society but this article where the man thought nothing of a human life, i feel he is in the correct place and he should be lucky he has TV!

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