

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/10/11/kids-in-solitary-confinement-americas-official-child-abuse/>

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | October 11, 2012

The title of this post is the title of our most recent piece for [The Guardian](#). It draws on a new report released yesterday by Human Rights Watch and the American Civil Liberties Union, titled [Growing Up Locked Down: Youth in Solitary Confinement in Jails and Prisons Across the United States](#). The report is a shocking and powerful document, and should not be missed. Our piece on it follows.

Molly J said of her time in solitary confinement: [I felt] doomed, like I was being banished Like you have the plague or that you are the worst thing on earth. Like you are set apart [from] everything else. I guess [I wanted to] feel like I was part of the human race not like some animal.

Molly was just 16 years old when she was placed in isolation in an adult jail in Michigan. She described her cell as a box: There was a bed the slab. It was concrete There was a stainless steel toilet/sink combo The door was solid, without a food slot or window There was no window at all.

Molly remained in solitary for several months, locked down alone in her cell for at least 22 hours a day.

No other nation in the developed world routinely tortures its children in this manner. And torture is indeed the word brought to mind by a shocking report released today by Human Rights Watch and the American Civil Liberties Union. [Growing Up Locked Down](#) documents, for the first time, the widespread use of solitary confinement on youth under the age of 18 in prisons and jails across the country, and the deep and permanent harm it causes to kids caught up in the adult criminal justice system.

Ian Kysel, author of the 141-page report, interviewed or corresponded with more than 125 young people who had spent time in solitary as children in 19 states. To cope with endless hours of extreme isolation, sensory deprivation and crippling loneliness, Kysel learned that some children made up imaginary friends or played games in their heads. Some hid under the covers and tried to sleep as much as possible, while others found they could not sleep at all.

Being in isolation to me felt like I was on an island all alone dying a slow death from the inside out, a California teen wrote in a letter to Human Rights Watch.

One young woman, who spent three months in solitary in Florida when she was 15, described becoming a cutter while in isolation: I like to take staples and carve letters and stuff in my arm Each letter means something to me. It is something I had lost. She started by carving into her arm the first letter of her mothers name. Another girl who cut herself in solitary said, because it was the only release of my pain.

In fact, solitary confinement [has been shown](#) to cause severe pain and psychological damage to the tens of thousands of adults who endure it every day in American prisons. On children, the report states, the practice has a distinct and particularly profound impact. Because of the special vulnerability and needs of adolescents, solitary confinement can be a particularly cruel and harmful practice when applied to them. This is all the more true because for many of these kids, developmental immaturity is compounded by mental disabilities and histories of trauma, abuse, and neglect.

Yet, prisons and jails commonly use isolation as punishment for violating prison rules, including both violent and nonviolent infractions. One boy who entered a Colorado jail at age 15 said the guards doled out stints in solitary for crimes that would, in any other setting, be deemed normal adolescent behavior: 15 days for not making the bed; 15 days for not keeping the cell door open; 20 or 25 days for being in someone elses cell.

On Rikers Island in New York City, more than 14% of adolescents between 16 and 18 spent some period in disciplinary segregation. This despite the fact that nearly half of all adolescents on Rikers have been found to have a diagnosed mental disorder.

Other kids are isolated as a form of protective custody, because they are vulnerable to physical or sexual abuse. Even though they are being locked down for their own good, many receive no educational or rehabilitative programming while in solitary, and some are barred from seeing their families.

Still, other children are placed in solitary confinement for treatment purposes, especially after threatening or attempting suicide even though isolation has been shown to sharply increase the risk that prisoners will take their own lives.

There is nothing to do so you start talking to yourself and getting lost in your own little world. It is crushing, said Paul K, who spent 60 days in solitary when he was 14. You get depressed and wonder if it is even worth living. Your thoughts turn over to the more death-oriented side of life.

No one knows precisely how many children live in these conditions, since many state and local correctional systems do not keep such data. But the overall rate of solitary confinement in American prisons is thought to be between 3% and 5%, and anecdotal evidence suggests that, in some systems, children may be isolated at even higher rates than adults. Given that nearly 100,000 youth under the age of 18 pass through adult prisons and jails annually, there exists the staggering possibility that thousands of children are spending time in solitary confinement each year.

Liz Ryan, who directs the [Campaign for Youth Justice](#), points out that 20 states have laws requiring that juveniles be kept apart from adult prisoners. Yet most of the nations 3,000 jails lack dedicated facilities for children leaving them with no alternative but to place kids in solitary. A majority of people in jail are there awaiting trial, which means many children in solitary have not even been convicted of a crime.

In addition, Ryan said, A kid could be held in jail not because there is a risk to public safety, but because they don't have the resources to make bail. So the racial and class disparities endemic to the criminal justice system are likely reflected in the population of children languishing in isolation.

Ian Kysel said in an interview: I think one of the greatest impediments to change is trying to unravel the policy issue that is at the root of this problem: a criminal justice system that treats kids as if adults without providing resources or guidelines for their care. For this reason, Human Rights Watch and the American Civil Liberties Union recommend that state and the federal governments prohibit the housing of adolescents with adults, or in jails and prisons designed to house adults.

However, regardless of how they are charged and held, Kysel says unequivocally: We need to ban the solitary confinement of young people across the board. There is simply no reason that a child or adolescent ever needs to be held in a cell, alone, for 22 let alone 24 hours at a stretch.

For this to happen, though, the American public will need to accept what numerous international bodies have already concluded that solitary confinement is cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and clearly rises to the level of torture when levied against vulnerable populations, including children.

If my story can stop another kid from coming to solitary confinement, one Florida teen wrote, then, Hopefully my pain serve[s] some purpose.

James Ridgeway (1936-2021) was the founder and co-director of Solitary Watch. An investigative journalist for over 60 years, he served as Washington Correspondent for the Village Voice and Mother Jones, reporting domestically on subjects ranging from electoral politics to corporate malfeasance to the rise of the racist far-right, and abroad from Central America, Northern Ireland, Eastern Europe, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. Earlier, he wrote for The New Republic and Ramparts, and his work appeared in dozens of other publications. He was the co-director of two films and author of 20 books, including a forthcoming posthumous edition of his groundbreaking 1991 work on the far right, Blood in the Face. Jean Casella is the director of Solitary Watch. She has also published work in The Guardian, The Nation, and Mother Jones, and is co-editor of the book Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement. She has received a Soros Justice Media Fellowship and an Alicia Patterson Fellowship. She tweets @solitarywatch.

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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@Fanny

I forgot to give you this link to a really good article on Warren Jeffs.

I believe when you wrote Mormon (Jeff Warner) you meant Jeffs.

## No Refuge

Five years after the infamous raid on the FLDS compound in Eldorado, questions remain about the states handling of the case and the safety of the children.

by Janet Heimlich Published on Wednesday, August 1, 2012, at 5:58 CST

<http://www.texasobserver.org/no-refuge/>

@Fanny:

Let me give you a quick summery of why I risked being murdered to help a bunch of misfits.

Besides the suicide in solitary in 1968 that I witnessed, an inmate that I begged as a victim of sexual abuse without any evidence other than my knowledge of a sad long list of similar victims that I had come across over the years I also thought about the following boy.

While awaiting trial I sat in the dayroom watching TV when I got up to relieve myself in the bathroom next to the counselors station. In the mirror I watch as an excited young, rather chubby boy take possession of his package from home. Then he went down the hallway with a huge smile on his face. I wasnt the only one that saw him take possession however and I watched with interest as a wolf pack followed the elated boy down the hallway.

I suspected he would soon be relieved of his possessions so I paused in the hallway looking towards his room. I looked on in disgust as the pack came out of the boys room stuffing their pockets full of loot. The boy stood crying and pleading with them Please my mom set me that stuff and it means a lot to me! The pack chuckled and replied something like Be sure to thanks moms for us then and shut the fuck up or well fuck you up too bitch.

I shook my head in disgust as much by the lack of heart of the boy that was robbed as by the raiders.

The next morning they had to cut his limp body down. I never saw him again so I believe he died.

I was furious and I pledged then and there Id do something to avoid future tragedies.  
This is partly why I still write about such things today.

@Fanny:

Good points Fanny but there is PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) of 2003. But in todays PC world how do you address the issues when.

Human Rights Watch published a report about this:

No Escape: Male Rape in US Prisons

<http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/2001/prison/>

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.

Talk about a third rail.

By the way I was a Boy Scout, an Alter Boy, went to Catholic School, boxed at the Police Athletic Club and in Air Force, spent about three years in juvenile facilities and never was abused and I only felt sympathy for those who couldnt defend themselves. These sexual predators spot the victim in a group like a wolf picks their prey. I organized such victims to walk together for their protection which made me very unpopular with those that victimized them. Other forms of victimization include extortion of personal property and food items. I became a warehouse for these victims which only increased the threats on my life. I was lucky to avoid being murdered when after I was involved in an altercation with the ring leader. Then when the unit was searched and 80 deadly weapons found in this cop killers room he was sent up stream or I would have been killed within days.

I was released shortly thereafter. Whew!

@Fanny

Look up Michele Deitch of the University of Texas LBJ School of Public Affairs she has too excellent and frightening reports on juveniles.

One is titled From Time Out to Hard Time the other has to do with juveniles held in Texas adult jails.

While on Texas a state with similar demographics as Cali here are some quotes on prison rape and race relations there that are more up to date than my experience. I see no improvement in fact it sounds so much worst than the 60s.

In Texas prisons, violence and racism reign  
by Jorge Antonio Renaud

Published: Nov. 22

Jorge Antonio Renaud, a graduate student in the School of Social Work, spent 27 years in Texas prisons. This post is part of a Know series on the Texas prison system.

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 didn't 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.

From the Texas Observer

Justice Justice of Texas wrote in 1999:

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.

Sad and under-reported.

Thanks once more Alan for your sources of information. So why cant we protect juveniles and/or inmates? It appears we cant in our society, nor in our prisons..You had mentioned code of conduct with the boys scout, and look at the years of abuse that they have been covering up, look at the bishops and catholic archbishops, and other churches such as the Mormon (Jeff Warner), and look at Penn. State, continual cover up by those in power, and those so very willing to look the other way. The increase of sexual predators everywhere seem to be increasing beyond protections that should be in place.

@Kathy

From today's LA Times:

<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2012/11/probation-officer-guilty-of-juvenile-hall-assault.html>

Jordan allegedly kned the boy in the face and pushed his face into the floor. The 13-year-old boy received a cut and bruises to his face and suffered a broken front tooth.

I was sent to Los Padrinos after LA Juvenile Hall then onto the CYAs Southern Reception Center in Norwalk for evaluation. With this done I was sent up state.

I arrived at Fricot Ranch Schools Eagle Lodge on September 28, 1964, I was 12 years old.

The second floor dorm consisted of two rows of beds lining the walls of the room leaving a pathway down the middle of the rows of beds to enter and leave the individual beds. On the far side of the building from the office elevated to the same level as the office were 12 single rooms without doors, each room had a bed, desk, and a chair. There was a metal tube railing that lined the walkway leading to the individual rooms and below this railing laid the dorm. These single rooms were given to people for good behavior which included their school performance. I would occupy the room that sat directly across from the front of the office for all but one week of my stay. Outside of these twelve single rooms the rest of the population slept in the dorm below where in the darkness of night the sodomizing of the weak continued undetected for the most part. Thus, although I was not easy prey, I still appreciated my single room.

As a whole my experience at Fricot was not intolerable which may bother some of you that believe in harsher punishment. The place had its moments however such as the night we were all told that we hadn't stripped down fast enough for our shower and were then told we needed to retrieve our cloths from the laundry pile in which they had just been thrown. I ended up with a pair heavily soiled with human waste and so I refused to wear them.

Two counselors came down the stairs and stood behind the split door of the linen closet. From just inside the doorway they now demanded that I join them and to bring the soiled underwear along with me. I held the pungent smelling underwear away from me with two fingers and went cautiously into the room naked as the day I was born. One of them slammed the door behind me and with one on either side of me they continued barking their orders Dame it put them on now!

No!

Do it now! they demanded

There is no fucking way Im going to do that.

Then now you are going to have to put them in your mouth!

No fucking way man!

At this point they rushed me and wrestled me to the floor trying to insert the underwear in my mouth while holding me in a tight head lock. I struggled to free myself while choking from the pressure being applied to my wind pipe then suddenly somehow I was able to break free and another counselor just happened to drop by and thankfully he interceded on my behalf.

A few days later the same two counselors woke us all up around 1:00 AM then ordered us to all get dressed as rapidly as possible. Once

we were all dressed we were ordered outside and made to line up in formation in the pitch blackness of a country night. There was no moon that evening which left only the stars to illuminate the road behind the lodge so one of the two counselors had to use a handheld flashlight to observe us lining up and to also lead us down the road. As we marched into the night he called out a rapid paced cadence in military fashion. Then once we were at the base of a nearby hill about a mile away we were ordered to halt. We stood there at attention in silence, while maintaining our formation and wondering just what kind of bullshit these two pricks were going to have us do next. We didnt have to wait long until the other counselor appeared in his four wheel drive pickup truck then set about maneuvering it in such a way as to illuminate the entire hill using his high beams. Once he was satisfied with the angle we were given the order to march up the hill. Then back down the hill, over and over again without pause. The hill was about two football fields in length with a steady steep incline which necessitated that we lean forward in order to maintain our balance. Up and down the hill we marched to their rapid cadence until the counselors grew tired of the drill which was well over an hour later. Sweaty and tired to the bone we all marched back to our lodge moaning from the pain in our leg muscles. Once outside the lodge we were given the order to enter the shower area, strip down to our underwear, store our cloths and return to our bunks.

As I laid down I could see from my rooms elevated position that many of the others in the dorm room below had decided to sleep on top of their blanket having become too fatigued to bother opening it up, some of these even had their feet still dangling off the bed as I fell to sleep exhausted.

On another occasion these same two counselors made us stand nude with our arms out at our sides until most if not all of us could no longer hold up our arms. Still we were not released at this point but made to remain standing at attention for several more hours until the weaker guys started to wobble and faint. Only after several had fallen were we finally allowed to go to our bunks for what remained of the night.

On yet another occasion we were made to participate in a cross country run in the mid-day summer sun. The run ended only when someone passed out from heat exhaustion.

And then there were the forced boxing matches where I was once targeted for defeat by pairing me up with an obviously physically stronger opponent (but thankfully he was not too bright). I was unwilling to perform for the two so I used the rope-a-dope method to protect myself until the idiot punched himself out then I countered with a few solid blows and they immediately halted the fight. I remained unhurt which obviously displeased the two counselors.

These two were the main source of my discomfort while I was confined there.

Both Fricot and Preston have been closed but I am sure life still remains difficult in those still open.

@Fanny It didnt much matter what my own views were it was a time of black rage. MLK was killed when I was in Preston. I hear the divisions are even more extreme today. Whites are hopelessly outnumbered and preyed upon. Some like this boy turn extremely violent to counter the aggression. As an example the Nazi Low Riders were founded in Preston soon after my release and the AB was founded in San Quentin when I was in another CYA facility at the age of this boy. I could quote the statistics on prison rape which reflects my observations but I am hoping the October 10th call for peace between the races in Cali is for real. (Human Rights Watchs 2001 report No Exit is a good source on rape,)

I was cornered by blacks because the picture of my girl friend looked black. Neither brown, yellow, red or black approved of a white male dating their women. Not that whites liked the reverse either. My best friend on the outside was a boy living in a foster home by the name of Jose. So I guess I was open minded enough but I was also determined not to be a punk so I fought tooth and nail.

Racial tension was so thick in the air that I suspected a florescent light bulb could be lite without a fixture when you walked down the hallway.

The racial balance of today is even more extreme and although they all have similar stories and backgrounds while serving time in the same place whites were and are seen as ligament targets for revenge on a racist society. I never understood this nor excepted it.

I fear this boy will bare an unbelievable amount of torment and either turn into a monster or commit suicide like that boy on Christmas Evening 1968 while I was in solitary.

I hope Im wrong but I doubt it.

I have yet to ask Bill how he made it. I fear that he was irreversibly damaged.

@Fannie: Well Ive been out of the system for over 40 years sadly it seems it has only gotten worst.

This is what I have read:

Both Hall and the boys biological mother accused each other of child abuse during their divorce.

Hall taught the boy to shoot guns and took him to rallies where Im sure he learned a code of conduct different than taught at Boy Scout meetings.

At home the boy was exposed to domestic violence, child abuse, more racism and the glorification of gun violence.

So with these type of lessons driven into his head the boy stabbed his teacher with a pencil on the first day of kindergarten, then years later, he tried to strangle another teacher with a telephone wire.

The boy went on to be expelled from six schools and was eventually home-schooled.

The defense suggests that the boys stepmother goaded the child into killing Hall because her husband planned to leave her for another woman.

In fact she testified that Hall sent her three profanity-laced text messages saying he wanted a divorce and ordering her to move out then argued just before Hall fell to sleep on the sofa and was killed.

If a judge decides he killed his father, the boy could be held in state custody until he is 23.

This is my own experience:

I met several child killers when I was incarcerated and because they were going to be held long term they received more counseling and job training than I did.

School is all self study so one has to be self motivated. Therefore they need have a sense of hope of being released one daay. I am glad that he is in CA because states like FL and PA would sentence him to LWOP.

My best friend while serving time in CYA Preston School of Industry was a guy named Bill. Bill was a soft spoken mild mannered teen who murdered someone when he was just 15 over a drug deal. Bill was given an apprenticeship in the upholstery shop while I serving a lesser term for disturbing the peace worked the laundry folding sheets.

Like this kid Bill was influenced an older person. Bills brother was the president of an outlaw MC that has since merged with an International club. I therefore assume Bills actions were influenced by his older brother MCs code of honor.

Bill was also freed at 23 and went on to open an upholstery shop. The shop had been opened for over 20 years when I discovered it on Facebook. Although Bill was quite intelligent if I remember right he had dyslexia and without the skills that he learned in Preston and the support from his parents he would have had a much harder time making it when he was released.

I am not aware of what kind of programs are now available to this kid.

I do know that this boy is in for some real hard time in a state with the demographics of CA even if the inmates never learn about his fathers background.

Lets hope he doesnt get sicker there.

Thanks Alan, I dont know how he can avoid becoming sicker in the system for so long a time. What were your own attitudes toward race and racism in prison. Has that been compounded over the years? I have to admit,I had thought we had come a long way in the last 40 years, but it is evident that our society has not, and still carries negative attitudes. When you get down to the wire, its pretty nasty with the current economic crisis we face.

Alan, would you be so kind as to comment on the Riverside, California murder trial of the Jeff Hall Murder. This young boys life was saturated with Nazism, and I wonder what kind of treatment he is getting, and if it is even considered treatment at his age.

Thank you, Fannie

@Kathy: A few examples of my own experience can be found here:

<http://solitarywatch.com/solitary-voices/in-solitary-at-las-juvenile-hall/>

To Alan CYA:

Im curious to more about your experience during your adolescent years in solitary confinement. Would you be willing to email me further details?

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/10/2012101765942325875.html>

How not to rehabilitate young prisoners

Sending young people to solitary confinement is the perverse consequence of treating them like adults, writes Kysel.

Just noticed this other NPR article.

Brain Scientists Uncover New Links Between Stress And Depression:

Stress affects mental health by releasing chemicals that impair the function of the prefrontal cortex, which is where higher level thought takes place. When that happens, we switch from being thoughtful creatures to being reactive creatures.

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2012/10/15/162934835/brain-scientists-uncover-new-links-between-stress-and-depression>

(All that screaming of the mentally ill held in solitary stresses everyone else out held near them. And of course the screaming is a reflection of their own stress. :( )

This NPR article on the adolescence brain is related.

Its major points are:

Two studies showed that the adolescent brain is literally shaped by experiences early in life.

One of the studies showed that men whod had an episode of depression had brains that were less responsive to rewards.

They do not respond naturally when something good happens. This is why its important to treat problems like depression in teens.

(Youth held in solitary for long periods get very depressed.)



The brain's outer layer of cortex plays a critical role in thinking and memory and is thicker in children who got a lot of cognitive stimulation and had nurturing parents.

(There's little cognitive stimulation or nurturing happening in solitary.)

A study showed how much the brain changes during adolescence in regions involved in social interactions.

The results revealed dramatic structural changes during adolescence in four regions that help us understand the intentions, beliefs and desires of others.

(Since there is little social interactions by definition in a solitary environment those held in solitary for long periods must have difficulty with this.)

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2012/10/16/162997951/teenage-brains-are-malleable-and-vulnerable-researchers-say>

I was 9 years old the first time I was held in solitary confinement. I went on to spend at least a month a year until a few months shy of my 18th birthday.

Although for whatever reason I tolerated solitary well one does feel apart of society and lack of hope for a normal future.

I would like to share Edward Bunker's experience from his memoir *Education of a Felon* because it covers so much ground and is quite similar to my older brother's life experience.

First read this for those that think sending the mentally ill to be treated will end their suffering.

Page 20-22:

Pacific Colony was primarily for the mentally retarded, but they took some ninety-day observation cases from the youth authorities. Its one locked ward was the most brutal place I've ever been. Most of my time was spent in the dayroom sitting on the benches. We sat in silence with our arms folded. Any whispering and an attendant might knock you off to the floor. For entertainment, the attendants staged fights between patients.

One favored punishment was pulling the block. The block was a slab of concrete wrapped in layers of an old wool blanket. The blanket-wrapped block was pulled up and down the hall twelve hours a day.

The most brutal punishment was hanging someone by the hands. The miscreant wasn't actually lifted off the floor, but he had to stand on the balls of his feet or let the weight fall on his arms and wrists. After ten minutes it was torture. In fifteen the victim was usually screaming. The attendants preferred old fashioned beatings.

Bunker then goes on to explain in great detail the physical attack on him by staff members that nearly killed him.

The Jabber came in with the shivering energy of a badger. Without a word, he punched me in the face with both hands, short punches from someone accustomed to using his fists. He rocked on the balls of his feet, hands up, leering; I'll teach you to yell, you little scumbag.

I knew fighting back might get me killed.

They could get away with anything. I'd seen brutalities that would never happen in reform school, or even a prison for that matter. This was a hospital. We were patients being cared for.

The Jabber left after that. I pulled the cot away from the wall and began to straighten the blankets.

My door opened again. The Jabber stood there, behind him were a big redheaded attendant and a patient.

This time I punched first. The redheaded attendant got an arm around my neck from the rear and pulled me back.

As the redheaded choked me, the patient goon lifted my feet off the ground. Someone got on the bed and jumped down on my stomach. Someone else smashed a fist into my face six or seven times.

When they left I could barely breathe.

At midnight, when the shift changed, my door opened again and two graveyard-shift attendants came in. The smell of liquor was on his breath. I managed to rise. He knocked me down and kicked me. In his drunken rage he might have kicked me to death if the other attendant had not finally restrained him: Knock it off, Fields. You'll kill him. He's just a kid.

After I was certified as sane they returned me to reform school.

Preston School of Industry an experience both he, my brother and I share:

Page 23: I was sent to Northern California, outside Stockton, to the Preston School of Industry. It was for boys sixteen and seventeen, with a few who were eighteen. I had barely turned fourteen. I was assigned permanently to G Company, a unit with a three-tier cell block. It was dark and gloomy and a carbon copy of a prison cell block.

Page 24: they were not allowed to keep a youth under sixteen in a lockup cell for more than twenty-nine days at a time. So on the thirtieth morning, they took me out of G Company after breakfast. I checked into the regular company and went to lunch. After lunch they took me back to G Company.

L.A. County Jail this assault on a sexual predator while Bunker was still a juvenile in LA county also an experience shared with my older brother:

Page 41: I stared into the thick black steam, holding the toothbrush tight and ignoring the water wetting my pant legs.

Alone in the last shower, he had shampoo in his hair and his face was turned up into the stream of water. His skinny little white body was pitted with acne, his arms covered with blue jailhouse tattoos. He was two steps away, and I hesitated for a moment. When he turned his head, white shampoo foam rolling down, his eyes open and he saw me. His eyes widened, and he started to smile; then he saw the weapon or something in my face. He turned to reach for a towel that had been thrown across the half-wall separating the rows of showers. I was sure it held a weapon. He would have gotten it if he hadn't slipped on the wet floor. One foot shot out, and he went down on one knee.

Before he could recover, I pounced, swinging the toothbrush handle with the protruding razor blade. It got him high on the back, near where the neck begins, and sliced down about six inches before his movement carried him out of the blade's arc. I chopped again, this time so hard that the razor blade snapped and flew away. His ducking plus the force of the blow threw him on his knees with his back to me. He was naked. I was fully clothed. Killer or not, at that moment Billy Cook was at my mercy and he was yelling for help. Naked prisoners were rushing to get out. I jumped on his back, grabbed his hair from the rear, and slammed my fist against the side of his head. Pain shot up my arm, but his cry made it worthwhile, I was soaked with water and blood.

Someone came up behind me. Fingers dug into both cheeks and my eyes and tore me loose, gouging out flesh as I was hauled back.

A few examples of my own experience can be found here:

<http://solitarywatch.com/solitary-voices/in-solitary-at-las-juvenile-hall/>

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