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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2013/09/05/california-prison-hunger-strike-ends-60-days/>

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close

Search

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | September 5, 2013

Update (10:32am): The Pelican Bay Short Corridor Collective have issued a [statement](#) suspending the hunger strike. To be clear, our Peaceful Protest of Resistance to our continuous subjection to decades of systemic state sanctioned torture via the systems solitary confinement units is far from over. Our decision to suspend our third hunger strike in two years does not come lightly, reads the statement. From our perspective, we've gained a lot of positive ground towards achieving our goals. However, there's still much to be done. Our resistance will continue to build and grow until we have won our human rights.

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) released a [statement](#) this morning that all hunger strike participants had resumed eating, ending a two month long hunger strike. 100 hunger strikers were participating as of yesterday afternoon, with 40 on hunger strike the entire 59 days since the launch of the strike. Protesting long-term solitary confinement and sensory deprivation in California's Security Housing Units (SHUs), 30,000 prisoners in 24 prisons across the state and in out-of-state facilities housing CDCR prisoners launched a hunger strike on July 8th.

Following up on two statewide hunger strikes in 2011, the hunger strike focused on the long-term segregation of 3,000 alleged prison gang affiliates for indefinite terms in SHUs at Pelican Bay State Prison, Corcoran State Prison, Tehachapi State Prison, and recently constructed SHU at California State Prison, Sacramento.

The hunger strike was ended following a [meeting](#) of the four main hunger strike leaders and 14 others, representatives of the four main ethnic groups in California prisons, in the prison law library. After a vote to end the hunger strike, leaders were allowed to call leaders of remaining strikers at California State Prison, Sacramento. The hunger strikers there concurred with the decision to end the strike.

Last week, State Senator Loni Hancock and Assemblyman Tom Ammiano announced their intention to hold hearings on SHU policies.

Three days into the hunger strike, strike leaders at Pelican Bay and Corcoran were removed from their cells and isolated from others. All hunger strike participants had sandbags placed at their cell doors. Some had their property seized and all had items purchased from the prison canteen taken from them. Hunger strike participants in the SHU were assessed 60-90 day extensions on their SHU terms.

Two weeks into the strike, Corcoran hunger striker Billy Sell committed suicide within a day of ending his participation. He is the second known death of a hunger striker in the last two years. Christian Gomez died in February 2012 in the Corcoran Administrative Segregation Unit (ASU) one week into his participation in a small-scale hunger strike inspired by the 2011 hunger strikes.

Participants at San Quentin even refused water for periods of time during their hunger strike. Calipatria State Prison hunger strikers had negotiated with the Warden to end participation in exchange for entering informal talks. Reportedly, hunger strikers there received minor concessions, including the installation of pull-up bars.

Several hunger strikers at Pelican Bay and Corcoran were transported to California State Prison, Sacramento, officially because the facility is better suited to treat them. Of concern during the strike was CDCR's obtained court permission to force feed hunger strikers even if they had signed a do not resuscitate order. The medical receivers office has consistently denied that the order was ever used.

Throughout the hunger strike, many were hospitalized, some lost more than 20% of their body-weights, and some had to be sent to community hospitals due to complications from resuming eating.

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 problem is that the officials already know this, and have no desire to make change, unfortunately, and will keep it up as long as the dollars from the incarcerated in isolation keep flowing

Here is an article that shows how social isolation affects our very genes.

I summarized a few of the relative points of the article below:

<http://www.psmag.com/health/the-social-life-of-genes-64616/?src=longreads>

Social isolation is the best-established, most robust social or psychological risk factor for disease out there. Nothing can compete.

Psychologists Gregory Miller and Nicolas Rohleder, found social stress levels in young women predicted changes in their gene activity six months later.

In another study on abused children the Kaufman study found:

That although poverty and poor neighborhoods tend to make people more sensitive to threats in ambiguous social situations, the main thing driving screwy immune responses appears to be whether the child sees the social world as scary.

The lack of a reliable social connection harmed the kids almost as much as the abuse.

A strong social connection can almost completely protect us against the well-known effects of severe abuse and that isolation was almost as toxic as the abuse.

The Kaufman study challenges the conventional Western thinking that social support is a sort of add-on, something extra that might somehow fortify us. Its not. We are naturally social creatures, and have been for eons.

So we move these human beings hundreds or even thousands of miles away from their social supports (families), and into extremely stressful environments, and when they dont get better we isolate them even further.

They should expand these studies to include all new inmates and then do follow ups.

What would they find in these isolation units?

With the numbers that are being incarcerated they would have enough samples to make very firm scientific findings.

My hat goes off to the fine men that peacefully protested their UNJUST and INHUMANE TREATMENT, by participating in the hunger strike, hopefully someone that can do something WILL? If nothing else, I do believe that the powers that be have taken notice and perhaps the American Justice system will check itself and CORRECT the error of its ways? How can our legal system continue to be so FLAWED? And why must human beings have to suffer in such inhumane circumstances?

<http://www.calbettergov.net/signrecallpetgovbrown.html>

Thank you for this update. I heard from my friend after his hospitalization. I do not know if he is still in Pelican Bay, but I do know he had begun to have organ failure, and agreed to treatment. Maybe there were few hearts changed among the officials. But a statement has been made and the public has heard it. I know I will never be able to tell myself that prison = justice and that anyone there deserves the treatment they receive.

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