

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2011/11/19/voices-from-solitary-message-from-the-father-of-a-california-prison-hunger-striker/>

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | November 19, 2011

We received the following letter from the father of a prisoner in the Security Housing Unit at Corcoran State Prison. His son took part in both phases of the California prison hunger strike. He describes the faulty gang validation process that landed his son in the SHU, and the kind of retaliation that has taken place since the strikes. (Names have been withheld to minimize the chances of retaliation against the writer's son.)

My reason for writing this letter is because I have a son who is currently incarcerated at Corcoran State Prison. Let me begin by saying that my son was a part of the hunger strike at Corcoran State Prison, and just last week I received a letter from my son telling me that this hunger strike was even harder than the one in September.

Furthermore, my son was also gang validated for a wrong reason and he, like the other prisoners, is struggling to change the validation policy that the CDC has in place because he believes and I also believe that placing prisoners in the SHU for indeterminate time is very cruel and unusual punishment, especially when the CDC has had these prisoners in the SHU for many years and even decades. The interesting part about this whole ordeal is that these prisoners have not been involved in any serious crimes since they were placed in the SHU. I personally think that many of the prisoners who are currently in the SHU deserve a second chance just like any other person especially if he or she has not had any serious 115s or write-ups.

In my son's case he was placed in the SHU because he had a telephone book with a name of a person, by the name of [common Latino name], and that was it for the person or officer who conducted the investigation to determine that this [common Latino name] whose name appeared on my son's telephone book was the one they had in their database, to come to a conclusion that indeed this is the same person.

Excuse my ignorance, but how in the world can someone make the assumption based on a name that's very common in the Latino and/or in the Mexican community to find someone guilty of association of being involved with the hard core gang members, and to send someone to the SHU for an indeterminate time based on a first name and last name no other information on the phone book. Now, if I had a telephone book with the first name, last name, social security number, date of birth and a prison number, I would have said bingo, the name matches with the database. But in my son's case it was not like that. The officer who found the telephone book with [common Latino name] in it, no other piece of evidence, made the assumption that the above name was the same person that matched their database, and whoever signed the officer's declaration was at fault for fabricating false information or for going along with the officer's declaration without having to do some type of research to confirm the name in question.

One thing I want you to know about me and that is, I'm not a criminologist, but if I was one I would probably be one of the best criminologists in the United States because I can put one and two together without using any common sense. But in my son's validation for association there is something very, very wrong, not with how the investigation took place but rather with the use of the power of authority, for I truly believe that's where the problem is you be the judge.

Also, my son tells me that the CDC or the guards are in a retaliation mode because the prisoners who are waiting to be transferred to the SHU, or I might add the prisoners who are currently in the SHU, are also speaking out about the validation process and/or the policies that are in place by the CDC, with that in mind the CDC doesn't like that! Therefore, the CDC is retaliating against those who were a part of the hunger strike by writing each prisoner who participated in the hunger strike a 115, or in other words a write-up.

The thing about these particular write-ups is that the privileges that were given to the hunger strikers back in September will no longer be in effect because the CDC will take back their privileges for a whole year. As a result of this second hunger strike, the CDC will place the write-ups in the prisoners' file to make the prisoners look awful. Therefore, when the prisoner goes to his or her board hearing it will have a huge impact on whatever decision the board makes, as it relates to his or her release date, because of the write-ups.

According to the CDC director the statewide hunger strike was organized by gang members and associates. I truly believe that the CDC director is full of caca or I might add the English version (shit). If a person who is willing to die or starve himself or herself to death, I truly believe that there is definitely something very wrong with that person or else why would 6000 prisoners want to die again you be the judge

Sincerely,

A Concerned Parent

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 [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 30, 2022

by [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 19, 2022

by [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 6, 2022

Solitary Watch encourages comments and welcomes a range of ideas, opinions, debates, and respectful disagreement. We do not allow name-calling, bullying, cursing, or personal attacks of any kind. Any embedded links should be to information relevant to the conversation. Comments that violate these guidelines will be removed, and repeat offenders will be blocked. Thank you for your cooperation.

Max;

What you miss in your comment is that once a son or daughter reaches majority age, s/he can do whatever s/he pleases. The father who wrote this letter doesn't say how old his son is, or his age when he ran afoul of the law & became incarcerated. As far as role models, that's the parents' job to be good ones for their children. That said, it is NO guarantee that the child(ren) will even respect or acknowledge good role models in parents. What do you make of an 18-y/o girl, daughter of a CPA & an orthopaedic surgeon, becoming a prostitute & drug addict? She had sterling role models for parents, & SHE decided on her own to sell her body & become addicted to cocaine. Her parents had NOTHING to do with that.

My comment is this and it goes to all Fathers. You don't want your Son or Daughter to be in Prison, have them obey the laws and rules. The problem today is we have no Role Models except the Rappers and Protestors! Like Newt says, the best this they can do is Take a Shower and find a job.

How many Veterans Incarcerated suffering from untreated combat Post Traumatic War Disorder? We crucify Christ (Wounded Warriors) afresh and put Christ to an open shame.

Hebrews 6:6

The War Widows

Reblogged this on pastproduction.

Sure seems that wardens can act with impunity when it comes to their fiefdoms called prisons.

Where the review, the oversight, of these decisions?

Has no one ever heard the maxim, Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.

I think there's little doubt that wardens are in a position of absolute power.

If there's evidence to the contrary, bring it on! I want to hear it!

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