

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2014/10/31/voices-from-solitary-the-heaviness-of-blood/>

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by [Voices from Solitary](#) | October 31, 2014

*In 2002, Rob Will was convicted of the murder of a police officer and sentenced to death. The [New York Times](#), among others, has pointed to a lack of physical evidence linking Will to the murder, and he continues to [claim his innocence](#). Will remains on Texas death row, in the Allen B. Polunsky Unit, notorious for its use of extreme solitary confinement. Writing in [Mother Jones](#), Solitary Watch editors Jean Casella and James Ridgeway noted that the men housed in the Polunsky Unit of Texas Death Row are housed in single cells on 22-hour-a-day lockdown, and even during their daily recreation hour, they are confined in separate cages. With no access to phones, televisions, contact visits, they remain in [essentially a concrete tomb](#) until execution day a stretch of at least three years for the mandatory appeals, and far longer if they opt to keep fighting. Some have been [known to commit suicide](#) or waive their appeals rather than continue living under such conditions. In his essay *The Heaviness of Blood*, Will illustrates the ways in which the oppressive and unforgiving environment of solitary creates insanity. Abby Taskier*

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Must the Italians be so very wicked? They have done this all throughout history: created soul-stirring strings music. Music that pulls at ones heartstrings, enhances the emotions with a slight caress, grasps ones deepest feelings and thrusts them into the heavens with the force of Zeus hurling thunderbolts, or smash-smash-smashes emotions into the abysmal depths of hell with the promise of bringing them back up-up-up to the highest heights of deep visceral reflection. There is always beauty to the music but sometimes its a dark beauty, a call to raise ones consciousness to the realm of musical spheres regardless of what else is occurring in ones environment but at the same time it compels one to hyper focus on the emotions at hand. Paganini, Vivaldi, Arcangelo, Corelli, Boccherini, they are all guilty of this and they knew exactly what they were doing in creating such sense enlivening music.

They have been playing many Italian composers recently and right now some Alessandro Scarlatti is on. A light cello concerto is playing but all I can think about is the heaviness of blood. Within the last two weeks, two guys on the pods were gassed and one was taken off the pod, right past my cell, covered in blood. He was in a non-responsive, catatonic state, hacking on himself with a razor when a C.O. [corrections officer] walked by. He was gassed and dragged out of his cell, strapped to a gurney and wheeled off to we couldnt find out but surely either the Psych Unit or the disciplinary pod.

The guy has been here for over a decade and has never been gassed before and never exhibited any form of suicidal behavior and has never engaged in self-mutilation. What happened? What pushed him over the edge? He is usually a very talkative, sociable and gregarious person. No one knows.

The other guy was attacked with riot gas and assaulted with the 37 mm riot control assault rifle in the dayroom. It was early in the morning so most people were asleep and only woke up when gas was deployed, the incident was ending and he was taken away to the F-pod dungeon. What exactly happened? No one knows. Something about an argument with a particularly oppressive and antagonistic C.O. who then lied to the Lt. and Sgt. The SWAT team arrived and the guy just stood there, perplexed, as he was attacked. He has been here years and has never been gassed before. He has never been aggressive with staff members and he wasnt that day. No one really knows what happened.

Incidents like this are all too common in this environment. They happen consistently and this takes a heavy toll on the minds of those involved both directly and indirectly. Picture this: Im in my cell with my headphones halfway on, listening to some nice music and standing at my door talking to my neighbor about painting techniques. Someone yells out, They just gassed T!

Huh? What? Whats going on? Another person yells out, Now theyre dragging him out of his cell and hes all bloody.

This dramatically jars the psyche and causes one to hyper focus at the incident at hand. Everyone tries to figure out what happened. No one can. Its an enigma, a frightening enigma. A thousand possible explanations are thrown out and bounced around, everyone hoping for some form of answer. There is none. This absolutely terrorizes the human psyche.

Then the avoidance sets in. No one wants to talk or think about it. Everyone silently hopes that they wont be the next victim of this twisted, unforgiving environment and then another insane gassing incident happens a few days later Again and again and again. At any

given moment, on any given day, insanity can erupt. Tear gas and blood. SWAT teams and screams of the insane.

The Germans have tried but theyve always lagged behind the Italians concerning strings music-with exception of J. S. Bach perhaps and Mozart is alright. His violin concerto No. 1 is on right now. Not moving enough to caress deep emotion from within me but this is good music to meditate to and try to get the image of yet another bloody body being dragged past my cell out of my mind

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Voices from Solitary

The Voices from Solitary series publishes dispatches from people surviving the lived experience of solitary confinement.

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by [Voices from Solitary](#)

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by [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 6, 2022

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Rob,
You mentioned this individual never having been in a position that caused him being gassed. Referring to Thomas Whitaker??

It's time to start caring about the innocent blood that America sheds daily, all for the love of JUSTICE.

P.O. Box 11374
Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

Solitary Watch

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