

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2018/01/15/voices-from-solitary-prison-staff-tried-to-get-me-to-betray-a-friend-using-isolation-and-intimidation/>

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by [Voices from Solitary](#) | January 15, 2018

The following account is written by Daniel Holland, who is serving a sentence of life without parole in Massachusetts at MCI Norfolk prison. After eight years of good behavior, he had earned the privilege of a single cell. But his clean disciplinary record was broken when he was placed in solitary confinement after being interrogated and accused of misconduct, which he claims was completely invented by prison officers. His time in solitary, he writes, affected him psychologically, and also disrupted his attempts to make the most of his life in prison through work and other positive pursuits.

The real reason behind the mistreatment and isolation, according to Holland, was an attempt to coerce him to inform on his friend [Timothy Muise](#), a [whistleblower](#) on prison abuse and corruption who had become a thorn in the side of the Massachusetts Department of Corrections. Muise, who was just recently released from prison, also spent time in solitary for his prisoners rights advocacy, as [documented by Solitary Watch](#). The use of solitary confinement as a coercive measure to get incarcerated people to inform on others is far from unusual, even though it often violates prison systems own policies. Valerie Kiebala

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The whole thing started when Inner Perimeter Security (IPS), an internal affairs unit charged with making sure the inner and outer parts of the prison are secure, locked up another inmate for having some sort of contraband in his cell. We will call him inmate B. He worked in the Maintenance Department in Prison Industries. B was sent to the hole and the following day, the IPS searched the Maintenance Department, including my area and shared computer. There was nothing on the computer linked to me. About a week later, while B was locked up, the IPS came and searched my cell while I was at work. The search was conducted for a couple of hours and every piece of paper was gone through and electrical boxes the structures on the wall that encase outlets were removed and searched.

At this point, I figured B was trying to get out of his own predicament whatever that was by putting the blame on me, especially since we were the only two in that department who had their cells searched.

I was working when they came to my cell. My supervisor told me that I was to report to the AD gate (Administrative Building Gate/Door). The only reason you are called to the AD gate is to meet an attorney, to get bad news, or because you are in trouble. I did not think I was in trouble.

At the AD gate, an IPS officer met me and brought me to an upstairs office. Once I was inside, he covered the windows. He showed me a photo of my work area and asked if I knew why I was there. I answered no. He asked if I recognized the photo of my work area. I answered yes. He said they had found illicit information on my computer and in my cell. I explained that I have never used the computer for any other reason than work. The IPS officer became very aggressive and berated me, calling me a liar. He said that this was serious and that I was going to lose my single cell (that took me 8 years of good behavior to obtain), along with my job, and that I was going to be reclassified and sent to the maximum-security prison in Shirley.

The IPS officer was shuffling a pile of papers in front of me and I saw an image of a panda bear among them. The panda bear image was similar to one on a piece of scrap paper I had used. I explained that the only thing in my cell that could be related to that computer was a piece of scrap paper with the picture of a panda bear sitting on top of a 2018 March calendar, which was in the scrap paper pile. I explained that it was clearly scrap paper and if he looked on the back, he would see that I had made a list of items I intended to order generic ambient at Costco when I got back to my housing unit (i.e. toothpaste, shampoo, coffee, etc.)

After more threats, I was moved from the office to a holding cell where the interrogation continued, as well as the verbal abuse. At this point, he said they were aware that I am a friend of Tim Muise and they do not want me, they want him. They said that if I gave them information, this would all go away. I would keep my single cell, my job, and stay at Norfolk. They told me that I was just a small fish in a big pond. They did not want me. They said it could all go away with a slap on the wrist. They asked me questions about Muise's blog and said that they had received information that I spent considerable amounts of time creating documents on the work computer. When it became clear that I was getting nowhere with this guy, I began to shut down and stopped trying to explain. He continued to ask me

questions about drugs, staff smuggling drugs, etc. He said if I could provide something, this would all go away, and I could go back to work and back to my cell.

Then I was moved down to another holding cell in the basement. There was no one there and I figured I was going to get beaten up, given the aggressive attitude of this IPS officer. He told me this was my last chance to give him something. I took the fact of these threats being made in booking, where inmates are put before they are shipped out of the camp, as some sort of psychological tactic. I was moved to yet another cell, where I was cuffed and shackled and taken to solitary confinement.

The course of this interrogation and movement to different parts of the prison took about two hours.

When I was in solitary, the officers there could not tell me exactly why I was there or for how long I would be there. I asked to see someone in charge, a lieutenant. I was moved to the solitary confinement holding cell where the same IPS Officer continued to berate me, saying that they found serious contraband in my cell and that I must start talking. I respectfully explained I would no longer talk to him. I stood there as the IPS officer proceeded to yell and threaten me for another 5 to 10 minutes. He left stating that he was going to arrange for my transfer to the maximum-security prison.

As far as what they were looking for, I believe they were looking for anything they could get on Timmy. Then, they decided to continue with the threats and see if I knew anything about drugs, which is a situation that is out of control here. Tims blog is the scourge of the DOC, and for little other reason than because it is the truth and they just do not know what to do.

To complicate matters, while in solitary confinement, I was deemed to be on a hunger strike. I was physically sick and unable to hold anything down. I continued to explain this, but I was moved to a hospital unit for a hunger strike though I never made any demands and continued to tell everyone that I was throwing up.

Also, the punishment continues, for an infraction that does not even call for solitary. For this reason, I am still not able to work. I received a category 4 ticket the most minor. Even with a category 3 a more severe ticket you must wait 6 months to be able to get a job. I have been forced to wait over 10 months now and continue to get the run-around with my job and cell status. It is one thing to get thrown in the can for something you did, but there is another psychological element when you are tortured for something you did not do, or is so inconsequential that it is almost comical. I do not mean to sound trivial I know there are guys doing years for less but the whole thing is not right.

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

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

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Dignity under fire is an acquired art, and I am so sorry that our society has failed you so profoundly. Please know there are those in the world who hear your voice and honor your story, and who are working to change the system for the better. While I can imagine that this is small comfort, I hope it reaches you!

I agree with you that this is pretty ridiculous and shocking. It is unfortunately likely all too common. This is the kind of thing that you would expect from..you know..brutal dictatorships who don't care about human rights and decency. It is not exactly a stellar example of what we stand for here in the land of the free and home of the brave.

But I really admire your sense of decency and humanity in not just making up stuff to tell staff about your peer to get him in trouble and protect yourself. That is hard to do under that kind of forceful pressure and intimidation and I am sure many people would respect you for that. I hope your situation will improve as no one deserves to be isolated from others, and in your particular case, it sounds unusually frustrating and nonsensical.

Do you have lawyers who can help Daniel Holland? Is there any way you can stop his intimidation and punishment for something he did not do?

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