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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/10/25/i-write-read-cry-sleep-and-beg-for-death-life-in-utahs-uinta-1-supermax/>

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | October 25, 2012

I write, read, cry, sleep and beg for death.

That is how fifty-six-year-old inmate J., in Utah State Prison, Drapers Uinta 1 facility describes life in Utahs isolation units, which houses the states death row prisoners in addition to inmates placed there for disciplinary issues.

J. has spent six years in Uinta 1, a place he calls a place of pain and terror. Describing his very ugly cell as twelve by six feet, he says that with the protrusions by the joke bed concrete slab and toilet, he cant walk. There is no prospect for either repair nor suitable sanitation.

J. writes that his biggest struggle in Uinta 1 is the daily, round the clock victimization. His experience, a physical, mental, emotional and spiritual horror. J. is described by a fellow inmate in Uinta 1 as a very religious man, who is able to sing almost any oldie song beautifully.

According to one inmate, correctional guards once taunted J., calling him a worthless piece of shit demon.

J., an Air Force veteran who dedicated himself to Mormonism following a 1977 suicide attempt, has been in Uinta 1 for over 5 years. Ive had no clothing to wear since they stole my sweat pants bottoms in 2005, he says.

He refuses to file grievances, he says, because Chapter 13 of Deuteronomy precludes even the suggestion. Because I maintain my honor I am made a unique target. Do what you want to him. He cant file grievances! They laugh, and laugh, and laugh.

J. has attempted suicide while in Uinta 1, and has been repeatedly moved back and forth between Uinta 1 and the prisons mental health unit, called Olympus. His refusal to obey orders from the guards and his psychological state, keeps him perpetually isolated. Sentenced to a term of three years to life in prison on a conspiracy to commit rape charge for marrying his teenage daughter to an adult man, he believes that he will spend the rest of his life in prison. And for him, that likely means a lifetime in solitary confinement.

Uinta 1 is divided into 8 sections, each with 12 cells. As of this writing, there are 90 inmates in isolation. The unit is always at or near its 96-inmate capacity. According to the Department of Corrections, the period of time any one inmate remains on admin segregation or disciplinary segregation varies drastically based on their individual case.

The Corrections spokesman went on to state that the minimum an offender would have the opportunity to come out of his cell is approximately 3 hours per week.

In addition, those housed on admin segregation and disciplinary segregation are seen periodically by housing and security officials as well as their caseworker for a discussion about their current status and to determine whether that classification needs to continue or can be lifted based on their progress.

A Government Records Access and Management Act information request yielded a letter claiming that the Utah DOC does not maintain records pertaining to how many inmates are classified as segregated, nor anything pertaining to costs.

At Uinta 1, however, the reports from inmates are consistently bleak.

Inmate S. has spent over seven years in isolation, and has written that like dogs in a kennel we are isolated and kept in individual cells twenty-four hours a day, fed half-rotten food and subject to every kind of psychological, social, verbal dehumanization known to man.

S. has been held in isolation for his protection due to his status as a sex offender. However, he believes that his time in Uinta 1 amounts to torture. When you are subject to dehumanization of any kind it is a form of torture. Torture is a criminal activity. It doesnt matter whether the victim is a convict, civilian or cop. Torture is unacceptable. If you felt that my crime was irredeemable, society, you shouldve just executed me. Keeping me in here like this, you might as well have.

Among the other Uinta 1 inmates is 76-year old D., who has been in Uinta 1 since 2001 following a disciplinary write-up. He reports he

spends his time in his 612 cell working out every other day in the hope that I may be able to live until 2060, at which time the U.S. is supposed to have a new plane that makes no noise and can fly real low to the ground and is shaped like a cigar, with no wings.

D. has been reported by another inmate to throw things around his cell and groan; he is often frustrated by body cramps.

In correspondences with Solitary Watch, he would meticulously copy the indexes of books and count every line he had written something on.

The conditions of Utahs Uinta 1 facility have received little attention over the years. Recently, the Salt Lake City magazine *City Weekly* featured a [Cover Story](#) on the isolation of inmates with mental health issues in Uinta 1. As happened with Solitary Watchs official records requests, the Utah DOC claimed not to have access to information regarding the prevalence of mental health issues in Uinta 1.

Solitary Watch will continue to report on the situation in Uinta 1.

Sal Rodriguez was Solitary Watchs 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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This article may have been written almost three years ago but nothing has changed and it could have been written today. Why has this been allowed to continue. <http://mynameisjamie.net> Jamie Cummings, in ad seg in a different prison, but the conditions are the same.

Utahs understanding of the law, and, as I understand it, violating the prisoners in maxs 8th amendment in most cases.

I presently have a Cousin who has lived in these quarters for 6 or 7 yrs.. for his protection.. not because he is a problem in the system there. The same sysytem who decided he was guilty without evidence or any dna..

He recently suffered a major heart attack, which he was not able to get care for, for approx 16 hrs.. when he finally passed out. The attack was most likely because of medication being stopped abruptly, Prison Dr said he couldnt have it.. he now only has 35% of his heart functioning.

With his medication he was stable and had been moved for the first time out, where he functioned very well and was working in the kitchen.

He spent 9 days in the hospital recovering form the attack, and when he was returned, they returned him to max, and again, no priveledges that he had earned.

He has been back there for 2 weeks, begs to see the Dr NONE come to see him. The Dr. at the prison threw away the many prescriptions the hospital sent him back with, saying he didnt need them!

He needs medical care, including a heart transplant which he cannot receive while in the State prison. They ignore him.

I might add, he has passed on his parole meetings, as going there you have to admit guilt and what you have done to change.. its the only ticket to a parole.

He refuses to admit guilt of any kind so he has sat in max and endured the torture there for entirely too long!

The Prison Director does not return calls to the family, but then, they didnt notify the family of the attack until weeks later either.

Who can help???

Whenever I read about the validation process Im reminded of story lines in pop culture such as those found in films Anger Management, One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest, or American Horror Story-Asylum. Where disproving the claims of authorities are near impossible to accomplish and failing to do so means tragic outcomes. Coincidentally I read about the study below on NPR right after reading SWs story.

In 1973 David Rosenhan published in the journal Science an experiment under the title On being sane in insane places. Rosenhans study was done in two parts. The first part involved the use of healthy associates or pseudopatients (three women and five men) who briefly simulated auditory hallucinations in an attempt to gain admission to 12 different psychiatric hospitals in five different states in various locations in the United States. All were admitted and diagnosed with psychiatric disorders. After admission, the pseudopatients acted normally and told staff that they felt fine and had not experienced any more hallucinations. All were forced to admit to having a mental illness and agree to take antipsychotic drugs as a condition of their release. The average time that the clients spent in the hospital was 19 days. All but one were diagnosed with schizophrenia in remission before their release. The second part of his study involved an offended

hospital challenging Rosenhan to send pseudopatients to its facility, whom its staff would then detect. Rosenhan agreed and in the following weeks out of 193 new patients the staff identified 41 as potential pseudopatients, with 19 of these receiving suspicion from at least 1 psychiatrist and 1 other staff member. In fact Rosenhan had sent no one to the hospital.

The pseudopatients were required to get out of the hospital on their own by getting the hospital to release them, though a lawyer was retained to be on call for emergencies when it became clear that the pseudopatients would not ever be voluntarily released on short notice. Once admitted and diagnosed, the pseudopatients were not able to obtain their release until they agreed with the psychiatrists that they were mentally ill and began taking antipsychotic medications, which they flushed down the toilet. No staff member noticed that the pseudopatients were flushing their medication down the toilets and did not report patients doing this.

Rosenhan and the other pseudopatients reported an overwhelming sense of dehumanization, severe invasion of privacy, and boredom while hospitalized. Their possessions were searched randomly, and they were sometimes observed while using the toilet. They reported that though the staff seemed to be well-meaning, they generally objectified and dehumanized the patients, often discussing patients at length in their presence as though they were not there, and avoiding direct interaction with patients except as strictly necessary to perform official duties. Some attendants were prone to verbal and physical abuse of patients when other staff were not present. A group of bored patients waiting outside the cafeteria for lunch early were said by a doctor to his students to be experiencing oral-acquisitive psychiatric symptoms. Contact with doctors averaged 6.8 minutes per day.

I told friends, I told my family, I can get out when I can get out. That's all. Ill be there for a couple of days and Ill get out. Nobody knew Id be there for two months The only way out was to point out that theyre [the psychiatrists] correct. They had said I was insane, I am insane; but I am getting better. That was an affirmation of their view of me. David Rosenhan in theBBC program The Trap.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosenhan_experiment

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