

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/05/25/voices-from-solitary-a-lose-lose-situation/>

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by [Voices from Solitary](#) | May 25, 2012

The following was written by Pelican Bay SHU prisoner Paul Sangu Jones. Jones has been incarcerated since 1969, when he was 20 years old. Sentenced 7-years-to-life, he has been in the SHU since 1988, a situation he refers to as a state of limbo. Jones wrote of his extensive incarceration, At the time many of us were incarcerated, 30 plus years ago, we were irrational and immature young men who had lived our adolescent and limited adult years based on the indoctrination of living by our own personal codes as learned from a criminally-oriented environment. Now after 30 and 40 plus years of self-reflection and self-criticism, we are fully aware of the incorrectness of such a life style Weve learned that responsibility is an inescapable burden of manhood and we had ours, which our conscience will not let us ignore. Our continued imprisonment serves no constructive purpose as it is only inflicting more pain and suffering of a physical as well as mental nature.

In this piece, Jones shares his views of the recently announced Step Down Program announced by the CDCR in the spring. Sal Rodriguez

Personality is mysterious, but its born in you, not made. But it can be brainwashed.

The secret to surviving isolation is not found in seeking more, but in developing the capacity to enjoy less. One learns the wisdom of silence. Prisoners are the people least empowered to advocate for their own safety how the horror of yesterday became merely the uneasiness of today once you grew accustomed. No one wants any complications in their lives.

Perception being what it is, caring seems to have faded with events. What is supposed to be corrective and rehabilitative prison is in reality far from that. Why call it justice system, there seems so little of that they are more concerned about the perception they convey. In the grand scheme of things perception is all that mattered.

The division of the administrations apparatuses into separate fiefdoms has rendered the Institutional Classification Committee (ICC) utterly dysfunctional. Under such circumstances, it is increasingly doubtful that ICC would be able to act as an effective and responsible committee in any case involving a prisoner put through the four-phase step down program.

The difficulty for Short Corridor Prisoners is not the fact that we find ourselves under pressure, still, to debrief and become an informant for the state; it is the fact that none of the options under consideration are an easy option that promises to deliver any concrete positive results on the prisoners behalf.

It is far too late now to alter the situation radically with this so-call step down program; that is nothing more than a thin disguise for their six year inactive status program reduced to four years. Policies executed by CDCR will always be intended to preserve and increase the exploitative and repressive powers of their agencies: a policy shift is simply a shift to a new strategy in pursuit of that goal.

Now that we have read their proposal for the SDP it has become increasingly clear to SHU Short Corridor prisoners that escalating intervention by Officers of Correctional Safety and IGI will render our attempts for release to general population futile.

In a nutshell, all the options available to Short Corridor SHU prisoners are fraught with unwanted side-effects and uncertainty. To us, the four-phase proposal is a lose-lose situation.

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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.

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In short, the system is demonic, wolf-in-sheeps-clothing.

As long as a debrief is mandatory, the program will not work and the consequences are more protective custody prisoners because they turned their backs on their gangs, whether they said anything or not, they will not be forgiven for turning on their own and can never go back to a GP yard while alive. Once released, they will have to look over their shoulders day and night or be killed. Such is the code of this business. The CDCR knows this and thus offered them nothing in return

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