

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2013/01/11/brandon-green-chronicler-of-solitary-confinement/>

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | January 11, 2013

Since first appearing in an [October 16th, 2010](#) Voices from Solitary post, Utah State Prison, Draper, prisoner Brandon Green has been a consistent and prolific chronicler of [the vortex](#) that is the supermax Uinta One facility. Over 90 inmates are held in solitary confinement in the facility, where inmates are held in 86 cells for up to 24 hours a day. Inmates may be placed in the facility for protection (voluntary and involuntary) or as punishment for rules violations. Most are not allowed phone calls or visitations, and reading materials are restricted. The facility has been described as a place of [pain and terror](#), with one inmate [commenting](#) no wonder there are so many suicides.

Brandon Green, 30, born and raised in Utah, has been in and out of prisons, and solitary confinement, for a decade. In 2003, he was arrested for driving a stolen truck. In an [essay](#) published on a blog operated by a supporter, he writes of his entrance into the world of solitary confinement: 115 Lbs, sick and coming off a two year crack addiction, you had to fight to stay unmolested and alive. The prison sends you to solitary confinement for fighting.

For eleven months he served time in prison, much of which was in solitary confinement. His time in isolation would have a profoundly negative effect on him. Writing, While in solitary you developed these fears, this hate, this animal-like emotion. You learned about needles from a neighbor and psychotropic medications from another neighbor. You start to shoot cocaine and methamphetamine at home. Your mom starts you on medication. You drive 400 miles, up and back, to Las Vegas every two days to keep your dope supply up and the money supply up by selling.

Being rearrested, he was incarcerated for 18 months, much of which was in solitary. Sent to a half-way house upon release, due to the stress after all that solitary he was rearrested and served two additional months before being released. In 2006, he was turned in by his mother following a resumption of involvement in criminal activity, and was arrested while driving back to Utah from Las Vegas. Upon being arrested, and not wanting to come back to solitary, he slipped his handcuffs and reached for the shotgun in the vehicle, prompting a swift response by officers. While in jail he pulled sprinklers to flood his cell, engaged in self-harm, and threw feces. He was forcibly medicated for a month while in a strip cell following a suicide attempt.

Following a stint in Utah State Prison, Drapers Olympus facility, the prisons mental health facility, Green became a productive prisoner. Receiving his GED, completing courses for substance abuse, computer literacy, financial literacy, anger management, thinking for a change, he routinely lifted weights and worked a job as a food server for two years, Green felt that he was making significant progress. However, in 2008, the prison took everybodys jobs and closes the gym at the same time you graduate. Youre fucked. You cant lift weights. You started with the needles. With the heroin. Your arm swells up the size of your leg from an infection and you contract Hepatitis-C. Another stroke. Your backs blown out from too big a stomach and too many squats in the weight room. Your arms veins collapse. Your heart and brain hurt because of the infection and the loss of vein. You decide to jump the fence. Either theyll shoot you or you can escape. Dumb idea. Back to solitary.

In essays submitted to Solitary Watch, Green has expressed considerable frustration at his predicament. Since 2008, he has been in solitary confinement. Aside from the escape attempt, he has remained in solitary confinement for refusing psychiatric drugs for a protected. As other inmates in the facility have indicated, mental health treatment for inmates in solitary amounts to a detached, seconds long inquiry of How are you doing? The label of being deemed mentally ill due to a history of self-harm and suicide attempts, and the perceived legitimacy of such labels, he argues, is oppressive. The worst is having my own mother, brother, sister, grandma, aunts, cousins, everyone hold me down and chase me down and bring me down into the needles reach. Telling me I need it. Leaving me when I refuse it. Dangling themselves before me saying if Ill only submit to poison, torture, death, theyll be there. If not Bye Bye Son. You dont exist anymore.'

He spends virtually all of his time in his small cell. He refuses to leave his cell to take showers, preferring to use his sink for bathing, due to the requirement that his face be covered with a spit mask, and that along with the arm and leg shackles a dog-leash attached to him. Aside from periodic transfers to different cells and having blood drawn to monitor his Hepatitis-C (for which he receives no medical services), he spends his time in his small cell. When he isnt working out (traded drugs for pushups), reading and writing, he meticulously cleans his cell. Outside of all of Uinta Ones cell doors are sandbags the prison set up to prevent flooding. As a consequence, small bugs regularly infest the bags and invade his cell.

When I write these things. This hurt, anger, and despair because of a UN outlawed institution. When I write and people read it it just makes them happier to have taken the time out of their busy lives to listen. Just listening makes them feel like they've done something. Like they've contributed. Like they are progressive.

Currently awaiting a parole hearing in spring 2013, Brandon Green has filed three lawsuits against Utah prison officials, challenging, respectively, prison censorship, torture, and medical malpractice. He writes more about them [here](#).

The following is an essay written by Brandon Green that expands on the complex relationship between Green and the experience of solitary confinement.

Countdown

Another similitude could be the two week drunk passed out with a lot of bile and alcohol just sitting in his stomach. A good friend dies so he locks himself in a room and drinks himself to death with a Whiskey Lullaby. Someone would have to come and slap his face real hard a couple times. To pour cold water on him. And accept his verbal abuse. Get him to sit up so his body can vomit the alcohol bile out of his stomach. Wash him and feed him.

Solitary becomes that after years. Yet no ones coming around to slap you here. Everything and everyone just adds to the bile. And each day its like another good friend dies. Most times in reality people do die.

My grandma writes. But only with bad news. Last time I was denied parole in 2010 I told her her job would be worse than mine. All I have to do is hold up to the bad news she sends. She has to send it.

You hear about soldiers in wars who complete their tours and return to society feeling as if life's not enjoyable or exciting enough. So they go back for another tour. Until they are killed. Our war is this place and we feel less when our tours are up. We keep coming back until we die. A kidnapped victim learns to love his/her kidnapper. That's another similitude. We love this pain.

There has always been willing participants for drug trials, for air flight testing, for space expeditions, for deep sea submarines dangerous occupations. Once a person is used to that lifestyle, nothing else compares.

I know how fucked up it sounds compared to torture to the above examples. But the very first 24 hours a person spends like this. In solitary. So alone. So much internal turbulence with nothing like TV, radio, magazines or conversation to hide it beneath. But I've seen it. I experience it. A man leaves this place to go to general population or to a less secure facility where you have electronics and a cellie. You can just count down the moths before he will return. T-minus nine, eight

And the first thing one feels is Whew, I'm back. I missed it. I love solitary. He broke his cellie's jaw with an elbow. To measure if he carried over some violence from solitary into that situation. Or he learned to employ violence just to come back. It's a countdown.

Certain people cry and do anything to get out of here. Certain people die just to stay here. I think it is the willpower involved to maintain your sanity in solitary. Every fiber of your being must focus on staying OK through the hours, days, years. And then to be removed into a place that supplies enough OK vibes to get you through, you come to miss your particular brand of OK. This ties into me only wanting to hear my songs I have in my head. Me wanting to not listen to others way of thinking because it's silly or less deep.

We become just a solitary willpower not wanting to go crazy. And we discover that all the bullshit we used to employ as a distraction to ourselves, to pain, to reflection, to hurt the mainstream activities are just so petty, trivial and above all unnecessary. We learn we can do without everything. Without anything. And we become content with nothing.

The more they take away from us year after year, the more family disappears, the more one doesn't want to go home, doesn't want a wife and a job and bills and an American future. It is like waiting for the world to give us a reason to live. But the world just keeps giving us reasons to not give a shit.

Years ago indigent captives received five envelopes a week. Now it's one. We had five outside contacts a week. Now one. We used to be fed enough to stay full. Now we are starved. We used to have shampoo and lotion. Now we don't. We grumble for an hour each time something is taken from us. Then move right along to inventing the creative willpower to survive with no penpals and mail, a full stomach or clean hair. Moving right along. We expect tragedy.

Sal Rodriguez was Solitary Watch's 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 [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 30, 2022

by [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 19, 2022

by [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 6, 2022

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Thank you for sharing this. I hope Brandon gets the help he needs after he's out.

Thank you for sharing Brandon's writing and thank you for your article. I am a Sociology student, doing research from my home office and have never been involved in corrections from either side, staff or inmate. I find this to be a window into the emotions that continue to flow when everything in your life has been taken from you. I do not find Brandon to be whining. I read his essay and find it excellent. We are emotional beings and whether someone is right or wrong, guilty or innocent, they are human and deserve basic respect, needs, and desires. Filling our prisons full of criminals of victimless crimes or non-violent/drug offenses and conditioning them and subjecting them along with hardened criminals in the same manner is never going to have positive outcomes or decrease recidivism. I hope that someday we can get some of this right and find a way to truly change people's lives and keep them out of prison. @Dan Stacks, I am going to try and find info on what you are saying about the stock worth of each prisoner. That is disgusting.

All prisoners come out better people? ?? What are you retarded?? 75+% of people who are released end up back in prison sometimes even those who were wrongfully accused and the other half are proud. They brag and think it's cool they were in jail and just cause they're out they can do whatever the fuck they want to. Prison wasn't designed to rehabilitate people it was designed to trap people in the system make them mentally unstable so they can recirculate them through their system this is why guards abuse prisoners and deny them off their medical rights and treatments. It's a business just as everything else in this country. People who think it costs money for prisoners to be in jail should be re-educated prisoners are stocks they are traded they're profitable they are technically purchased slaves bought by big banks and treated like baseball cards. Hell I don't remember where it is but you can actually look up the stock worth of every prisoner. Wake up people were all prisoners and our cells are getting smaller and smaller everyday until we fight and take this country our freedom and our justice back

I have worked with Brandon for many years and have seen many daily logs of what he and others in Unit A endure. Trying to overcome the abuses by guards and administration has been frustrating. Keep up the fight to right these wrongs to help ALL prisoners come out better people.

Please help. This is the first time my adult son has been in jail. He violated a rule from his drug court. Never a serious crime was committed. He has a mental illness and is on disability. He was supposed to be there for one week. That was on Dec. 7. He is now in solitary confinement (2nd time). They keep postponing his release for unknown reasons. It's all so confusing and maddening. What can I do to help? Upstate NY.

I correspond with Brandon since a few years. I disagree with the notion he needs to grow up, since he has done his best in my views (maybe it does not show in this article) that he has raised himself from being addicted to becoming a conscious person inside a very bad prison that does not allow me to send in any books or copies of books, he has not heard music in years; he has not seen a TV in years; he has not been allowed to telephone someone for years; he has not been allowed any visits in years; he has been among people (many of whom are or become mentally ill) who are treated equally bad, and at his own risk he chose to speak out about the situation they are in (not only he himself, but they all inside the unit he was in). I have seen a long affidavit he wrote about the abuses against many others. Therefore he should be seen as someone who has done all he could to change the bad situation they all are in.

I am involved with several groups in New York City fighting to end solitary confinement at Rikers Island. I also write inmates in Green Bay Wisconsin prisons and Pelican Bay California prisons. The inmates who continue to fight the system are occupied with reading, painting, what's going on in the world, politics and a spiritual or religious life. Others are so beaten down they have ended the struggle and are no longer able or willing to fight the system. I do research and direct my efforts to involving political parties to actively oppose the failed criminal justice system whereby after five years of release leads you back to jail 66 percent of the time. The system fails correction officers. Their life expectancy is 59 years versus 77 for the average citizen, due to stress, multiple shifts, forced overtime leading to failed marriages, heavy drinking, high turnover rates for officers and if an officer is not sadistic he gets other officers on his case. Correction officers who are really correction officers deserve our respect. Bully, sadistic, violent guards don't deserve our respect and should be made to leave this occupation. allanfeinblum@aol.com

Tim Hurley is extremely abusive, demeaning and disrespectful to Brandon. This is such a disgusting comment posted. It's people like Tim that just perpetuate the problems of society in and out of prison, as if condoning the poor behavior of employees of the correctional system and the lack of responsibility they should be accountable to the public for! We the people!

We need people's minds to reform for the better, not tearing another human down or apart!

Yes, Tim you grow up, stop the abusive name calling and help make accountable those who are also abusive in the sick system, and society that acts like it's fine to do so. Or is that too much to ask of you all?

I'm a returning citizen. Having been locked up in prison twice, I can attest to Brandon's depiction of prison and the lack of medical care. As far as Brandon goes, the guy has the untreated disease of addiction. I was not moved by his writing. Painting yourself as a victim never engenders any real change or redemption. I'd suggest he quit whining like a little bitch, take responsibility for the mess he's made of his life and grow up.

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