

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2015/04/16/voices-from-solitary-the-safari-from-pelikkkan-bay/>

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by [Voices from Solitary](#) | April 16, 2015

*Kijana Tashiri Askari has been in solitary confinement since 1994 after he was validated as a member of the Black Guerrilla Family. Until recently in Californias prisons, people who were validated as gang members were sentenced to indeterminate stays in the Security Housing Unit (SHU), where they spent nearly 24 hours in windowless cells. In 2012, following two hunger strikes in 2011, CDCR introduced its [Step Down program](#), in which people who had previously been validated as members of prison gangs or Security Threat Groups could ostensibly work their way out of the SHU and into general population. As [reported previously in Solitary Watch](#), there has been some reduction in the number of people in the SHU statewide, although the numbers in Pelican Bay have risen between 2012 and 2014. In this piece, Askari describes his transfer from one supermax prison to another and his first taste in 20 years of the world outside prison walls. He can be reached at: Kijana Tashiri Askari, s/n Marcus Harrison #H54077, PO Box 3476, 4B1L #31/Step-4, Corcoran, CA 93212-3476. Victoria Law*

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On January 29, 2015, my quest of travel began with a wake-up call at 2:20 am, where I was told to be ready in 30 minutes by the first watch unit officer. Myself and a total of 17 prisoners were *all* rounded up like chattel slaves and placed in the C-facility SHU visiting room holding cells till we boarded the bus at 6 am. In hitting the highway, my sensibilities immediately went through the whirlwind cycle of shock and awe via the vivid reminder of what freedom used to entail. I mean think about it, were talking about 20 years of being entombed in Pelikkkan Bays torture chambers without any environmental stimulation or human contact!! So just imagine how my sense voraciously feasted upon: the sight of cows and horses parlaying in the open fields; the sight of the oceans waters roaring and brushing up against the elements of Motha Earth; the sight of enormous mountains and trees, along with green grass and birds flying in the clear blue sky as free as they wanna be!! The sight of social activity, in seeing other human beings exercising, walking, driving their cars, and doing everything they wanted to do simply because they were free!!

To my surprise, it got better!! We had a one-hour layover at San Quentin and times definitely have changed since I was last there in the late 80s and early 90s. San Quentins lower yard now has tennis courts?! And theyve completely remodeled the receiving and release (r&r) building.

As we left San Quentin, I was reminded of the old saying: That some gifts just keep on giving. As I was able to take in the sights of the historic landmarks of the new Bay Bridge extension, the Golden Gate and San Rafael bridges, the BART train, and part of my hometown in West Oakland, California, via the West MacArthur Maze Freeway. While not a religious person, I thought I had died and gone to heaven. Because as a person serving a life sentence, I never wouldve believed that the good fortunes of seeing home would come to fruition in my lifetime ever again.

The safari from Pelikkkan Bay continued while awaiting transfer to Corcoran SHU per Step 4 status of the Step Down program (SDP) in the Administrative Segregation Unit (Ad Seg) at Deuel Vocational Institution (DVI)-Tracy State Prison (slave kamp) via the now standard week-long layover. The only good things about DVI were:

1. The food is prepared with seasoning and taste a whole lot better, and they still issue real jelly and syrup unlike Pelikkkan Bay;
2. You finally see prison guards of color (Afrikans/Mexicans) who treat you fairly decent; and
3. Theyve upgraded the r&r holding cell area with top-of-the-line flat screen TVs where theyve showed us quality grown folk movies that just came out, which is a complete 360<sup>[1]</sup> from the kindergarten flicks shown at Pelikkkan Bay.

However, the living conditions in the Ad Seg unit of L-Wing are outright deplorable, filthy and disgusting. The cell sinks are broken with holes in them and the drinking water is brown!! Its like drinking water from a water hole in an underdeveloped country!! And you know the water is compromised when the prison guards are walking around with bottles of drinking water for themselves and when your soap doesnt even lather up during showers. Every environmental water agency needs to be notified about this so that it can be investigated and corrected ASAP!! There is no telling what level of contaminants these prisoners are being forced to drink?!

On February 3, 2015, we were back on the road and for the first time in 20 years, I had the pleasure of seeing the sun rise!! The script couldn't have played out any better, until the rude awakening of my arrival to the Corcoran Slave Planation, my new internment kamp for the next foreseeable years via indefinite SHU status.

Unfortunately, we had a New Afrikan of the Damu tribe lose his discipline as he fell for the fascist antics of Corcoran's welcome committee that greet you upon exiting the bus where they intentionally roughhouse you to try and provoke a reaction. As I approached the stairs to exit the bus, I was immediately identified by a sergeant who told me I would be going to 4B1L (the validated gang housing unit), but for reasons unknown I'm currently housed in 4A4L (housing unit for informants/debriefers), which is a typical COINTELPRO tactic aimed at neutralizing/isolating all committed revolutionaries. Upon my relentless protest, I was rehoused.

Our struggle continues!

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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I write blog for a man who spent years inside the add set unit in Huntsville. He told me of the brown water coming out of the faucets he was forced to drink. He made his way out of those cells for a short time and was even able to call me for a few short weeks. But it didn't last for long. They really don't want to let you have hope you can take classes so the day you are finally free you can walk out a man with hope and the ability to work when your education and life experiences stopped when you were 16 and now you are 32. So I started to write a book in addition to the blog. Inside the Forbidden Outside, titled Fantasy Crime. On it I have published 4 of the chapters I've written. This is the latest one <http://mynameisjamie.net/2015/04/17/inside-the-forbidden-outside-chapter-fantasy-crime/>

I am glad you were able to store a new memory of things long forgotten. On the outside we don't realize the spenders we have that we take for granted. Watching my new spring flowers bloom and listening to the birds. My heart goes out to you.

Spell check has its own way of writing. Lol add set unit was supposed to read ad seg unit.

He writes:

I was immediately identified by a sergeant who told me I would be going to 4B1L (the validated gang housing unit), but for reasons unknown I'm currently housed in 4A4L (housing unit for informants/debriefers), which is a typical COINTELPRO tactic aimed at neutralizing/isolating all committed revolutionaries. Upon my relentless protest, I was rehoused.

Sounds familiar.

Although not a revolutionary, Thomas Silverstein experienced the same thing upon his transfer to ADX.

Read it in full here:

<https://thomassilverstein.wordpress.com/2014/12/21/summary-of-a-guestbook-posting-about-protective-custody-pc-housing/>

Or read this excerpt:

Silverstein was first moved to a Protective Custody (PC) unit but was kept isolated from the others for the first few months. D unit was later reclassified as a General Population (GP) unit and a few high profile inmates joined him but most of the PC inmates remained.

He maintains that this is not safe for the PC population and the GP population is very uncomfortable with their presence there.

After years of isolation it took Silverstein a period of time to figure out how ADX operated.

When he realized who he was housed with he came to the conclusion that he was being set up in three ways.

First they seek to undermine his reputation by housing him with known informants (a practice that he has never heard of before). This

makes other inmates question why he is being held there.

Secondly by surrounding him with informants the authorities hope to find a reason that they can point to keep him isolated. It doesn't matter if the allegation is true or not, and he points out that these informants have every reason to lie in order to gain favors from staff but have nothing else to lose.

I wonder if he was aware of the history of D.V.I. when he wrote about the water. BTW it was bad even in the 60s.

I quote from this Huffington Post article with photos:

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/luke-whyte/california-prison-tear-gas\\_b\\_844214.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/luke-whyte/california-prison-tear-gas_b_844214.html)

How a California Prison Became The Tear Gas Capital of America

Posted: 04/10/2011

To stand inside this fence is to stand in the prison where the notorious Mexican Mafia gang first spilled blood in 1957.

To stand inside this fence is to stand where, in the early 1980s, more tear gas was sprayed on inmates annually than in the entire rest of the nation's prison systems combined.

To stand inside this fence is to stand in the Deuel Vocational Institution (DVI) of Tracy, Calif., or as it used to be known, The Gladiator School.

In response to formation of La Eme in 1957 at D.V.I. (well I'll just quote from another article on the subject.)

Opposition to the EME materialized in the 1960s when two new prison gangs were spawned: the Black Guerilla Family (BGF) composed of African American inmates and the Nuestra Familia (NF) which drew from the Northern Hispanic gangs and Southern inmates. Also entering the scene about this time was the Aryan Brotherhood (AB) composed primarily of white inmates which aligned itself with La EME against the BGF and NF. Each of these prison gangs also had their beginnings in CYA facilities, but from 1957 to the mid 1960s the Mexican Mafia alone ruled the prison system.

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