

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Voices from Solitary](#) | January 5, 2014



Sean Swain has served 22 years of a 20-to-life sentence for a murder he maintains was committed in self-defense. He has done many long stints in solitary confinement, and is currently being held at the supermax Ohio State Penitentiary in Youngstown. A self-proclaimed anarchist, he has twice run for governor of Ohio from his prison cell. His writing appears at www.seanswain.org. The following comes from a letter to Solitary Watch written in December. He welcomes mail at: Sean Swain 243205, Warren CI, P.O. Box 120, 5787 State Route 63, Lebanon, Ohio 45036. Jean Casella

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I arrived here at Ohios super-duper-uber-meza-ultra-max on 29 August. I call it that because super-max sounds so ridiculous. If maximum is maximum, the most, what can be super or beyond the maximum? If its more secure than the already-existing maximum, then it supercedes it as being the new maximum, but it doesnt become super-maximum. This is my deliberate, hyperbolic use of multiple prefixes to heckle the states grammatical euphemists.

They even have to abuse language.

Since August I note there are days I experience heightened anger. I call them rage days. They happen seemingly at random and I am self-aware enough to know that my emotional response is exaggerated. Sometimes pencil cups tip over. Its not a cause for murderous rage. So I breathe deeply and recall that the situation Im in creates those symptoms, and I self-talk through recognizing the relative insignificance of a spilled pencil cup compared to all the very serious disasters happening in the world. Re-centering. Re-grounding.

I fear losing my mind. I rear that on a long enough trajectory Im doomed. Im like a flood victim stacking sandbags, contemplating that I can hold out for six months, or a year, and if I am ambitious and scramble, I can hold off the inevitable for 18 months, but sooner or later the water will begin to trickle over the top of the barricades and then

Smash. Pencil cup hits the wall.

Solitary confinement is waking every day already stacking the sandbags in your head to stave off the flood of irrationality that seeks to consume you while operating within slow-motion mundanity of sensory deprivation. Its almost comic, really, how those two realities, the internal and the external, are so oddly divergent. The internal feels like everything is emergent bells and buzzers and sirens and the external, that which triggers the internal madness, is less eventful the cows grazing or paint drying. But thats just it. Its the vacuum, the absence the gets the monkey of the mind scrambling for some kind of sensory toy to grab.

I smirk to myself when the shrink comes around once a week. He asks me if Im OK. My response is always, I think so. Its the best I can do when I know there are prisoners smeared in their own fecal matter and muttering to unseen demons and they tell the shrink, Yes, Im doing fantastic.

Im not smeared in fecal matter.

Yet.

I dont hear disembodied voices screaming at me to check my tire pressure.

Yet.

Am I OK? I think so.

I dont tell him that Im afraid. Im afraid of the day when a shit suit sounds like a grat idea, when Shabriri, the Demon of Blindness, screeches at me about unsafe driving conditions

I also consider the irony that this massive mind-fuck machine works feverishly, day-in and day-out, prying out my psychological fingernails with a pair of rusty pliers, and then sends around this poor, well-intentioned, professor-ish clipboard dragger to inquire about my well being, prairie-dogging through the plexiglass bulletproof window of the steel door on my tomb, seeking signs of my inevitable mental disorganization.

I **think** so. I think **so**. I think so. Yes

A pencil-pusher was making rounds recently. Thru the bulletproof glass he asked me, Do you know why youre here?

I responded, Because there was an open cell available and the director doesnt like my criticism of his policy?

He looked side to side and saw the coast was clear. He shrugged. Well, yeah, was his reply.

Am I OK? Im still stacking the sandbags. I havent given up.

Yet.

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

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I visited Sean for end of April-May(first week) He is sensible,witty and a joy to be with.All the torture they have given seems ineffective.The torture affects his family and loved ones who have far less effective coping skills.

How about this one:

When dogs run free, any and all breeds, the murder rate among themselves approximates that of humans. (A statistic; a demographic. Do the lab.)

When they lock up humans, the message is very clear each and every of these should not come anywhere near any human in society, out there. Safety, the issue proclaimed, is thusby accorded to all of the out-there society that these certain ones are contained, having shown preemptively a propensity to cause harm or even ultimately kill. The message is also that the probability is greater these are among those who might harm, or kill another human. With these probabilities, enforced by the message, what happens when.

Michael Vicks (or anyone doing what he did) puts 2 dogs in a tight place together? How did Michael Vicks or anyone effect the dogfighting? Answer: by the sole act of putting them in a small room together.

How do the states and feds house their prisoners? By the sole act of putting them in small rooms together, or wherever this specific act, and it IS the mainstream act in there.

Is dogfighting a felony? When it was Vicks the feds said so. And Im not even equating pit bulls to certain humans the lockdown message suggests have propensities. I said ANY and ALL breeds. Do the lab, the study. You dont need special dogs for the dog murder rate to be the same. Thus, you dont need special humans, (you say criminals?), for the murder rate to stay the same. Its still happening out there the same after various get locked up. And it all starts with a contact; forced when you put them in a small room together. (Also see trunking, a recent phenomenon.)

By the repeated housing of literally all prisoners, states and federal, in 2 man cells, they have created somewhere a guaranteed murder. Created murder, not accessory to murder. If you could show me where it has been mandated that prisoners are not humans, thus are never entitled to the right to avoid being randomly murdered, please show me.

The answer has always been there: no human, incarcerated or otherwise, should be forced to live either with a stranger hes never met, or anyone he doesnt want to. At the booking into any incarceration facility one prime question is Would you like to live with another inmate. If no, they live alone. It would take a bit of discomfort to work the prisons up to this, but clearly possible. Quite a few would choose to live together; its statistically the case; you could still keep large portions of the facility as double occupancies, and depending on the choices, the rebuilding, add-on building may not be as difficult as you might think.

But add on to all present prisons and jails the rows of the loner-housings for those who, perhaps prudently, would like to eschew the possibility of being murdered. THIS should be an inalienable right, and should always have been in place on the statistics. Picture Chelsea Clinton has just been arrested and booked for spitting on a cop and slapping him in her disgust over a ticket. They force her in withoh, I see Charlie Mansons not got a celly. Pardon me, Charlene Manson, his female counterpart. Might that be OK then with Hillary, since this is the way it works presently? oh yea, must be. Often the intercom in the cell doesnt work if theres one at allor they wont even answer it. And when the terrors got you, not vica versa, do you think youll even be able to make 1 step to that button? Michael Vicks losing-dogs didnt know quite what to do with it either. The answer is simple. Uninvite the possibility.

Point to somebody in authority in history who ever thought to arrest himself.

Now consider the likelihood of the system charging itself with The Felony involved.

All the jailers in this country, fed and state, by these proofs, continue to operate the infamous rings involved.

I tried to put this to the record for yo, bro, with a come-around civil address, but they didnt consider it too likely either the system would even consider to undertake its correction minimally. Apparently, regardless of the crimes, murder or dogfighting.

Posted at:

<http://sfbayview.com/2014/mission-statement-of-the-pelican-bay-human-rights-movement-first-amendment-campaign/>

When I was in the SHU at the Federal in Dublin, CA, they allowed me 1 ph. call a week. If the guy didnt answer, wasnt there, for 1 try allowed to ring him, you waited till next week to ring him again. They sometimes forgot to allow a call. The BUSINESS of putting together ones defense (impossible without MUCH, much phoning w/lawyer to focusno detail to be overlooked in a very complex case) is given the preferred-instead tools of letting you rot. This comprises then ones right to defend under the amendments, as well as the tools to do it. The federal judge ACTUALLY USED the phrase Silence is Golden when instructing me to stop speaking, while I was on the stand, when I was using my best to answer questions. Its on the trial record. Re: ones right to testify. Right here; in the high self-touting USA. (Could she have meant Silence Like a Cancer Grows?). S.F. Dist Court 2009-10. I KNOW what you guys must bear for a system so corrupt its unbelievable, where it hasnt left you perfectly speechless already as to its extents.
Case3:09-cr-00989-MHP

Tough shit

When a loved one is in solitary family ties are difficult to impossible.If this is punishment it affects the entire family.This is an 8th amendment.The prison system strives to break these mens minds then send them back to the outside.This practice is unreasonable and criminal.

As a former mental health professional and a former corrections officer I was intrigued by Seans writing. Notice the poet in him. I hope he continues to write and educate. His strength and determination are awesome. I am grateful for his writing.

I must say that, if you go into solitary confinement and stay long enough, the sensory deprivation will begin, slowly, to take your sanity.it truly is, a mind fuck for the masses.

I hope Sean can keep up with his current frame of mind. He is still hanging on. I hope he can get out of solitary sometime soon. Extended Solitary is abusive beyond what is necessary.

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