

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2019/05/03/voices-from-solitary-we-go-through-hell-here/>

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by [Voices from Solitary](#) | May 3, 2019

In the following piece, Ryan Brown describes the conditions he faced during his three years in solitary confinement at Missouri's Jefferson City Correctional Center. According to the most recent [data](#) from the Prison Policy Initiative, 32,000 people are currently incarcerated in the Missouri state prison system, with about an additional 20,000 people held in local jails, youth detention centers, and federal prisons throughout the state. With the dramatic increase in the states incarceration rate since the 1980s, staffing ratios have sunk to dangerously low levels, leaving incarcerated people to face isolation, inadequate medical attention, and hazardously unsanitary conditions at many state facilities.

A report from the state corrections officers union, [cited](#) by Fox2 News, found a shortage of 900 correctional officers throughout the Missouri state prison system last year, with the number of staff dropping precipitously. Another Missouri maximum-security facility, the Crossroads Correctional Center, faced a 100-day lockdown following a protest in May of last year, in which hundreds of incarcerated people demanded a solution to the staffing shortages and lack of recreation, among other concerns.

In a letter to Solitary Watch, Brown said that he has witnessed incarcerated people at JFCC being released directly from solitary to the streets all the time. This practice has been proven to seriously undermine peoples already tenuous chances of having a successful re-entry, and can affect their families and communities as well. Brown, who had already ended up back in prison after being released straight from solitary, fears the menacing struggle of once again returning to society after enduring the torture of prolonged isolation. Valerie Kiebala

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Im writing so you all can know what me and everyone else is going through here in Missouri. We go through hell here. Our cells have cracks in the concrete, which ants come out of. The paint on the walls is chipped off. The air vents are nasty and clogged up. Some cells dont even have any fire sprinklers in them. We dont even have mirrors. We have shutters on our outside window, which makes it real difficult to see out of. When we look out our door window, the only thing you can see is a white wall and thats it. Theres mace all over the doors and walls because they wont clean it up. There was food and blood on the walls too. They dont respond to the emergency buttons most of the time. The only cleaning supplies we get once a week is a toilet brush and thats it.

The suicide cells are real nasty and to use the bathroom in them, you have to squat down over the hole in the floor. The guards will come around and cuss you out or mess with your food or your mail or they will hit and kick on your door. They will tell other prisoners fake stuff about you so they will hurt you. They will write false violations on us. They have refused me my visit before for no reason at all. They make threats to us and violate our due process rights.

They dont give us anything therapeutic to help us and people who are severely mentally ill are put in the same house as us! The mentally ill people are always yelling, banging on stuff, and throwing feces on the hallway floors. We are kept in solitary confinement for months and months at a time, just for minor stuff.

The prison is at least 100 staff members short. We have trouble getting our meds because there isnt enough medical staff, and they are three months behind on sick call. Our safety and health is in jeopardy every day. We just had a part of our food service shut down because of a really bad problem with maggots in the food. Its very overcrowded and things are getting bad.

Ive been in the hole for three years now, and I go home in eight months. They wont even give me stuff to prepare for the outside or anything. I know solitary confinement will cause people to have problems bad. It has messed with my mind bad. I know the last time I got out of prison from the hole was a scary thing for me because I didnt want to go out in public with all them people around me. I just wanted to stay in the house in the smallest room possible.

Ever since I came to solitary confinement, I havent felt right since. I know its torture. We get assaulted a lot by guards in the hole. Ive been assaulted five times by guards and one of them was a sexual assault. There is so much that goes on its crazy.

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 have spent some 48 years of my life in various prisons throughout the U.S.. My last period of incarceration stretched for a span of 30 years. 10 of those were served in isolation. While there I had contemplated writing a book of my experience behind the walls focusing more on the psychological/emotional impact isolation has on man/women. During the course of my writing my notes were repeatedly confiscated by the goon-squad, better known as thugs in uniform. My writings were considered inflammatory and thus a danger to the orderly running of the institution. So I quit writing. I didn't want to one day leave there in a body bag, a cripple or with some mental disorder caused by one too many beatings, like all those others. I allowed one year to go by before I began writing again. But this time my notes and research were written in random, incoherent scribbles which at first blush appear to be the rambling, rantings of a madman. The goons were OK with this. In their view, time, isolation, and sensory deprivation had reduced me to just another babbling idiot. I am finally out of prison and am in the process of formulating my Manuscript titled Species of a Lesser God, a glimpse inside the abode of the damned. It's a work still in progress.

I hope to give voice to prisoners who find themselves in a similar situation and are able to say, Yeah! that's how I am feeling! That's what I'm going through! And perhaps find some solace. I also think it would be a good read for those in the Mental Health profession and for those involved within the judicial arena; Judges, Lawyers, and Prosecutors. Reinforce, A Prison Reform in dire need of fixing! Unfortunately, at the moment, advanced technology has me at an advantage. As you can imagine, the 8 track cassette player was the popular tech before my incarceration. I having to learn all over again and readjust to the new way of the world. My purpose for writing is to ask, if you would provide me with some information and leads on how I may go about getting my journal published and out to the mainstream public?

Thank you
Hector Gallegos

They young man I visit in solitary confinement in Massachusetts could write almost exactly the same story!

P.O. Box 11374
Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

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