

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/07/07/voices-from-solitary-loneliness-is-a-destroyer-of-humanity/>**

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by [Voices from Solitary](#) | July 7, 2012

*The following comes from Jesse Wilson, who is incarcerated at United States Penitentiary, Administrative Maximum (ADX) facility in Florence, Colorado. Initially sentenced to five years in prison when he was 17 for grand larceny, he was given a life sentence for the murder of a death row inmate in Mississippi Unit 32. He has been in solitary confinement for eight of the last 12 years. He describes his time in solitary as consisting of walking around in circles and losing his social skills. A collateral consequence of his time in solitary, he's written, is having families members watch you get older and crazier. He will be corresponding with Solitary Watch about the conditions at ADX. Sal Rodriguez*

I refuse to embrace the solitude. This is not normal. I'm not a monster and do not deserve to live in a concrete box. I am a man who has made mistakes, true. But I do not deserve to spend the rest of my life locked in a cage with no purpose does that serve? Why even waste the money to feed me? If I'm a monster who must live alone in a cage why not just kill me?

Our country has thousands of its people confined to concrete cages. Years pass, lives pass. The suffering does not. Our families suffer most, watching us grow old and go crazy in a cage. This is my biggest pain knowing my mother and sister suffer with me. I can not see how this is helpful to society. Most men will spend years in a cage alone and be released back into society filled with hate and rage. It is an ugly truth. We as a country are blind to the reality of our prison system.

It has become normal. And we the inmates are voiceless. Our voices are not heard. If they are heard, they are thought of as lies. I heard the head of the BOP in Congress (on radio) saying they do not have insane inmates housed here. This is what should be thought of as a lie. I have not slept in weeks due to these non-existing inmates beating on the walls and hollering all night. And the most non-insane smearing feces in their cells.

This is reality.

This place is horrific with the solitary, and the lack of communication outside these walls. I've been in prison without release for over 12 years, and eight of them I've been in a cage walking around in circles. I was released for 23 days in 2000 after completing a boot camp/drug program. I was rearrested for drinking beer, a violation of probation. So I am pretty in tune with the concept of solitary. Prison. Cages and craziness.

Out my window I see into a concrete yard surrounded by red brick walls. There is a drain in the middle of it and out of it weeds are growing. I thought they were weeds until a few blossomed into these beautiful yellow and brown flowers.

Every now and then a pair of owls roosts on the security lights. This spring they had two babies. We watched them grow up and fly away. On any given day the sky here is breathtaking. The beauty out my window stays in my mind. I look around this cage at plain concrete walls and steel bars and a steel door, a steel toilet and I endure its harshness because I am able to keep beauty in my mind. The window helps greatly.

I'm in the hole so there is no TV. Books help me escape better than my words could ever explain, but most of all it's the love of my family, the memories of beauty and the knowledge of humanity.

Loneliness is a destroyer of humanity.

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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There is big money in prisons, that is why prisons exist in this country. That money is taxpayer money. We fund prisons, we fund war, and we fund congress. We fund these things, even if unwillingly. The Law and order, security at any cost, fear of the bogie man mentality costs us all. We are the imprisoned, imprisoned by our fears.

@otto I had to come back and say that is true that prisoners NEED mail; at this point in Tommys incarceration he is one of the lucky ones that has lots of mail, there are others that get none it is a very fulfilling thing to write to prisoners. theres just not enough people that care.

@Alan so true Tommy has had the exclusive privilege of being in a basement of a prison what 27 years ago and they got away with it he survived it; now these out of sight -out-of-mind torture chambers are common while all the studies in the world nor the constitution seem to matter that Americans are being tortured and just because Tom has not chewed his wrists opened and is still alive and well (well as can be expected) under such intense conditions high in the mountains sometimes unable to catch his breath. Why is this happening? How have we-the-people turned a blind eye to government sanctioned torture? If we continue to let the govt have free reign over these lives when will it be our turn to have our rights violated and everything in place by our founding fathers has been ignored? ok so there was a congressional hearing is that progress? to hear them talk about it while these people see no end to their suffering? I only have questions no answers. A statement though no matter the crime we as Americans have the right not to be tortured.

These lines, I have not slept in weeks due to these non-existing inmates beating on the walls and hollering all night. And the most non-insane smearing feces in their cells. This is reality., are so very true and they bring meaning to this quote.

Insanity is contagious.  
Joseph Heller, Catch-22

But the loneliness he speaks about here Loneliness is a destroyer of humanity. is also contagious.

Here is excerpts from an article on loneliness:

<http://psychology.about.com/od/psychotherapy/a/loneliness-can-be-contagious.htm>

Loneliness can spread much like the common cold. While a cold or flu bug might be spread through a handshake, loneliness can spread through groups of people via negative social interactions. Past research has found that lonely people tend to act more shy, hostile, anxious and socially awkward. They also tend to interpret social interactions differently, often seeing certain behaviors in others as a form of rejection or dismissal.

The Health Consequences of Loneliness

Loneliness has a wide range of negative effects on both physical and mental health. Some of the the health risks associated with loneliness include:

- Depression and suicide
- Cardiovascular disease and stroke
- Increased stress levels
- Decreased memory and learning
- Antisocial behavior
- Poor decision-making
- Alcoholism and drug abuse
- The progression of Alzheimers disease
- Altered brain function

They sound familiar huh?

The following somewhat humorous quote reminded me of Silversteins dilemma where his apparent mental health is held up as proof that the system doesnt drive everyone totally insane.

There was only one catch and that was Catch-22, which specified that a concern for ones safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didnt, but if he was sane he had to fly them. If he flew them he was crazy and didnt have to; but if he didnt want to he was sane and had to. Yossarian

was moved very deeply by the absolute simplicity of this clause of Catch-22 and let out a respectful whistle.

Thats some catch, that Catch-22, he observed.

Its the best there is, Doc Daneeka agreed.  
Joseph Heller, Catch-22

And so it goes on unabated.

Thank you for your articles on solitary and its impact. I write to many in prison and welcome a chance to write more. At present our list includes over 626 and growing. I answer each letter each week. A letter may not seem like much to those on the outside but to one in solitary or just in prison its a ray of hope.

Thank you for your voice on speaking out. This is such torture, My heart goes out to all of you. I now sit and think about this all the time. I do not know why the prision systems thinks this will accomplish something. Please try to stay strong. You are not forgotten.

P.O. Box 11374  
Washington, DC 20008

[info@solitarywatch.org](mailto:info@solitarywatch.org)

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