

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2014/04/29/voices-from-solitary-analyzing-isolation-part-ii/>

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by [Voices from Solitary](#) | April 29, 2014

This post is the next in a [series of pieces](#) Solitary Watch is publishing as part of a project calling for people held in solitary confinement to write on various proposed themes. Our second suggested theme, [Analyzing Isolation](#), calls for writers to provide their analyses of solitary, discussing ways in which the practice is counterproductive.

The following comes from Dennis Hope, currently held at the all-solitary Allan B. Polunsky Unit on Texas death row. In his piece, Hope, who has been held in isolation for over 19 years, examines two major practices involving the use of administrative segregation by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), including the so-called review process and classification system in place. He can be reached by writing: Dennis Hope, 579097, Polunsky Unit, 3872 FM 350 South, Livingston, TX 77351. Lisa Dawson

In the past ten or so months I have read a lot of things regarding the use of Ad. Seg. and changes that are and have been made in other states. Cindy Eigler with the Interfaith group on Public Policy wrote a story wherein she gave some numbers on the reduction of inmates in Ad. Seg. here in Texas. I wrote her with some information regarding some of the things she had said. I believe she said Texas had reduced their Ad. Seg. population by 14% over the last two years while the number of mentally ill inmates in Ad. Seg. rose by 17%. While I don't question there being lots of mentally ill inmates in Ad. Seg., I do question their reduction in Ad. Seg. population.

Inmates in Ad. Seg. go before a State Classifications Committee (SCC) every six months. If an inmate is a confirmed gang member then he only appears before them once a year. The problem with the SCC is that, while it is comprised of three officials, only one has a say in whether to release the inmate or not. That person is the classification member who comes from Huntsville to conduct the review. The warden or his designee and the other committee member has no vote in the matter. In other words, the officials that work the closest to the inmate and see changes he may not have made (for better or for worse) have no vote and whether to release and made or not. In fact, the other two members signed their names on that review form and handed over to the SCC official prior to any decision being made. Whatever they decide the other two have already signed off on.

The SCC member from Huntsville reviews the file and does so in a limited manner. In July 2013 I was seen by SCC member Buckner and was told to stay out of trouble and have a line class 1 and when I was reviewed in January I would be released. I did that and was told to remain in Ad. Seg.. Nobody will honor what someone else says and the SCC member from Huntsville changes each time we go down there.

Honestly I think all of their excuses are by design. For over six years I have had a S-4 (which is the highest time earning class one can have in Ad. Seg.) and they still found excuses not to release me. By policy they can keep an inmate in Ad. Seg. for up to 10 years for an escape. In November of this year I will have been in Ad. Seg. for 20 years. I have actually been told by some SCC members that they are waiting for me to lose my mind or lose my health. One even stated that even if I was in a wheelchair she still wouldn't put her name on my paperwork. That being their mindset, how can they give me a fair and meaningful review when their minds have already been made up? The answer is they don't and the Fifth Circuit of Appeals has said that inmates in Ad. Seg. don't have a liberty interest or due process protections under federal law.

In accordance with TDCJ Classification Plan, when an inmate has gone 24 months without a major case and has a Line class 1 or better he should be released from Ad. Seg. There are adequate policies in place to manage Ad. Seg. inmates to include their release. The problem is they don't follow them. In my opinion it's clear they want to ensure the Ad. Seg. beds remain full since that's their cash cow and what they used to go to the legislature to get more money and argue why they should be exempt from the 5% budget cut. It's always the violent inmates they need bedspace for. The problem is the legislature is allowing TDCJ to decide who should be placed in Ad. Seg. rather than an independent committee.

In September 2013 the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1003. This bill would make TDCJ report to Congress who they segregated, what for, how long, were they under psychiatric care when admitted to Ad. Seg., did they seek psychiatric care after being in Ad. Seg., were they paroled from Ad. Seg., were they discharged from Ad. Seg. and several other stats they want to use to determine whether or not Texas use of Ad. Seg. is harming inmates and ultimately putting the public at risk.

The problem with that Bill is it wasn't funded. By their estimates it would take \$168,000 to gather the info. TDCJ already has those stats,

but they sure aren't going to voluntarily hand them over.

They still move me at least once a week. Sometimes if they move me on a Monday they come back and move me that Friday. Our friend Stephen Russell is still getting moved once every two weeks. The cells are not being cleaned prior to us being moved in the cell. We have complained and they lie and say the cells are cleaned by officers or SSIs (Support Service Inmates) prior to us being moved in the cell.

For about a month this unit had an outbreak of the flu or Nonovirus. We were quarantined on several different occasions back here in Ad. Seg. They still moved us two different cells and still never cleaned or disinfected them prior to us being moved in. Additionally, the cells leak water from the ceilings and back walls when it rains. Numerous cells have mold, mildew and green moss on the back walls and in the cracks where the ceiling meets the back wall. The cells most affected are the ones on two. The showers are filthy and have mildew and mold on the walls, vents and door. When complaining of the showers were told the night shift who cleans them only has so much time and they have to be off the building so they just half-ass clean them.

The public is beginning to see the worst of the worst aren't the only ones they subject to that treatment. If I were to lose my sanity they wouldn't take anything I said serious. The fact that I remain sane is their proof that isolation doesn't drive people crazy. They have all their bases covered. :(

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

Solitary Watch encourages comments and welcomes a range of ideas, opinions, debates, and respectful disagreement. We do not allow name-calling, bullying, cursing, or personal attacks of any kind. Any embedded links should be to information relevant to the conversation. Comments that violate these guidelines will be removed, and repeat offenders will be blocked. Thank you for your cooperation.

I know this is very late, but I feel compelled to comment. The above statement In September 2013 the Texas Legislatures passed House Bill 1003 should instead read In September 2013 the Texas Legislatures passed Senate Bill 1003.

its sad that they would wait for someone to go insane to finally help him. do these people have no concern for human decency? Its so infuriating

Please help stop this madness. My son just turned 16 awaiting trial INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY. . In solitary confinement. Arizona. Hell hole stop solitary confinement please.

@Daryll

Hell there was no need to read between the lines Hope says it all clearly with the first 7 minutes of the first video.

10 years in a Texas Tough prison is no cake walk.

Glad you made it out with the support of your family. :)

CYA #65085; I am sure you can understand the system much more than the average person. You seem to be able to read between the lines. I have spent a short period in the Texas Prison system from 1999 2009 in comparison to others mine was a walk in the park. He did say it himself ,

I am in here till my heart stops beating. It is a world within itself. The rules inside are independantly determined. I was very lucky. I had a family waiting for me and a second chance at life. Once I left I never looked back. I was not a violent offender, no weapon when I committed my crime.

The fact is Hopes survival instincts kicked in when he was faced with the realities of prison life and then had an upfront seat during a blood and guts prison riot.

One should ask how we can reduce the tension and lack of hope which motivates such daring and ultimately self defeating acts of desperation.

In the video above A guard eludes to the desperation needed to attempt such an escape.

Hope's present sentences eliminates any Hope of a release and since the prison environment has not changed Hope states the obvious here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=myxF5myFNhw>

John thank you for sharing. However, in one of the shows it has him pointing a gun to people in a supermarket and telling them to get on the ground. In another it shows him stabbing another inmate with a pencil in a bathroom which also never happened. One of many things that Never occurred. If you read the Public Court Documents and put them against the show you will see many inaccuracies. Dennis story has been all over the internet with people who don't know him saying the exact same thing I said. They looked up the court documents and confirmed most of what is shown not to be exactly as it occurred. The awards won were won for Cinematography NOT for the story being told. You may want to research that as well.

National Geographic is a non-profit scientific education institution.

September 1997, the first National Geographic Channels were launched in the United Kingdom, Europe and Australia.[1] In July 1998, National Geographic Channel Asia was launched in partnership and distribution with STAR TV (before replacing NBC Asia Channel; the same happened after NBC Europe's demise in 1998). Today, the channel is available in over 143 countries, seen in more than 160 million homes and in 25 languages.

In the United States, the National Geographic Channel, launched on January 12, 2001, is a joint venture of National Geographic Television & Film and Fox Cable Networks. National Geographic provides programming expertise and the Fox Networks Group provides its expertise on distribution, marketing, and advertising sales.

Breakout along with many other shows allows the story to speak for itself. As in this particular episode. This man spoke for himself and told his own story. Awards are won for their accuracy, professionalism and production. Bringing public awareness is the main goal. Money? I would guess we all want to get paid for what we do.

SERIOUSLY PEOPLE YOU BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU SEE ON TELEVISION? Dennis signed a release with Nat Geo and Investigative Discovery to tell his story and bring awareness to his situation and how he's serving an 80 year sentence for Armed Robbery (not murder). Once that release was signed, the television company has the right to depict the story however they choose for ratings. People never read the disclaimer in the beginning of anything. They just believe everything they SEE. Yes he's in solitary for armed robbery and escape over 20 years ago when he was in his 20s. However, much of what is portrayed in the series is for Rating purposes. Please keep that in mind when watching ANYTHING on television. Money is being made off of telling others stories! p.s. some of his episodes won awards in Canada. What's that tell you? They are making \$\$ off of him.

Are you kidding me? NO wonder!

National Geographic Channel Episode: The Running Man

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Et4rQMUR7rw>

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