

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2014/09/30/voices-from-solitary-at-war-with-my-own-self/>

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by [Voices from Solitary](#) | September 30, 2014

This following account was written by Anthony Lamar Davis, 34, who has been incarcerated for 11 years of a 22-year sentence. He has spent more than six of those years in solitary confinement. In New York State prisons, about [13,000 sentences to solitary confinement](#) in the Special Housing Units, or SHUs, are handed out each year, most of them for nonviolent disciplinary violations, and close to 4,000 people are in isolated confinement at any given time. Here, Davis writes about a suicide attempt that took place last year, and his ongoing battles with the effects of extreme isolation. He can be reached by writing: Anthony Lamar Davis, #04-A-3293, Shawangunk Correctional Facility, P.O. Box 700, Wallkill, New York 12589. Lauren Denitzio

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On August 4, 2013, while waiting for an officer to handcuff and escort me back to the cell that awaited me after showering, I sat on the floor holding a razor used for shaving. Today was the day I decided to end my life. My decision came from a mixture of things. Things like the living nightmare that I called my childhood, my loneliness, the fact that I have been incarcerated for 11 years and had not seen *one* single family member including my own children in that time. Hundreds of things ran through my mind. Including being in extreme isolation.

In my 11 years of incarceration, I've been in and out of solitary confinement for about 6 1/2 years and a 3 year sanction had just been imposed on me (it has since been modified) for an accusation for which I was falsely accused, causing me to be removed from a facility located about 20 minutes outside of New York City (Sing Sing Correctional Facility) where I am from to a zoo-like facility build to house prisoners in solitary confinement, which is located hours away from my city where my children are.

On August 4, 2013, I've had enough. And, truth-be-told, I was not at all afraid, excited, anxious, or nervous as I broken the guard on the razor and cut my wrist / forearm to the point where I had to be taken to an outside hospital for stitches. I felt no pain. Nothing. I knew that suicide was an effective way to get rid of all the difficulties that surrounded my life. What the hell is the purpose of living if one does not experience happiness?

Again, I have buy discount ambien done over 11 years in prison off of a 22 year sentence (New York state prisoners do 85% of their determinate sentences if they behave) so I *do* have a release date. But in the way that I have been affected by extreme isolation, I fear that I will not be productive in society. I have no family. If I was to be released from prison today, I would be completely lost; like being born as a full grown adult. Furthermore, I am not the same person I once was. The charming, funny, handsome, charismatic individual whom I used to be is gone. His soul snatched away by the psychological effects of solitary confinement. I have now become this soul-less, bitter, fraction of myself who is emotionally unstable and full of rage. This is not how I want to live; who I want to be.

I am aware of the effects that extreme isolation has had on me. These effects are not just limited to being in solitary confinement. I will be released from solitary confinement in May of this year (2014), but I will still be a product of solitary confinement. My pain will not end because I have been relocated to general population. There, it will be much difficult for me. I *still* will have no family. I *still* will be lonely (I literally feel hollow inside), I *still* will be bitter and full of rage. Now, there are no people around me, so when my rage surfaces, I bruise my knuckles by punching the concrete walls or screaming (my anger has reached dangerous highs). When I get back to general population assuming that I have the strength to get through the remainder of my time in solitary confinement my rage will still be with me and now there will be *people* to punch and not concrete walls. I am fearful of my future in general population.

I am at war with my own self and it has become a constant struggle to wake up and face the day. I have become a monster created by life and taught by the effects of solitary. I've come to realize that this is who I am now and I don't like what I see when I stare at the monster in the mirror. The fight. The war. I take solace in the possibility that I could wake up one morning, defeated. Not wanting to fight anymore.

And what happened on August 4, 2013, will happen again. But this time the results would be final.

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 pray that someone will write to this man. It doesn't have to be family. I began writing to a prisoner 9 years ago. I think of her as a sister now. She says that I came along just as she was about to give up. But, the truth is, she has changed me, my life, for the better as much as I did hers. She has served almost 29 years now. Only been up for parole once 4 years ago. They extended her 5 yrs. It was crushing. She has been beyond a model prisoner and should have been paroled. I am glad that I was there to encourage her to hold on, to never give up. They all need this kind of outside support. If you have thought about writing a prisoner do it. Don't be stupid but be a friend.

My heart breaks for you and everyone else in Solitary Confinement. This is not proper treatment for a human being. Please know that you are not alone for God is always there with you. Call on him to comfort you and give you peace so that you may endure the balance of your time. Pray that he will guide you in your future. Peace to you.

That's a really difficult situation and I'm not sure that words would have any effect. I think that it is unjust to be failed by everything that should have stepped up and possibly prevented the path you took in life. It is really easy for people and society to blame a broken subject that is broken and acts in accordance to their brokenness, rather than show love and kindness which is all we all want. It is unfair to bring a person into the world and not nurture, teach and guide them but still hold them solely responsible for the outcome of their lives. All the people who criticized and abandoned you should have helped instead of throw more stones at you. It is unfortunate that the people who work in the system and hold positions of authority in general in life, don't really do these jobs for the right reasons, only for their own clout or money. We're all our brothers and sisters keepers but unfortunately society gets it wrong all the time. I hope you know that there are people who think of you and care for the betterment of society and humanity in general. You are far but not forgotten. It's really hard but try to live out your life knowing you were chosen for it for a greater purpose that is beyond what you and any of us can understand now. Peace be with you, you have already done it so you really can't say that you can't or haven't.

Beautifully said, Kathryn.

Please hold on. We are fighting to stop solitary. Keep working on writing and get any education you can. We need your voice. I don't know you. I don't know why the prison system is so incredibly cruel. Put your heart in the future and imagine all the people who are in solitary rising up and flooding the right authorities with letters. Society is not at its best and the wars are not just within you it's a scary world out here too. I don't know you but encourage people in your same situation to write. There are people like me hoping for change and reform. We need to hold on and my heart is broken and I am not free knowing how human rights are being violated..and just know that there are people trying to change it.

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