

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2013/05/25/voices-from-solitary-your-imagination-but-my-reality/>

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by [Voices from Solitary](#) | May 25, 2013

The following was written by Troy Hendrix, who is currently serving a life sentence at Elmira Correctional Facility, a maximum security facility located in south central New York State. For the last seven years, Hendrix, 29, has been held in administrative segregation, meaning that hes in solitary confinement indefinitely. In this powerful piece, Hendrix asks readers to imagine the agonizing conditions to which he is subjected day after day in extreme isolation. This is your imagination, he writes, but this is my reality.

Hendrix's entry comes from [his blog on Between the Bars](#), a prison blogging platform that aims to provide a positive outlet for creativity, a tool to assist in the maintenance of social safety nets, an opportunity to forge connections between people inside and outside of prison, and a means to promote non-criminal identities and personal expression. Contact him through his blog or by writing: Troy Hendrix #06A2056, Elmira Correctional Facility, P.O. box 500, Elmira, New York 14902-0500. Lisa Dawson

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Imagine this: 4 walls and steel doors Being isolated to a cell 22-24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year Being confined this way indefinitely Being isolated for years upon years, until you are psychology, and emotionally damaged Being isolated for so long, that your thinking becomes distorted, behavior becomes irrational, and mood becomes unstable Being amongst individuals who become so overwhelmed by this isolation, that self harm and suicide seems to be the only outlet Being in isolation, where daily idleness results in lethargy Being in extreme isolation, where minds are rotted out, hearts become frigid, and spirits become broken This is your imagination, but this is my reality.

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT Two words that ring loud and clear in your minds eye, whenever you hear it spoken, or see it written. But solitary confinement is far more worse than what you picture in your minds eyes, because the actual reality of this confinement is devastating. Everything about this environment is abnormal, but after spending the last 7 years in this environment, I have become a product of it. The abnormalities of this environment, that I once viewed as abnormal, now seems normal in my mind. I do not exactly know when I began to view my surroundings as normal, but somewhere along the way, my thinking changed. This happens frequently in solitary confinement, because most of the time, you do not even realize that you are miserable, bitter, delusional, socially withdrawn, hypersensitive, and mentally and emotionally damaged. Someone usually has to point this out to you.

The abnormality of this environment is clear for everyone to see, but only those living, or working in it are truly affected. The following picture that I paint (vividly), will show you this abnormality It begins with the cells and the structure of them. They vary in size at each facility, but they all have the same effect, and impact on the mental. The doors are steel, and the 4 walls that surrounds us, seem to close in at times. These same walls are painted a dull white, or beige color, which is a very depressing sight. The cells consist of a sink, toilet (some facilities have showers inside cells), and a mattress as hard as the floor we walk on. The definition of bathroom, is a room containing a bathtub or shower, and usu. sink and toilet. So the reality is that we eat, sleep, and spend 22-24 hours a day in a bathroom. From the outside looking in, these cells give off the impression of a cage, used to confine a wild monkey. (The cages used for daily 1 hour recreation outside, give off this impression also). Long periods of time spent in this confinement, and one could lose himself, and actually become as wild as a monkey.

The barbarous and uncivilized behavior, is a very big part of this environment, and many are a product of it. Arguments amongst solitary confinement prisoners, is the daily norm. Frustration, misery, and bottled up rage, lead to verbal degradation, and this is done at the highest level possible. Since there isnt any physical contact, verbal degradation is carried out instead. Biological warfare, is another form of savagery that is done at the highest level possible. This warfare involves feces, urine, and/or saliva, and is one of the worst forms of degradation in solitary confinement, if not the worst. It is common for an officer or prisoner to have these things thrown, or spit on or at them. Another tactic in war that is used, entails depriving one of sleep, by kicking and banging on their walls whenever they attempt to sleep. I have not taken part in any forms of savagery, but when I witness it, or hear of it occurring, I am no longer disgusted because Ive become numb to this type of behavior.

Despite all the loud babbling, shouting, cursing, and banging, that occurs on a daily basis, solitary confinement is a very lonely place. In these cells, ones thoughts are in constant overdrive, and creating a fantasy world in ones mind, is most common. Escaping reality for awhile is necessary, but many become so engulfed in these worlds, that at times they find it difficult distinguishing fantasy from reality.

During the past 7 years that I've spent in this extreme isolation, I experienced, and still experience bouts of depression, hopelessness, loneliness, anxiety, bottled up rage, and mental anguish. Living in this extreme isolation for long periods of time, will take a toll on your psychological, and emotional well being. Whether you notice it or not, this confinement will take a part of you, it is inevitable. There is nothing beneficial or therapeutic about extreme isolation, it only breeds despair, depression, rage, loss of impulse control, anxiety, misery, distorted thinking, hypersensitivity, and mental illness. Spending your days, weeks, months, and years isolated indefinitely, in an abnormal environment is your imagination, but this is my reality.

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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Too damn bad what he did was heinous; I have no sympathy for him. First he tortured, raped and killed this poor girl Romona, then during the court proceedings him and the co-defendant tried to kill again so that they could escape. Thank God these animals are off the street; him and Kayson. They should have both received the death penalty but I guess what they have to endure for the rest of their lives is much worse. And this piece of crap still claims he is innocent. Give me a break.

Imagine that pain and torture innocent ROMONA MOORE endured when she was snatched off the street by this evil subhuman low life. Her limbs duct taped, her neck chained, enduring several days of brutal rapes, lit cigarettes put out on her face, attempts at having her limbs SAWED off while still alive, her jaw broken by punches and skull fractured by multiple hits with blunt objects such as dumbbells, face swollen, bruised and unrecognizable. Imagine being left scared and alone, bleeding heavily on a piece of tarp for days, forced to recite the horrific torture to guests that this monster brought over as he proudly boasted about every detail of his crime. Imagine knowing you'll never see your mom, your step father, your friends ever again because your life would be taken by a psychopath who still has NO remorse for what he did to you. THAT was Romona's reality.

There are those who might believe that this guy is locked up in solitary confinement for a reason, and that he's probably had ample opportunity to be released into the general population, yet always ends up back in solitary. One all too common practice corrections tends to do, is to release a prisoner back into the population for one day, and round him back up again. Staff gets to say that he was released, yet did something to warrant being thrown back into isolation again, for the good order of the institution. It's a barbaric practice, as is the prison system on the whole, and is a form of torture that is commonly used in every prison everywhere in North America.

Another breakdown in the system that makes this scenario even harder to imagine, is there are instances that people can be locked in solitary for years, and then just released back into society. After living in such extreme conditions can one really function in society again? Dr. Grassian believes the extreme conditions create a distinct mental disorder.

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