

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/04/01/voices-from-solitary-a-terribly-unique-experience/>

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Search

close

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by [Voices from Solitary](#) | April 1, 2012

Note: The following is an excerpt from an inmate who has been in solitary confinement since he was 16 years old. Held in isolation since 1998, he has only spent approximately six months in general population. Originally incarcerated in Oregon, he was transferred to Texas in 2005. He describes the visceral experience of isolation as a terribly unique experience that instills a bitterness and hatred in you. He writes also about the relationship, as he perceives it, between inmates and the prison guards. He is currently corresponding with Solitary Watch for an upcoming piece on the Intensive Management Units in Oregon. Sal Rodriguez

Being subjected to years of solitary confinement is a terribly unique experience; quite unlike any other form of time, one of the things in life that you've kind of either been through or you haven't. However mentally tough you may be, years of sensory deprivation, total isolation, lack of mental/physical stimuli, and otherwise enduring the struggle that is a part of it all, takes a tremendous toll. Nearly without fail it instills a bitterness and hatred in you. After a number of years it often becomes difficult to do any other type of time; being around people in typical or normal environs becomes uncomfortable and even unbearable.

The time and experience alone are adequate to torment an individual. However, further aggravating, is that the hardships & struggles frequently arise, and to do years and not endure these in some fashion is about unheard of to me. It's paramount to grasp fully the relationship between inmate and guard. Aside from the very obvious, everything in such a setting is magnified. An inmate's dependency is complete, and becomes a central focus. For example, you rely on them to bring your food, mail, etc., to escort you to shower, recreation, etc.

Situations are liable to arise from nearly anything; perhaps you wrote an officer up, maybe got into an argument, assaulted a guard in the past, etc. but when these conflicts do arise (and they will), you're going to be retaliated against in some fashion and when this occurs, you're nearly helpless. Whether it's something petty as being jacked for your shower or rec periods, or more seriously something like being refused food, or having mail tampered with, your remedies are often a joke. Your inmate witnesses will be laughed at, and you surely will not have any officer witnesses.

Any time you leave your cell you're handcuffed with a dog leash attached (they refer to it as a tether I believe) and otherwise treated like a straight up animal. I've often compared it to having a dog in a kennel or cage and keeping him there for years, while poking sticks at him, playing vile games against him, making him go periods without water or food, etc. and when you eventually loose that dog, do you really expect anything other than pure aggression, hatred, anti-social, etc?

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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September 6, 2022

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I spent 10 years in a myriad of California prisons, some of which in solitary. Interesting article. I turned my life around writing novels and just finished one about the hunger strike over conditions in solitary. I used an analogy with dogs in a shelter. The book is called, Underdog, A Definitive History of Pelican Bay State Prisons Super Max. Here is what people are saying about it- With laser-like precision Glenn Langohr lays bare the festering under-belly of our criminal justice system in a driving, graphic narrative that somehow finds the humanity in this most inhuman setting. Phillip Doran, T.V. Producer and Author

Ex-con Langohr can describe the hell of life inside better than any other writer. His vivid passages on just surviving in prison describe a nightmare we'd rather not know about.

He compares the plight of abandoned dogs, locked and horribly mistreated in rows of cages in animal shelters, to California prison inmates, locked and abused in the same cages. Not a book for the faint of heart. We who sleep peacefully in our beds at night, unaware of the savagery going on behind prison walls, can only thankfully say: There, but for the grace of God, go I. John South American Media

P.O. Box 11374
Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

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