

Center For Constitutional Rights

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://ccrjustice.org/home/blog/2017/08/23/released-solitary-you-can-sense-and-feel-all-emotions>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

The CCR blog

To mark the 23rd of the month, invoking the 23 hours per day that prisoners spend isolated in special housing units, activists throughout California are taking action to bring attention to prison conditions. Below, Carlos Molina, a class member in [Ashker v. Governor of California](#), shares his experience of being released into the general prison population after 14 years in solitary confinement, following a settlement in the case that effectively ended long-term solitary confinement in CA prisons.

Knowing that the conversation about the horrors of solitary confinement continues is very encouraging. Specially when there are those who want nothing more than to go back to the practice of long term solitary confinement.

Coming from an environment where everyday interactions consisted of talking from cell to cell, it was an assault to my senses to see men coming and going about their daily activities in a, somewhat, unrestrained manner.

For many years all of my meals were given to me through a slot on my cell door. I ate all my meals alone, with my own thoughts. So you can imagine how it felt to actually walk to the chow hall and eat with almost a hundred other men; conversating and enjoying the camaraderie. It took a while to get used to sharing a table with three other men.

Luckily I arrived at this prison in late November, when the blazing sun is not as hot as it is in summer. Otherwise, I might have fallen out. First day on the yard was exciting. For many years I exercised alone, in a concrete box, now I'm surrounded by more than a hundred guys. Not only did the sun feel great on my skin, I was able to actually run on the track.

Soon after I arrived here I had my first contact visit in many, many years. My wife and I kissed, held hands, ate, and took two pictures. Being able to converse, without a glass window in between, is great. You can sense and feel all the emotions.

My mother and one of my sisters made the hour long drive to spend time with me. When I first saw my mother walk thru the visiting room door I felt all kinds of different emotions. My mental image of my mother was of a much younger woman; here was a woman in her seventies, still making time for her son. We spent the entire time catching up on everything that the family has been through. It was a great day.

Not long after I arrived here, my daughter found time in her busy schedule to come visit me. After she made the appointment to visit, my daughter warned me that my granddaughter and grandson are very shy around strangers. When I walked to the table where my daughter and her children were sitting, I introduced myself; both of my grandkids gave me a hug and kiss. I spent the next hour walking around the visiting room with my grandkids on my shoulders.

For many, many years, those of us who were held in the SHU were deprived of many basic things: contact visits, phone calls, pictures with loved ones. Since our release from the SHU, many of us have re-established family ties. You can't imagine the feeling of being able to sign up for a phone call and calling loved ones.

It is my hope that people on the outside continue to support us, and continue to advocate for real rehabilitation.

Thank you for allowing me to share my experiences with you. Unfortunately, the authorities have, once again, housed me in Administrative Segregation. Not for anything that I did, but because of what confidential informants say I did.

Respectfully,

Carlos Molina

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[View the discussion thread.](#)

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