

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2015/06/19/voices-from-solitary-phantom-souls/>

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by [Voices from Solitary](#) | June 19, 2015

Fifteen years ago, Gerard G. Schultz, Jr., now 38, was convicted of murder in Phoenix, Arizona. He is serving a life sentence and has been in solitary since 2008, when he was transferred from Arizona to Illinois under the Interstate Corrections Compact. In Illinois, he was placed in Tamms Supermax Prison until it was closed by the governor in January 2013. Since that time, he has been held in the Pontiac Correctional Center, where he reports that he is still in isolation. Hallie Grossman

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Unable to be perceived by the outside world and sometimes unable to be perceived by our own selves. We are an estimated 2 million, but the sound of a pin falling to the ground makes a much louder sound than 4 million teardrops, incessantly falling every second of every hour of every day for the phantom souls that are entombed in their purgatory state of existence inside correctional facilities across the United States.

We are phantom souls: the men, women and children incarcerated from all realms of life. Yes, it can be said that weve made mistakes and wrong choices in our lives quest. It can be said that, in more cases than one, we deserve to be imprisoned, some of us for the rest of our lives. It can also be said that many of us have disappointed and let down the people of our own communities, but has it been said that we are human beings too? Has everyone forgotten that we, too, are your parents, spouses, children, relatives and friends? Has it been said that we, too, still bleed and even breathe the very same air as the rest of the world does? We still bleed! We still breathe! Unfortunately, the world has immediately forgotten our presence and existence as soon as the iron gates slam and cell doors close.

That is why we are phantom souls, because no one can even see us or hear us, and if it were possible to do so, it would be like a bees wing falling onto your shoulder or an eyelash falling on your nose: hardly detectable. We have no outside effect at all. What we do have in here is something mentally, emotionally and physically corrosively debilitating, which none of us convicted felons would ever wish upon anyone else to ever experience.

As phantom souls, we are trapped in a purgatory state of existence with Hells fire already burning our feet. Ive been locked in this purgatory state for over a decade, and I still have not gotten used to this burning sensation that never ceases, not even in my sleep! Animals in animal shelters, in a horrid way, are blessed. Because after seven days, if no one wants them, then they are morbidly euthanized. An inhumane, bittersweet luxury of a quick escape from this protracted nightmare we unfortunately cannot receive. For we phantom souls must endure the pain of life without parole sentences, with no rehabilitation or educational reform available, just left to rot inside supermax prisons.

Everyone eventually leaves your sidefriends, siblings, parents, relatives, your spouse and, lastly, your own children leave you to stand utterly alone. Everyone scatters away from our lives like cockroaches scatter when the lights turn on. No more visits, no more collect calls accepted, no more photos, no more letters and no more outside financial assistance to purchase the bare necessities that are hard to come by in here. No more nothing! Thats it! You are officially cut off from the very essential things that were giving your phantom soul the slightest hope by having to endure Hell itself, just to try to get back to its body, back to life and back to love.

This is when mental illness, violence, murder and the suicide rate in correctional facilities and their draconian supermax prisons drastically increases. Because a phantom soul with no help, no education, no vocational training and no proper rehabilitation, for the vast majority, with nothing to lose and no hope for the future, is better off dead. Actually, that is what a phantom soul truly is. For we are dead men walking. Its a bone-chilling feeling to realize that.

Now, as a phantom soul loses itself completely, it then attaches itself to the prison atmosphere: its lifestyle, culture and methods of mere survival, like a leech to your inviting flesh, thirsty for your blood. It is nothing nice or positive at all! For we do not live in here, we must strive daily to survive in a cold isolated world full of pain, loneliness, anger, confusion and hate. Its a menagerie where big dog eats little dog. Kill or be killed. Human snakes of all shapes and sizes roam this place with two faces, menacing glares and evil agendas, having to resort to convict criminal ingenuity to get by and survive. Phantom souls must condition themselves to be alert and ready at any moment for the instant danger reveals itself and chaos erupts.

For many, pride is sealed by tattoos. For others they are shields, for they shield many from exposing their true selves. Respect, acceptance, loyalty, acknowledgement, reputation, honor and authority are earned by the degree of corrupt mercilessness and violent deeds of ruthlessness against any other prisoner who violates convict code of ethics and by-laws: violence against rival gangs, racial enemies and against the guards. We cannot forget the guards. For they are the most ruthless, deceitful, dangerous, conniving, lying and cheating gang in the prison. For seven times out of ten, if a prisoner is assaulted, marked for death, unjustly persecuted, punished or even killed, a guard one way or another had his hand in the treachery. Sad but true.

Hate is the only way that emotion is expressed inside of this concrete bed of barbed wire, thorny roses that we reside in. Unfortunately, in prison life, jealousy, envy, deceit, gossiping and plotting against others without anything else to do, look forward to or lose is what many fall into. All other positive extracurricular activities are cut, only available to select few or are non-existent. The vast majority display acts of treachery and hate against one another, burning with boredom and lack of mental, emotional and physical stimulations that are positive and productive, all wanting what the next person is or has. As I've said, we are phantom souls, so we are never satisfied with who we are or what we have. Yet people out in society wonder why prisons become so rampant with gangs, violence, drug abuse, racism, hate and the mass deterioration of once good-natured souls.

Men die in here both physically and mentally, and it's worse than any war or natural disaster because this is all planned. Oh, you think that it is the prisoners who do the planning? They are a problem, but it is the government and its reckless prison administrations and faulty judicial systems that do the planning to provide laws, sentences, stipulations, restrictions and budget cuts of prison rehabilitation, education, therapy, job training and recidivism prevention programs. It is hard for us not to fall prone to its negative backlash; in that way, we become prisoners cast off into this environment. I didn't make these laws, and I didn't create these fetid institutions and their mind-altering supermax prisons with no other purpose but to punish physically, torture us and break us mentally, emotionally and physically, creating the animals many of us unfortunately become. The government did this and planned this horrendous thing that is the greatest unknown atrocity in America, for all men are neither created nor treated equally. Like I said, we are phantom souls, and we are unknown. For a phantom soul is nothing but an institutionalized, lost sense of hope.

Every day when the guard comes by the cells to pass out mail, there are so many phantom souls literally trying to maintain their composure from the overwhelming anxiety and desperate hope of possibly receiving a letter. From whom? It doesn't really matter, just a letter from someone telling you that you are thought of and exist to the outside world. In most cases, the letters do not come and the sadness creeps in, but it's quickly deterred by anger and aloofness. A couple of curse words, reassuring comments and thoughts to tell yourself, I don't care if I get mail or not. Well, it is a lie and if any phantom soul claims such, then he is a damned liar! But hey, everyone lies to someone, so why not lie to yourself, right?

If you do receive a letter, an answered collect call, or even a visit, for a brief moment of time one is not a phantom soul. He is once again a parent, sibling, someone's child, spouse or a friend. He is a person, he is a human being; plain and simple, he is alive again. Oh, and it's a Beautiful thing. You can literally feel the next man exhale a breath of relief and then inhale in a breath of hope to try to last until the next letter, visit or answered collect call comes again.

Do we phantom souls ever cry? Well, this is actually a touchy and controversial subject because, in essence, we are not supposed to, but my personal opinion as a hardened phantom soul is that, yes, everyone does, somehow, some way. Especially for us phantom souls in here who experience hurt, anger, confusion, loneliness and stress daily, we tend to hide it best. Sort of like an M&M candy: a hard shell on the outside but soft on the inside. Through one's artwork, poetry or creative writing, tears are shed symbolically or secretly crying and muffling your sobs and hiding your tears into your pillow so that no one else is able to see or hear. I guess some of us even cry in our sleep. I can honestly say that I did once that I am aware of. One night, I awoke to find hot tears running down my face. I felt a deep, aching sense of sorrow and hurt. What was I crying about? I don't even know, which astounds me.

There are those of us trying to do something for ourselves and rehabilitate back into our enriched flesh and bones. Well, just imagine the civil rights movement between blacks and whites, the United Farmworkers union striking against the greedy grape grower industry and immigrants trying to get a fair shake on the new biased and even bigoted immigration reform policies and laws. Intensify that a trillion times over and over: The government and its reckless prison administrations feel justified in how they treat and deprive our phantom souls from a transition back to life through any rehabilitation reform with light at the other end of the dark tunnel. For it is no secret that the government and its reckless prison administrations have literally cut back or cut off the means for prisoner reform through rehabilitation, education and vocational and job training. This is true especially for prisoners with lengthy sentences or who are sentenced to life without parole and have great influence over many younger prisoners and those with shorter sentences. Yet America gives away billions of dollars to supposedly help and aid Pakistan for whatever reason and has the audacity to question and look down its nose at countries like China over human rights violations. Meanwhile, America cannot or chooses not to fix its own.

It is a struggle in every way, so we continue to remain phantom souls: lost, wandering, ghost-like souls between Hell and a hard place, in a purgatory state and soulless cells. Think about it, have you ever seen someone's eyes that reflect nothing? It is heart-wrenching, and people say, Oh, they deserve it for what they've done. I feel sorry for those people because their souls are more lost than ours. Compassion and understanding are gifts that are attained, and the sad thing is that few people ever attain those gifts. As phantom souls, we have no voice to the outside world, but there are minds of great intelligence in here that could put an end to all issues that are deteriorating our Beautiful world. Many discussions in here of art, politics, religion, history, war, philosophy, economics, literature, hobbies and music are so baffling, people wouldn't be able to fathom what we know, are truly capable of and are trying to express. Just imagine what we could accomplish with the proper rehabilitative and educational reform provided to *all* of us while incarcerated at all levels.

This is why people out in the free society are so astounded and even sickened by the *fact* that the prison system continues to corrupt and not help many young and first-time offenders who become repeat offenders and progress further into crime. Prisoners with long-term sentences and life without parole who are not being rehabilitated and positively stimulated become part of the virus that helps spread the disease to other prisoners entering and leaving prison. For as phantom souls, we become institutionalized through this deterioration and negative unreformed recidivism disease eating us alive!

We phantom souls experience a real travesty of loss, despair, anger, sadness, confusion and loneliness. What we feel is so intense, it can

be described as that feeling in the movie *Titanic* when Leonardo Di Caprio drifts off into his icy tomb of death from making sure his true love Kate Winslet would be safe, or that first initial thought and feeling after the attacks on 9/11, and that feeling of anger and despair over the flooding of Hurricane Katrina and the errors made in the aftermath in New Orleans. Think about the first few seconds of each of those feelings. That is what we feel in our hearts, and our hearts pump blood, which means we still bleed and we still breathe.

This is not a poor me story, for I deserve to be punished for my crimes that I take full responsibility for, but I also need help to be better for myself, the prison I survive in and for society who pays taxes to the government to help and fix our society and those things to make it better and more productive and prosperous. This is something felt by everyone. Most, if not all, convicts will not admit it, but there is no fault in that. Because, in a crazy way, if we do admit it to ourselves that we are alive, then it all rushes in and the emotions are too much to bear. Prison is not always the answer for everything. Punishment with no reform and no proper educational rehabilitation is not the answer. Life without parole with hopelessness and nothing to lose or gain is *not* the answer. Long-term solitary confinement in draconian supermax prisons is not the answer.

Rehabilitation, love, education, understanding, hope and change *are* the answer. But how can it be properly applied so that it is not taken advantage of? I don't know, but I sure hope that someone can find a way or a solid solution to this problem before this phantom soul completely fades away.

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.

Respect felt the depth I hear ya on crickets chronicles podcast 20s DEVE keep it pushing

This is very good. I have been corresponding with a prisoner for a couple years now whose cell mate was previously in solitary for a total of 13 years. That's what got me interested in the so-called justice system. What I've read about prisons and prisoners in the past 2 years has been an eye opener. I mean, A REAL EYE OPENER. I can hardly believe how people are treated inside. In many cases, worse than a dog. My friend is fortunate enough to have people on the outside committed to sending him money every single month so he can eat. What the prison serves is not enough for even a 60 year old who doesn't need as many calories. I can't imagine how someone in his 20s with no one on the outside to help, can survive. And so many people on the outside talk about life in prison being a vacation and that all the good stuff should be denied them, saying that prisoners deserve what they are getting. If they only knew what it's REALLY like, they'd never talk like that. I am happy to see that some voices, badly needed voices, are making their way to the outside. This is the only way things will ever change, if people hear what is actually happening.

We don't need reform. we need TRANSFORM. This is saying we'll decrease the amount of torture how about no more torture? Solitary is only torture the way they do it. THAT is what needs to change. MY remedy will transform the whole system.

Remedy for Rikers

<http://www.1prophetspeaks7.blogspot.com/2015/06/remedy-for-rikers.html>

Faith based programs are the only ones that really transform people. God through Jesus changes people. Hence we need to change the prisons into schools of ministry.

Give EVERY person in solitary a bible, guitar and kitten Bibles should be a constitutional right in every jail cell everywhere, like a toilet. Guitars are tools to help them learn to worship God which invokes His spirit so they can hear from Him. Kittens would help them maintain their humanity. Many prisoners use cockroaches or rats as pets.

I spent 8 months in solitary. It was torture because I did not have a bible or instrument.

I was already a strong believer an intercessor and lifelong musician. Everyone in jails hears voices. I knew they were God and demons. The task was to decide who was who. MOST prisoners think they are hallucinating when they hear voices. And the atheist psych people who talk to them tell them this too. THEN they think they need psych drugs for the alleged hallucinations. They get all distressed cos they can't get the drugs, when the drugs is NOT what they need. They turn people into vegetables. They block all thoughts, not just bad thoughts. They cause brain damage I was on them so I know. They HINDER prayer. They are not what people need. People need to be TOLD they are NOT hallucinating that God is there for them and to develop a relationship with HIM by reading a bible and playing music.

I have masters in jazz composition In music school people go into small rooms the size of cells, often, with their instrument, It is not hell like jail it is more like heaven. Hence we can turn solitary into an experience that a person should have had before they ended up in jail. A chance to be in music school. This is a blessing. They will come out of there trained to be a minister to others in jails, in schools, warning kids not to use drugs, join gangs, etc and ministers.

The other important issue is to erase criminal records. THEY are what ruin peoples lives because what is written down acts like curses and sends assignments to a person where they get re-accused in all kinds of bizarre situations and ruins their lives. And it also tempts people to re-do sins and criminal behaviors.

Prison should be a time out Solitary does not have to be torture. though it should be used in a way where people have their own cell and come out for communal meals, to compare notes about prayer.

Psych drugs destroy people. They are the problem, not the solution. They cause suicide and homicide. The Governors need to give people an amnesty by executive orders overriding their previous sentence.

Regardless of the previous sentence, it could be that they need to spend no more than a year or two training for ministry reading the bible, learning how to pray.

Their job can include writing a memoir of what happened to them so others can understand it and learn from it. Especially for people on death row.

People make mistakes in life. It is part of life .To punish people for this makes no sense. We should be interested in transforming them and using their previous experience as part of their testimony to what Jesus has healed them from and to warn others about not doing. The worst criminals have the most powerful testimonies. So their mistakes are not wasted. They are valuable testimonies to others of the transformative power of God/Jesus. Someone who was a mass murderer has a more impressive testimony than someone who stole gum. The jail sentence should be seen as a time out for assessment of a persons attitude and behavior and training to change it. One thing that would be effective would be part of their sentence would be to have the person write 50,000 times Drugs are a bad idea if they used drugs, for example. Doing this will re-program their brain NOT to want to do drugs! Or whatever they did before. Like when kids have to write on the blackboard.

We should use school as a model for what happens in jails. Life is School. Re training rather than punishment should be the objective.

Turning someone from an animal into a caring human being is a more inspiring testimony than just executing people or punishing them. Those who are unwilling to forgive need to be warned it can send a person to hell. That is what solitary is like as a warning that hell is real. Every person near me had been horribly abused and needed to forgive. They were there as a warning to do so or go to hell, which is what jail was a taste of.

jesus said unless we forgive others, God wont forgive us. Matthew 6

Hell is real. Jails, solitary, psych wards, holocausts and wars all exist as a taste of it on earth, so we WILL believe there IS such a real place. That is their purpose.

but it doesnt need to be for 20 years. Experiencing it for a week is enough to get the message.

David Berkowitz the Son of Sam is one such person. He has been saved 25 years. Gov Cuomo should pardon him and ask him to come to Rikers and help transform the place. He should RUN for office because the PUBLIC needs to hear about the transformative power of Jesus. Especially the Jews. They do not realize this. And he is Jewish. Many Jews who commit crimes end up in psych wards and are not helped that way.

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Remedy for Rikers

<http://www.1prophetspeaks7.blogspot.com/2015/06/remedy-for-rikers.html>

Spiritual Bootcamp my experience in solitary launching prayers

<http://www.1prophetspeaks7.blogspot.com/2014/02/spiritual-bootcamp-my-experience-in.html>

Leanne I want to encourage you and your husband that prayer works. You could pray for the judge to have dream to release him. Or some witness or lawyer to recant, for example. One time I prayed for God to talk to a judge and apparently it happened because when I saw them the next day they said to me Oh have I meet you before Yes in her dream! This happens a lot.

A good thing for Gerard would be for him to write a memoir of what happened in his life to lead him to be accused of murder and whether he did it or not, and what has happened since. an honest testimony could scare a lot of kids straight. No life is wasted and everyones experience is part of their testimony.

Everyone has a phase 2 ministry

there is the part before being saved and born again and the part after which is the ministry. The first part is an important part of the testimony to show how powerful God really is.

<http://www.1prophetspeaks7.blogspot.com/2014/12/everyone-has-phase-2-ministry.html>

You are welcome to print and send anything on my website to him or others. You can send my article

REMEDY for Rikers to his jail warden and governor.

Remedy for Rikers

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Leanne send him a bible and a guitar if he can have it. try to get them to let him have one. it will totally change him. see the comment:

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I love you hunny. Im proud of you!

My heart goes out to you. Many people care deeply for you and for others who are in your situation. You are correct, no man deserves to be in solitary confinement no matter the crime. Our prison policies have failed and there are many people working trying to bring about change. You ARE part of that change. Thank you for your efforts by writing your wonderfully crafted letter. You have a gift for writing and you can use that always. Many are working to bring about change and to open up the conversation around this issue. Our failed prison policies, failed lengthy mandatory minimums not commensurate with the crime, the use of solitary confinement (studies dating back to Dickens state that solitary is torture and yet we use it). I have been posting on this for years now, the fact that first time nonviolent offenders get thrown into solitary for 30 or 60 or 260 days (one young man I know who was a first time nonviolent offender) that we stand by and allow this to happen is appalling. Thank you for your letter. Thank you for your efforts to bring about change. Send your letter to every newspaper in the country starting with the NY times, Huffington post, Washington Post, you name it send it to them. We cannot lock our fellow citizens in solitary confinement. It is my heart's belief that we CANNOT do this any longer. This has got to end and it will. People feel the pain and the insanity, never doubt that people do not care, we just need more people to care and they will only care the more stories that they hear. Have your cellies send their stories in and more and more and keep doing it until you fill a book and another one and another one. Thank you. You have a good heart and NO ONE can take that away from you. You are doing something good. Keep it up and someday please God someday no man will have to ever endure solitary confinement in an American prison ever. This is what WE are calling for. NO SOLITARY CONFINEMENT EVER.

Peace to you. Keep writing and reading and you will and are making a difference. I wish you peace all the days of your good life.

Hi Im his wife. Im having your comment printed and sent to him. Have a great day!

Thank you for ensuring that he hears that people do care and are working to try to abolish solitary confinement which is cruel and inhumane. I am sorry that you and your family, like so many others, live with this. Please have all the people that you know who are affected by this write and call their representatives, senators. Solitary confinement has been proven to drive sane men insane, it is an abuse of power and a dereliction of duty to inflict that suffering on ANY man. It is my firmly held belief that there is no place for such a practice in a so called civilized society, ever. Best to you and your family. Keep calling for an end to solitary. Peace to you.

Thank you :) I will. My whole life revolves around him and prison issues. I moved from CA. to Illinois and Im now only 6 blks away from him. One thing for sure is we will never stop fighting. If you'd like to see his art just search Gershco on FB. Thank you for caring so much about these men!

Hi Leanne,

Many organizations have been doing good work to bring about changes to our failed justice system. But we need more and more to get involved.

FAMM is one such organization. They have been, for years now, battling to bring about changes to our mandatory minimums outdated insane laws which are ludicrous, unjust, and utterly unfair. I am attending a conference in Harvard today and tomorrow, on women in prison and why we need programs not prisons for these women. Children and families suffer too, very much so. ALL people affected must tell their story over and over and over again until we see some change. Just as the Black Lives Matter movement is raising consciousness and awareness around the unfairness that exists in our police force. We must also start the conversation around how solitary confinement serves NO ONE. It is a cruel and barbaric practice that needs to end NOW.

We can all only do our own small part, but each of us have a part to play in this and we will do our own part. Keep going and please God some day there will be NO solitary confinement in American prisons.

Best to you and yours for all that you do too.

Please God we will eliminate solitary confinement for all. Best.

my I use this on our website? cureil.org

Yes please do. Hope its not too late. Sorry I didnt see it sooner. Im his wife.

Ive been trying to leave you a reply but its not working. Maybe this one will. Im sorry I didnt notice there were comment sooner. Please feel free to use it. Thank you.

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