

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/04/22/voices-from-solitary-waking-nightmares/>

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by [Voices from Solitary](#) | April 22, 2012

Incarcerated for over 17 years, Mysterious Offender (M.O.) has spent over 16 of those years in isolation units in Oregon, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. Corresponding with Solitary Watch for nearly 4 months, he has recounted his 12-year incarceration in Oregon's isolation units. He has said he suffers significant impairment from isolation. The following is a portion of a series of writings entitled



Exiled in Purgatory. Sal Rodriguez

Waking Nightmares

In 2009 I had been in prison for 15 years. My attorney hired a nationally well-known expert to examine me and determine how I had adjusted to incarceration. He gave me 34 tests, over three days, many of which can detect the faking of mental health disorders. He concluded I suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He stated in his written report:

Further witnessing several murders, suicides, and general mayhem before and after his incarceration likely exacerbated his pre-existing PTSD symptomatology. His PTSD appears to be chronic from the TSI data. [SW note: The TSI is the Trauma Symptom Inventory.]

I've since learned, from other prison psychiatrists that PTSD is common in prisoners who have spent many years incarcerated. It is akin to serving several tours in a war zone. People become hypersensitive and you can literally feel the stress and tension on people. I've known it for years but didn't know it was PTSD.

I startle easily. If a pen rolls off my desk and hits the floor even that small sound can throw me into fear. If the officer knocks on the cell door or shuts the cuff port hard, a door slams, an odd sound every one of them can throw me into fear. I can only describe the fear as being of of body. I have recurring nightmares.

Does the prison provide treatment? Aside from wanting to put you on medication, No. They tell me if I need treatment I have to tell them what I need and chances are they don't have it.

I have to wonder why the US continues down the path of failing prisons that they know makes people worse, then sends them back into the world none the better.

I constantly worry how I will function in general population, let alone the free world. The U.S. has more prisoners than any other nation on earth. Why is that? Why is the land of the free also the land of prisoners?

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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I relate to this a lot, I've had the same reoccurring dreams again and again of being in a new prison and scared of not knowing anyone and not being used to being there yet. I did no where near as much time as you did or Anthony (I did 8 months when I was 16 and a month in the hole). I'm in my early 20s now and still have the same reoccurring dreams of being locked up in a new place knowing no one and the worst part not being used to being locked up. Thank you for this article it's nice to read this from someone with more experience than myself. This system needs to be changed in the states, it's horrendous to continue like we are.

I know that feeling and I hate this feeling. I was 18 years old. No juvi, never in trouble with the law, just a wrong turn in my part which landed me in prison for almost 14 years. I was raised by a system that was to protect me not subject me to a life of hell and pain. Being raised into a man from jail is not the same as you become one with parents guiding you. I remember times when my wife and I were dating I would have to tell her, one we fall asleep please do NOT touch me while we are sleeping. Well she forgot and she almost lost her face. If it wasn't for my quick reflexes, she will not be looking like as beautiful as she does. Just say when she touched me I guess to snuggle I felt violated I pushed get off the bed so hard she went flying off the bed. I was right on her on the way down until she screamed my name. Well I saved her from a busted skull and a snaked face. She never snuggled again. Till this day 7 years later, she tells me I love you and it's only me and the kids and we love you and we are here in bed only us no one else. I laugh but I do tend to jump at times. I guess I'm still getting use to things and NO I still haven't gotten checked out, I guess it's a trust thing. I still suffer from a lot of things and I know I need help. I just don't like it when I'm being evaluated, and I hate it when the phycists all do the, aha yeah, I hate it because the prison psyics only cared about the check not about us. So now what do I do? I can't hold a job down without feeling I'm being attacked. I go threw so much everyday, it's a struggle feeling like you're useless, when you're not, but how do you continue when you feel like the world is an arrow in your just a target? Who do I trust when in all my years in prison I didn't trust no one? So how can I trust some one with my feelings and my emotions? TRUST it's hard to just trust. Just looking for help I just don't know where to start. A fallen angel

I wonder if those who say we are the greatest country in the world are smart enough to eat their words when confronted with the prison statistics. Our 1 in 100 incarceration rate either suggests that our citizenry is among the most barbaric or that the government is the most repressive on earth. Worse than China! Plus we torture and remove all hope from a good portion of the prison population. Those who get out find that the sentence they received is really a life sentence; just as the concept of good time is passed, the idea of paying your debt to society and moving forward is history.

This is inhumane and constitutes cruel and unusual punishment. The reasons inmates are locked in these cement tombs is due, in many cases, not because they are dangerous or pose any threat to anyone but because they refused to work on their hoe squads or the inmate wrote a grievance against an officer and the officer is out to punish them. Many times male officers will threaten female inmates with this if they do not engage in sexual acts with them and the inmate never wins any case where it is an officer's word against theirs. Some come out after being locked up in these tombs for 10 years and suffer permanent psychological damage and PTSD then have to apply for medicare and welfare, which costs the taxpayers more money as they can no longer function in society.

you may not really have PTSD you need to look up what is called SHU syndrome by Dr. Stuart E. Grassian that may fit even better but I'm sorry to hear this I know what solitary can do to you stay strong for you are not alone in this pain may there be light in the darkness of justice

I am not sure that the hypersensitivity ever totally leaves a person. I still jump up at the age of 60 if someone walks into my bedroom while I'm asleep. If I am awake I struggle to get up but asleep I pop up like a gymnast. My kids call me from the safety of doorway rather than trying to touch me while I sleep. And the last time I was released was when I was 18 years old. I spent no time in prison and maybe a total of 3 years in juvenile institutions with maybe on the average of four weeks a year in solitary, I can only attempt to imagine the impact after so many years that this man and others have experienced.

Rarely do I comment on issues, but this issue I follow with great concern and interest. I applaud ACLU in its fight to end this cruel idea and practice of incarceration. At the VERY LEAST give these human beings some hope for the future! Implement some form of, earn it back program to return to an existences of some form. In truth, I feel the Super Max way of punishment needs to END! An please spare me the political Dem/Pub B.S.!!! As this issue has NOTHING to do with either.

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