Solitary.................................................Continued on page 2

WASTED MINDS: AN INSIDER’S LOOK AT THE TORTUROUS EFFECTS OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

By Kevin “Rashid” Johnson

Introduction

Much has been written of late on the torturous effects and wide-scale use of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons and the fact that this torture causes mental pain and suffering, and in many cases psychosis. Not much has been written, however, that illustrates the forms this damage takes and the suffering it causes both the victims and those around them, which is the purpose of this article. I’ve witnessed the mental deterioration of many a prisoner over my years in solitary (nearly two decades). Often the worst cases are those who lack outside contacts, and thus have no one to turn to for compassion, material support, and basic human interaction. Deprived of human companionship and the complex sensory stimulation of “normal” social environments, the minds close in on itself, searches desperately for stimulation, and attempts to create (compensate for) in turn, what is deprived of externally. The resultant imbalances and psychoses take many forms. Even mental health experts admit there is no single nor simple diagnosis of the mental impairments sensory deprivation causes. But common patterns do emerge.

I don’t usually use prisoners’ names in my reports and articles without their express consent. However, in the present case I’m making an exception; first, because the prisoner in question—Ellery Oliver #304611—needs help, and he won’t get it if I conceal his identity, and second, because I don’t believe he is capable of competently giving or withholding consent. What is most disheartening is there are thousands of cases like his hidden away within the vast U.S. prison system.

Oliver’s case is not exceptional. The Prisoners’ Five Core Demands

1. Eliminate group punishments
2. Abolish debriefing policy and modify active/inactive gang status criteria
4. Provide adequate food
5. Provide constructive programs and privileges for SHU prisoners

- Feb. 2011 - Prisoners send these demands to the Governor and CDRC officials
- July 2011 - Hunger strike commences, over 6,600 prisoners participate: CDRC promises but fails to show real progress
- Sept. 2011 - Hunger strike resumes with 12,000 participating
- Oct. 2011 - CDRC promises to review all current SHU assignments
- March 2012 - CDRC proposes repressive new Security Threat Group Management Strategy
- July 2013 - 30,000 prisoners initiate a third hunger strike, which includes thousands refusing to work.
- Sept. 2013 - Third hunger strike ends after 60 days, promise of special legislative hearings. The five core demands were not met.

Persecuted by the Persecuted

Prisoners like Oliver are almost universally disliked by the guards. Also by the guards. Their “behaviors” enrage and frustrate others, few of whom are inclined toward, and none of whom are trained to have, patience, tolerance, not understanding in dealing with or relating to the mentally infirm. And that is the key.

So they feel justified in condoning or participating in venting their own frustrations with the disturbed prisoner’s behaviors through their own and/or others’ physically and verbally abusive acts. Which does no one, in turn, neither the victim nor the victim’s family. Further, the guards’ abuses fuse to relent to guards’ brutal efforts to break him or his compatriots.

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And Here’s Ellery

Ellery Oliver has been in solitary confinement (administrative segregation in the TDCJ) for over a decade. He’s a New African Black male in my mid-50’s, who was confined to E2U for about 4 years. During that time he’s been brutally beaten by guards on numerous occasions, once having all his hair cut off in long (over his nose); thrown into a box and left contaminated with OC gas over 20 times (guards usually turn his cell-in water off for hours to days so he can’t wash himself); etc.

He’s been in solitary for any number of reasons (for any end, which often escalates into incidents where guards use violence against him. Oliver embodies a sort of stubborn rebelliousness. Although his expression seldom takes “rational” form, he refuses to relent to guards’ brutal efforts to break him or his peers’ persecutory responses to his erratic behaviors. He usually outlasts them and wears them down. One can see in his behaviors a struggle to cope with and resist the weathering effects of a compulsory solitary confinement, devoid of a meaningful social stimulation.

He has a remarkable memory. He can give the full names of almost any guard and other staff person at E2U (nearly 1000 people) without fail, and can identify them simply by their names, mannerisms, etc. Indeed, I often turned to him to identify various guards and others, including those involved in abuses who were otherwise unidentifiable because he dressed out in full body riot armor, which leaves down everything, especially guard misconduct, that happens around him. When he cannot get paper or guards trash his, he writes on the cell wall from floor to ceiling.

Upon my E2U assignment, I was confined to a cell he’d previously occupied. Every wall from floor to ceiling was covered with his notations of dates and times that he and other prisoners had been beaten, denied meals, etc. by guards, with all participants’ full names. Independent of his notes, he remembers the dates, times, and places of about every incident of serious abuse that has taken place around him, and the name of each prisoner victim. I often tested and double-checked his memory and information for accuracy, and found most of what he recorded to be correct. He also recorded to evidence obvious struggles within the limits of his environment to oppose guards’ abuses and hold on to what was certainly once a keen mind and colorful personality.

One who’s had all his personal belongings destroyed to over and over (consisting mostly of notes he writes about guard abuses in the unit, and books and pamphlets he’s obtained from free-books-to-prisoners programs and ABC books, etc.)..."has good sense," "knows what he’s doing," etc.

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HAVING THE FORESIGHT TO END ALL HOSTILITIES!

By Marisol Duguma

In my 25 years of incarceration I never saw what I would witness on November 24, 2013. An act of transparency that shocked the world and forever changed the landscape of the California prison system.

The foresight to end all hostilities was a revolutionary action that demonstrated a collective desire for peace and change. It was a moment of solidarity among prisoners, united under the common goal of improving living conditions and recognizing the inhuman nature of solitary confinement.

As one of the prisoners involved, I witnessed the power of perspective and the transformative potential of collective action. It was a turning point in my life, and I feel honored to have played a part in such a monumental event.

The foresight to end all hostilities was not just a protest or a letz; it was a call for change and a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. It was a step forward in the ongoing struggle for justice and equality, and I am proud to be a part of this movement for a better future.
Californians do so needlessly. We have brutally taken a breath or decorated a breath. We are optimistic about the impact of the The California Public Safety Board (CPSB) meeting on June 19, 2014 was called to discuss changes to Proposition 47, the legislation that reclassified some low-level drug offenses from felonies to misdemeanors. The meeting featured presentations by the California Justice Institute (CJI) and the California Public Policy Institute (CPPP), followed by public comment and a vote on the proposed changes. The California Public Safety Board (CPSB) is a joint agency of the state of California that was established by the California Constitution in 1976. The board's primary function is to develop and implement public safety policies that promote public safety and reduce crime, while also ensuring the fair and equitable treatment of offenders. The board is composed of five members appointed by the governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate. The board is responsible for developing and implementing public safety policies that promote public safety and reduce crime, while also ensuring the fair and equitable treatment of offenders. The board is composed of five members appointed by the governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate. The board is responsible for developing and implementing public safety policies that promote public safety and reduce crime, while also ensuring the fair and equitable treatment of offenders. The board is composed of five members appointed by the governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate. The board is responsible for developing and implementing public safety policies that promote public safety and reduce crime, while also ensuring the fair and equitable treatment of offenders.
**BOOK REVIEW OF MOTHER CALIFORNIA: A STORY OF REDEMPTION BEHIND BARS**, by Kenneth E. Hartman

_A short reflection on Inside/outside Solidarity_

_by Kim Pollak_

_Inside/on the outside, it has been incredibly inspiring to witness the hope and persistence of the people who have long served time, and continue to go through the trauma of the loss of loved ones and family members._

_In the narrative of Mother California: A Story of Redemption Behind Bars, Kenneth E. Hartman showcases the resilience of incarcerated women in California._

**JUAN MENDEZ ON SOLITARY CONFINEMENT: A HUMAN RIGHTS**

_Probably one of the most influential persons in the movement to end the solitary confinement of inmates within their borders is the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, journalist, human rights activist, and scholar, Dr. Juan Mendez._

_In the book, Mendez, a torture survivor of the Argentine military dictatorship, continues his campaign to end the solitary confinement of inmates._

_The book contains a foreword written by Richard Lindbergh (Lindbergh-B) said in a statement last week._

_“I am grateful to have been able to contribute my perspective to this important book. It is clear that Dr. Mendez has a unique understanding of the suffering caused by solitary confinement and the urgent need for change. I encourage everyone to read this book and support the efforts to end this practice.”_
We must not lose sight of the fact that these conditions have not been accepted by us in a spirit of meekness, but as an expression of the consciousness of the whole of which we are a part, that the time has come for the realization of our full humanity. The fact that these conditions exist is not due to any lack of will or capacity on our part to transform them, but rather to the necessity of transforming the society that created them. We cannot accept these conditions as merely temporary or as the result of an accident or a misunderstanding. These conditions are the result of a conscious and intentional policy of the government, and as such they are not merely a reflection of our current social conditions, but a direct consequence of the way in which our society is organized.

We must not be content with simply denouncing these conditions and expressing our solidarity with those who suffer from them. We must take actions to change the system that created these conditions, and we must do so in a way that is congruent with our principles and values. We must not allow our actions to be dictated by the government or by other people, but rather by our own conscience and our own principles.

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...and this, SHU prisoners were not allowed access to any education at all. If you don’t have the thousands of dollars needed to get through college, you will remain uninsured, and as foolishly uneducated and unemployable as if you were transferred; just like those SHU prisoners. If you are willing to learn and to make the effort to get a higher education, you will be more successful as a student at home.

In SHU, your mail is censored, and routinely withheld.

Many SHU prisoners are held in solitary confinement for years. Some states have minimum time periods of solitary confinement in their SHUs. Others allow the unlimited use of solitary confinement.

In the final analysis, mass incarceration is proof that there is an inverse relationship between the wealth of society and the freedom of the individual. For society to become more wealthy, it must become more repressive. The growth of mass incarceration is an economic necessity.

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PRISONER UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS...

The Nightmare of the American Dream

I would like to take this moment to possibly enlighten you on the topic of immigrant prisoners. This is a system that I would love to share with all of you. Our hope is to create discus-
sions around this topic and encourage every single person in this room to see these people as they are. I am a California prisoner, and we hold in California, more than a few thousand Mexican and California prisoners. For lifers to be included in the Mexican Prisoner exchange program and the Mexican Prisoner exchange program is some-what an issue and we need to focus on the importance of this issue in need of the human and just treatment.


Article 9 of the U.N. Convention Against Torture and other “non-derogable” provisions and policies that “constitute cruel, inhuman, or degra-
ding punishment and other forms of torture.”

Lastly, the California Prison Reduction and Cost Saving Act of 2010, has recently and significantly, cut funding, and mandate cutbacks to 4,000 lifers. As you may know, it is a serious issue and we need to focus on the importance of this issue in need of the human and just treatment.


In an exchange over how to get the data needed, legislators ques-
tioned whether California had enough staffing in various areas. Lawmakers also asked what steps were being taken to ensure that all verbal and written complaints were properly recorded. Legislators asked whether there should be more training for staff, and whether there should be more oversight of solitary confinement. Legislators also asked whether there should be more training for staff, and whether there should be more oversight of solitary confinement. Legislators also asked whether there should be more training for staff, and whether there should be more oversight of solitary confinement. Legislators also asked whether there should be more training for staff, and whether there should be more oversight of solitary confinement. Legislators also asked whether there should be more training for staff, and whether there should be more oversight of solitary confinement.

In conclusion, in asking for more information from CDCR on hunger strikes being disciplined for hunger strikes as 
become the norm. Stainer declared that "It is a struggle to the point of death. In the California Penal System, we are not just fighting for our lives, but for our very existence."

Ammiano agreed that the time for change was now, and urged all legislators to use the hearings as a platform for change. "We have reached a tipping point in the debate over solitary confinement in California. We must move forward and make the changes that are necessary for a humane and just system of justice," Ammiano declared.

In his closing remarks, Assemblymember Hancock praised the panelists for their work and commitment to the issue. "We have heard powerful testimony from a range of perspectives, and I believe that we have moved closer to understanding the complexities of solitary confinement," Hancock said. "We must continue to work towards a system of justice that is fair, just, and humane for all Californians."
and some non-antagonistic, like the contradiction among larger and more powerful, that it is changing into, or in the deduce from the number of participants in the three hunger exercise responsibility. The more collective responsibility platter. It is something that must be struggled for. And in the Yet these history-making numbers were not enough to over numbers, not ours, and they are of historical significance. They are being held in conditions of constitutionally sanc...will for size, so try to keep them at around 2,500 words or...

"The main topic for Prison Focus #42 will con...ing message. "The main topic for Prison Focus #42 will con...

One thing I've learned in those years is that in this movement...to be isolated, they should not be isolated.

Margaret Winter: I would like to thank Senator Han...uting policy in the hands of the state. [1]

Fourth. Juveniles should never be kept in solitary con...in segregation without an individualized determination that (physically and psychologically) make them a danger to the safety of others. And that means real means the death penalty for offenders, regardless of whether their actual behavior, in prison or in the community.

Fourth. Avoids should never be kept in solitary conf...ing prison staff, inmates and the public safe."

A similar bill on juvenile solitary confinement practices passed in Minnesota earlier this year. The bill, sponsored by State Representative David Doren, was passed to limit the use of solitary confinement for those with serious mental illness and medical needs. The bill, however, did not receive the necessary votes to pass.

Also in 2013 bills were proposed to limit or ban the use of solitary confinement in Illinois, Pennsylvania and Mississippi. In late 2012, the American Psychiatric Association approved policy opposing the prolongation of segregation with people with serious mental illness. It is estimated that 16% of people in the U.S. with serious mental illness are housed in solitary and segregation facilities. The American Institute of Architects' Code of Ethics to prohibit the practice of solitary confinement and that this mate instrument in the hands of the state. [1]

The Federal government has also recently become in...empirical research is essential to eliminating the use of prolonged or indefinite isolation under all circumstances, stressing that prolonging it can be dangerous for all individuals and that it

A few states have followed this path, with the most notable examples being California and Oregon. In 2008 New York passed the Shilts Inclusion Act, a law that does not prevent people with serious mental illness from being considered for a security level in the place of confinement. In 2015, Maine Department of Corrections - Maine had its first 15-day hearings implemented for all prisoners to be heard by a national classification expert from the NIC, an arm of the AIC.
CPF GOALS
1. End all human rights abuses against prisoners.
2. End the use of long-term isolation.
3. Close the Security Housing Units.
4. Educate the public that SHU prisoners are torture survivors.
5. Improve medical care and living conditions for prisoners living with HIV, hepatitis C and other life-threatening diseases.
6. Help gain compassionate release for prisoners with serious illnesses and physical disabilities.
7. Scop all discrimination against LGBT prisoners.
8. Abolish the prison system as we know it.

SOME GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO PRISON FOCUS
Some suggestions for submissions:
• Artwork or graphics
• Letters (250 words) Let us know if you want us to use your name or we will only publish your initials and city & state of residence. You can also specify “anonymous.”
• Short Articles (250-500 words) The same identification guidelines apply. Topics can be issue specific, or current news or information.
• Helpful resources with address and pertinent information.
• Larger articles are accepted but be aware—our space is limited.

Topics: Prison Focus topic of issue; current news; recent or pending legislation or policy; news from your institution; organizing efforts; books—basically anything related to the prison industrial complex as you see it. Individual legal cases are not usually printed.

Sorry, we cannot return your submissions unless a prior arrangement is made. Submissions are not guaranteed to be published and we generally cannot respond to your submissions because of the volume of mail we receive. Prison Focus welcomes all submissions (they will not be returned).

CPF’S MISSION STATEMENT
California Prison Focus fights to abolish the California prison system as we know it. We investigate and expose human rights abuses with the goal of ending long-term isolation, medical neglect, and all forms of discrimination. We are community activists, prisoners, and their family members working to inspire the public to demand change.

CPF depends on volunteers to do our invaluable work. We need your help answering mail, working on our newsletter, staffing our office, fund raising, and outreach. Check our website for more information.

PRISON FOCUS #42
The main topic for Prison Focus #42 will consist of theoretical questions facing the prisoner's movement both in California and generally. Please send us your articles and artwork. The due date for submissions for the next issue is February 1, 2014. If you have ideas for issue #43 send them in to us as well. Although we don’t often do it as often as we should, we do like to think ahead. You should too.

ABOUT CPF
California Prison Focus is a non-profit community-based human rights organization working with and for California prisoners. Our two main issue areas are fighting against the long term isolation, torture and abuse of Security Housing Units (SHU) and demanding an end to the medical neglect and abuse of prisoners.

The focus of our work is our investigative trips to prisons with SHU facilities. We make as many SHU visits as possible. We work to build strong bridges between the prisoners and the community, and to bring forth the voice of the prisoners through our newsletter, Prison Focus, and our ongoing educational outreach. Central to our work is training ourselves, prisoners and their loved ones in self-advocacy through public protest, networking, coalition building, letter-writing and contacting prison officials and policy makers.

Founded in 1991 (as Pelican Bay Information Project), we have made hundreds of prison visits and conducted thousands of interviews with prisoners. Our membership is comprised of prisoners, activists, family members of prisoners, former prisoners, law students, attorneys, and human rights advocates.

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