

## **Never-Ending Fight**

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People might believe that men and women incarcerated in the prisons around this country live with no reason for responsibility. Prison life is a never-ending fight, emotionally, physically, financially, spiritually, and psychologically. The never-ending fight in prison lacks no difference in the fight any average "free" American goes through. Our fight is just confined to a big building that has "state penitentiary stamped on the front.

At the age of 18, I found myself sitting alone in a cold, dark, muggy medieval-like cell. The entire time, my underdeveloped mind fought with itself. I was left all alone to fight the many inner demons I had. It is a fight that eight years later I'm still fighting. At the bright and beautiful age of 26, I'm still alive after all my years of complete psychological turmoil and torture. Locked in complete isolation inside a 16 foot by 8 foot cell for the last eight consecutive years, I've won more battles with myself than I have lost. Many men that I knew committed suicide. They couldn't deal with themselves. Death became their ultimate friend. It welcomed them with arms wide open. It consumed their souls from the beginning to the end.

I could have been one of those people. I've conquered the unforeseen enemies in isolation and one of them is death. A lot of people don't admit it for the fear of receiving a bad reputation, but death has crossed many minds confined for years in isolation. It's as if death is sitting right at the back of your mind all the time.

For hundreds of years, from the beginning of constructing the first state penitentiary, solitary confinement was used to break criminals. The only thing solitary confinement broke was their minds, making some completely insane, hate people, and some just gave up.

Not every prisoner has a life sentence or a lengthy sentence to serve,. The majority of us are going to walk the streets again, some right out of isolation. And guess what? The PA Department of Corrections doesn't care about the possibility of some dude with hate on his mind committing another heinous crime. Some of these prisoners never had a day of treatment during their entire time incarcerated. And they're thrown out to society with not a chance in hell of succeeding.

Not only do the prisoners confined to long-term isolation fight with their own problems, they have to fight the (lack of) common sense of men and women who operate these prisons. The fight for common sense will never end as long as people with power refuse to use it.

Pennsylvania is a police state. It focuses on many forms of safety and security of people who reside in this state. What are people with power doing to protect prisoners, who are people, from being psychologically tortured in isolation which could later down the road once released cause the victimization of yet another American?

People are so focused on keeping us in so we don't hurt someone else. But in the same breath they hurt us psychologically which could have a negative impact on our communities once these people are released from prison.

There can't be prison reform when there is long-term solitary confinement. And there can't be prison reform when the same system that wants it falsely promotes to the public that their facilities offer rehabilitative opportunities and teach us to be law-abiding citizens. There is a lot more to being a law-abiding citizen than not breaking the law.