

How Solitary Confinement Has Been Good for Me in Prison

By Beverly Jaynes

I've been on Protective Custody and Administrative Segregation status at the two Missouri women's prisons for almost three years now, liking it and needing its relative safety. Because of being physically harmed by other offenders, I first sought PC status in Nov. of 2011, staying on it in HUSA of WERDCC for 3 months, coming out into general population (GP) for 2 or 3 weeks, only to be harmed again and so miserable that I was suicidal, so a mental health counselor urged me to seek PC again and I stayed on PC/Ad Seg status there another 4 months until I was transferred to CCC, the other women's prison across the state. I did not request PC there, hoping that I wouldn't be harmed ~~again~~, which proved not to be the case. So after suffering injuries, I went into PC/Ad Seg. confinement at CCC for 27 months, after several weeks stressed out in prison population there.

All that time I'd been urged by prison and mental health staff to waive my right to PC and to reenter GP, which I wouldn't do in the 30 to 90 day status reviews. So I was then transferred back to WERDCC, to attend the WSRU Mental Health program in the HUS segregated unit. However, to participate with the other WSRU offenders in the classroom, dayroom, and activities out in GP, I'd have to waive my PC status and sign enemy waivers, which I still refused to do. WERDCC and MO DOC officials still urged me to waive my PC, saying my need for it was "delusional" and unfounded. But since I'd already completed the WSRU class modules in the class on HUS in 2007 and 2009, and I'd done them in my cell at CCC in 2014, WERDCC Mental Health devised a customized WSRU program for me to do while in the confinement of my PC/Ad. seg cell and weekly with my M.H. Counselor, so I wouldn't have to waive my PC status. I'm now studying subjects that Ms. Hall and I decided on, which better suit my needs: Post-traumatic stress disorder, OCD, stress management, meditation, and relaxation and stretching exercises, which I've added to the yoga and exercises I already do daily in my cell as it is, so I feel physically and mentally more healthy.

p.2) During these three years of solitary confinement in PETED Seg. Status, which isn't really so solitary, as I'm often taken out of my cell for medical and mental health appointments and several trips yearly to outside specialists out of town, I keep myself occupied and mentally stimulated by writing poetry and essays, letters to the editor of newspapers, and corresponding with many friends and govt. officials in letters. I play card games, keep a journal, and take notes on the books and magazines I read. At CCC, I received two books from the weekly HUI book cart and several magazines, ("The Week" news mag., "MO Conservationist" and "Guideposts") in my cell. At WERDEC, I'm not allowed these magazines in my cell, except for the spiritual, monthly, "Guideposts" and, "Daily Bread," daily devotional pamphlets, because I can choose a magazine along with two books from the weekly book cart. I study the WSRM materials, along with information that my friends and family send to me as enclosures in their frequent letters.

As long as I stay so occupied, I'm happy and I don't miss my former prison activities, including weekly canteen and purchasing snacks and items from fundraisers. I like most of the food served on the three food trays daily, which are filling. I'm allowed to purchase stamps, paper, envelopes, pens, soap, D.O., toothpaste, shower shoes, and shampoo, (at CCC, but not at WERDEC, where we're given state shampoo in our 3 weekly showers in segregation) twice monthly from canteen which is brought to our cells. We're offered, "recreation," to stand outside in a caged dog-run-like area, able to see and talk to other inmates, three times weekly, which I did a few times at CCC, but I prefer to exercise alone in my cell instead. At CCC, I communicated with other Seg. inmates by calling out through my cell door (which acts as a megaphone) or talking to them ^{handwritten} in the hall as we wait for sick-calls or go over to medical for Dr. appointments we might have, on Thursdays. At WERDEC, I don't have those opportunities to talk to other inmates, except at shower times. But I see people moving about in the halls from my door's window and outside from the outer window. I talk to nurses and caseworkers when they make daily rounds on the wing, and to officers who escort me to places at WERDEC.

I'm at peace and content in solitary confinement, which has been good, not adverse, for me. At my advanced age of 69, I'm not as physically active. I'm more of an intellectual, so it works for me. By Beverly Jaynes, 88123