

Ask me about solitary confinement,
and the Panda Bear

If you were to ask me about solitary confinement I could tell you horror stories. But here is an example of how solitary confinement is abused and used as a tool to bully inmates.

Here is a guy we will call Stan who has been in prison for the better part of 19 years. Stan has been virtually "ticket" free with only a couple minor disciplinary [tickets] infractions over the years. (On a scale of 1 to 10 on the problem scale- this guy is a 2 given that he only complains about his medical issues/rights as a diabetic and his diabetic diet.) He stays busy helping others and working- basically doing the right thing. He has a little job painting and fixing windows which he enjoys and looks forward to doing. He is well known as a hard worker, respectful and diligent; and not involved with anything nefarious.

On December 14, 2016, Stan was questioned by the I.P.S. (Inner-Parameter Security) a/k/a/ the Gestapo, about a work computer. Stan was berated by an I.P. we will call Waffler about computer use; and that he [Waffler] received information that Stan was using the computer for "illegal non-work related activities." During the interrogation Waffler repeatedly asked Stan questions about other inmates; staff; and, drugs. Stan was told that a search of his cell yielded enough to send Stan to the Maximum Security Prison in Shirley- and if Stan would provide information "this could all go away with a slap on the wrist." The castigating questions continued as Waffler shuffled a stack of papers like a blind man playing

solitaire. Stan saw a print-out of a panda bear. Stan explained that some weeks prior he had taken a piece of scrap paper from a scrap paper pile and one side had a picture of a panda bear on top of a March 2018 calendar page. And, someone had printed the 2018 calendar instead of a 2017 calendar for the office. Stan was asked who printed it, and Stan replied he did not know. Stan further explained that while he was waiting for movement back to his housing unit he grabbed the piece of scrap paper and wrote out a list of canteen items he wanted to order once he got to the unit. Stan expounded that the paper was all folded up(not suitable for framing); and there was a list of items to be ordered, i.e., toothpaste, shampoo, coffee, etc., along with the corresponding math. Perplexed Stan inquired what else was found in his cell as there might be a reasonable explanation as there was with the panda bear. At this point Stan was called a liar and told that he had just lost his job; lost his single cell and would be sent to Shirley Max. And, at this point Stan strongly believed the I.P.S. had planted something in his cell because he knew he had done nothing wrong. Waffler later told Stan that he had spoken to the Sgt. of the I.P.S. who we will call O'Malarkey, and that O'Malarkey had stated that "he [O'Malarkey] was willing to take this one all the way- and for Stan to prepare for Shirley Max." (As it turned out O'Malarkey had been on vacation during this week.)

Stan, who also suffers from hypertension explained that "he did not feel right", as his head felt as it was about to explode, he asked if he was flushed? Waffler answered "yes-cuz your lying ." A nurse

was later called who took Stan's vitals before he was shackled and physically escorted to solitary confinement. Stan was placed on A.A.P.I. status (Action Awaiting Pending Investigation). Which means a disciplinary ticket is not written pending an investigation- consequently no one was able to tell Stan why he was in solitary confinement or how long he would be there. After the investigation it was determined that Stan had been in possession of an image of a panda bear, and that Stan would not disclose who printed it or who gave it to him. Eventually Stan was given a Category 4 ticket, which is the most minor of tickets or infractions and does not warrant sending a man to solitary, or his losing his job or housing seniority. Sanctions given for a category 4 ticket usually include the loss of canteen, gym or visit privileges for a short period, or extra cleaning duty, i.e., cleaning a stairwell.

For reasons not exactly clear to anyone, including Stan- Stan began to withdraw. He was physically sick to his stomach. He tried to eat and vomited then just started to refuse food- pretty much giving up. Apparently the policy of the DOC is that if someone misses 3 meals then they are on a "Hunger Strike." Stan was unable to eat for 8 or 9 days- or 24-27 meals. When asked "what his hunger strike demands were?" Stan tried to explain there were no demands- he was sick and not on a hunger strike. This would turn into a disagreement over whether or not it was a hunger strike. Lost was any concern over him being sick. His frustration was compounded by the fact that no one would tell him why he was in solitary or for how long. At some point after many days Stan was moved to the medical unit at the Shirley Max- Stan in his confusion believed this to be the

original threat made by Waffler.

After a number of days at Shirley Max, a doctor, a psychiatrist, or a nurse handed Stan a can of Ensure and told him to drink it- Stan complied and was sent back to Norfolk the next day. Stan was released from solitary (because of overcrowding) and told to report to the Probation Unit. Stan was unable to carry his mattress and was admitted to the hospital unit for 4 days due to stomach pain and severe dehydration. Stan was then sent to Probation and some days later a regular housing unit.

It is now the general consensus that the matter of Stan and the Panda Bear was blown out of proportion, and "may not have been handled properly." But it has been agreed that, at some point Stan will regain his housing seniority and job, he has been told to be patient.

Two months later Stan is still waiting for official word on his housing status and job. Where does the punishment end? Stan, who already had to wait 8 years for a single cell will probably have to wait another year or two. (Which Stan accepts as he does not wish to displace anyone from a single cell.) But Stan is being run in circles to get his job back. The person who oversees the area Stan worked- wants Stan back doing his job. Stan "just needs to get cleared." Whether it is by design (to further break a broken man) people are playing pass-the-buck with Stan, sending him on fools' errands to talk to the same people over, and over, and over. But there are hidden punishments with Stan's situation, not thought about. When Stan's cell was packed, over \$200.00 in

property went missing or misplaced including dress shirts, (sealed) canteen items, coffee, a radio(walkman), headphones, stamps batteries, etc. The speakers in a set of headphones were switched with broken ones. Stan has also lost over 2 months in pay. Then there are the smaller things like school. Because Stan was unable to register in time he is forced to take the semester off. School is something Stan takes pride in and it occupies what free time he does have. Additionally, because he was unable to submit his final paper(s) his grade was effected.

But was there really a need to jam up a guy like Stan over a fucking picture of a panda bear? Stan is the guy who will walk an extra mile just to avoid problems or trouble. He is always helping others. He has volunteered over the years on a number of camp projects, refusing compensation. He spent many weekends refurbishing and painting the B.U. Classroom. Stan helped tear up pavement and retamp the East Field Basketball Court(in the middle of the summer) in his spare time. Stan has helped shovel roofs, paint units, and pull wires on weekends. Never expecting even a thank you, even though these duties were not part of his job.

Okay, this is prison- Shit Happens, mistakes are made, and we learn from our mistakes- Right?

Well the number one mistake is allowing the Gestapo to use solitary

confinement as a tool to bully people and torment them. Socially awkward people like Waffler who do not have the God given smarts to spell N-E-P-O-T-I-S-M let alone grasp the concept surrounding it: ("keep your mouth shut, don't cause waves, show-up, don't act the ass, and you will have a job forever."). Oh, and his lies about Stan losing his cell, job and going to Shirley Max- Lies! Infact they held Stan's cell and job for a week for him to come back. Shouldn't Waffler be searching for drugs or weapons or perhaps a personality instead of seeing just how far he can push an inmate before he breaks or snaps? And another mistake- The Panda Bear. The only thing worse could have been a copy of the ANARCHIST'S COOKBOOK. "Hey take the picture of the panda bear- kick the guy in the proverbial arse; send him off to clean a couple of stairways and take away his gym and canteen privileges for a few weeks- and, warn him to check both sides of scrap paper, and no animal pics." (Waffler this does not mean to actually kick people- it is figurative . . . nevermind.") And Stan with his many ailments can still outwork any guy half his age- send him back to work glazing the thousand remaining windows so the state can stop heating the West Field- And call it a day.

So just ask me about solitary, I can tell you stories.

I am Stan,
by Daniel LEO HALLAND^{6.}