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The American Prison Writing ARCHIVE

The Marshall Project

Experiences of Solitary Confinement

My name is Bob Clark, I'm currently incarcerated in the Kansas prison system.

I'm serving a sentence of 122-222 yrs. My release date is 2104 which is the next century. I've served a total of 50 years in prison. After years of violence against staff and inmates a like I will die in this prison. I got locked up when I was 13 and I'm 63 now. I've never drove a car, been to a mall, never had sex with a female, never been fishing, I've never talked on a cell phone. I got locked up with a 4 month sentence for vandalism and picked up the remainder of time for crimes I committed while in prison.

I wish to speak on my experiences of Solitary Confinement. I was arrested in January of 1968 for the charge of Vandalism, this was in Omaha Nebraska. I was taken to the Douglas County Youth Center.

This was my first encounter with Solitary Confinement. I was placed in a bare cell with limited light. I remember the pacing, 4 steps forward, 4 backward. It had a brick slab for a place to lie down. Also it had a commode, which was made of steel, it was a sink and toilet combined together. The first time I was placed in a cage this small it was probably the closest thing to death you could imagine.

This was how they processed the new arrivals. After hours of pacing back and forth & laid down and slept for what seemed for days. Only human contact I felt was when they brought food, which was 3 meals a day. I had no idea how long they'd keep a 13 year old locked up like this. 3 days later they processed me into a dorm. This was my first taste of solitary confinement and hopefully my last.

Little did I know what would follow was years of solitary confinement in the future to come. After 6 months in this youth center I was transferred to the Boys' Training School in Kearney, Nebraska;

My adjustment to this new facility was not a smooth one. My second experience with Solitary was Cottage D which was called R-3. After rule infractions I was placed there.

The cell was slightly larger than the one in the youth center. It had a mattress and a bible in it. Same old same, pee back and forth, sleep and think. You alone with your own thoughts so you develop mind games within your self-self. I rode this out for a couple of weeks until I was released into the general population. The population gives you options to occupy your mind. Play ball, watch TV, communicate with others. Go to school. In Solitary you don't have that ~~choice~~ choice. I imagine being in your closet 24 hrs a day or your bathroom. You full of paranoia, anxiety, fear and extreme boredom. Solitary is the worst experience anyone can deal with. It's a prison within a prison, you can never learn anything from it, you lose your trust with people, you become anti-social, and angry.

After more chances in the population and more trouble, I kept self-destructing more and more. I was finally placed in a cell with no light in it. It was a dark green brick room. It had a slam door on the outside of the regular cell. It was so dark in there I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. This was literally being buried alive. I was kept in this placement for 90 days. Once I was ~~re-~~ released from Solitary I couldn't hardly see because I hadn't had no natural light.

This was the longest I had been in Solitary up to this point. I was taken to an adult prison at the age of 14 where I was placed in Solitary because of my age. They had policy, back then you had to be 16 to be in the prison population. So I was held in Solitary for 2 years until the age of 16. This cell I was placed in was in a large cell house it was open barred with chicken wire all over the cell. The cell was so small I could expand my arms and touch both walls. Only Entertainment was some novels. Very

little yard. I did 2 year of this and  
was released into the prison population  
at 16. After a serious prison assault I  
was placed in Solitary Confinement for 2 more  
years at the State Prison in Lincoln, Nebraska.

One situation turned into a worse  
situation and I was placed in Solitary  
for years. Out of 50 years of incarceration  
at least 15 years were in Solitary Confinement

Solitary is mental torture, its a world  
of its own, I've seen men go insane,  
kill themselves, become recluses. Its the  
worst form of punishment that one can  
endure. No matter what you do in  
your little world of a cage, I'll  
never be the same, pacing back and  
forth like an animal, trying to be stoic  
which is a daily fight to preserve what  
sanity I have left. Its been several  
years since I've been in Solitary but  
I'll be never be away from it. I'll  
never be afraid to be buried alive  
I've been there and done that.

Thanks for keeping me out  
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