

Solitary

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It's cold. It's so cold. It's ~~so~~ cold. I completely covered my vent with wet toilet paper like plaster. It's ~~still so cold~~. My table freezes my arms when I try to write - like now. The floor freezes my feet even with socks and these so-called "shower shoes," the only footwear they allow us here. The toilet freezes my butt and hamstrings when I use it. The wall that surrounds my bed on three sides freezes any part of me that touches it... through my thermals, socks, sheet and blanket. Thermals I had to buy at sixteen dollars a pair. That's tough when you have no one to send you money. Believe me, I know.

Don't ask how I managed it. Couldn't tell you if I wanted to. They'll read this before they let it go out. So cold. I wear two pairs of thermals these days. Still. So. Cold. I want to work out, but it's too cold to take off my thermals, and I don't dare get them dirty. Sending them through the laundry service only spreads the sweat, and gets funk from everyone else's clothes also. How many times my clothes have come back smelling terrible when they went out smelling great. I don't dare hand wash. It takes so long, and it is so cold when I'm not wearing them. Plus, because it is so cold and there is no way to hang your clothes to dry properly, it takes forever; I don't dare uncover the vent.

Three years? Four? How long has it been? It doesn't matter since I have no prospect of any semblance of freedom. Ever. Let's see... ah, next month makes four years. Without a trace of sunlight. I look at my pictures of myself as a child, brown-skinned, and look at my pale white skin today. This can't be healthy. I have been mistaken as hispanic throughout my life. Now I'm called "whiteboy" and "cracker." People assume I'm racist because I shave my head. Admittedly, I look like a stereotypical white supremacist. The truth? I shave my head because I'm going bald

and it looks like crap, and I look damned good bald. Besides, I am half Cherokee, which I relate to *far* more than my white side. I could give a damn about race.

So cold. So constantly, mind-numbingly cold. I've created a heating system. I have to use it regularly. When my insides feel like they are shutting down from the cold having finally reached my core. Cold through and through. First, I have to properly clean my toilet. There is no other place to drain it besides my sink. I have to drain it this way because if I flush it will fill with ice cold water. Hopefully the sink's hot water will be hot throughout the process. Once I have cleaned and drained my toilet, I use a styrofoam cup to plug it up, then commence filling it with hot water. This takes a while. The sink is rather slow, and the toilet bowl rather large. However, it works great because it is stainless steel.

I have a number of fifteen-ounce lotion bottles that I have collected. And a peanut butter jar as well as a couple twenty-two-ounce cups. I fill all these with hot water and put them in a cluster on the other side of the room from the toilet. Then I use a plastic lid (from aforementioned styrofoam cup) as a drain stopper in my sink and fill the sink with hot water. Of course, this is all assuming the hot water is actually hot. Sometimes it is colder than the cold water. Literally. The cold water will be room temperature (normal rooms, not these ones... I wish it *were* like these ones), while the hot water is ice cold. How that happens I could never guess. The cold water has *never* been that cold. That's probably what they wash our clothes in, having set the machine to hot water.

Have you ever slept between sheets that smell like really buttery popcorn and dirty gym socks? I have. Every time they give us "clean" sheets. Some don't smell as bad as others. Same scent, just not as strong. With no

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pillow. The simple things. Clean clothes, linen, pillows, sunlight, fresh air. Food. They won't allow us to buy food, but they refuse to feed us properly. You know, yesterday for breakfast I had two pancakes, smaller than sand dollars (and nearly as brittle) and a serving of oatmeal. Approximately four grams of protien. Probably not even that. Six at the most. An entire breakfast. No milk. Some *extremely* watered down orange juice. This can't be healthy.

I get to come out of the cell for one hour, three times a week. It's even colder out there. They don't have the vents blocked. Often times the officers wear jackets. We can't have jackets. Can't even buy them. We get to suffer. So cold. I've seen them with jackets, thermals, beanies and gloves. During their entire shift. We can't get any of that either, except thermals. We get to suffer. So cold. So damned cold. Sometimes the shower water is hot. Luckily. It takes a half hour under the hot water before I'm not cold anymore. Then I bundle back up, conserve the heat I've put back in my body, because it won't be long before this steel and concrete sap it back out of me.

Steel and concrete. Everywhere. No dirt, though there is plenty of dust and grime. No grass, though there is plenty of mold and mildew. No animals, but there are *swarms* of flies in the shower, literally, like some kind of Egyptian plague, and I've caught four brown recluse spiders. Killed several others that I couldn't identify, and let live and roam two huge daddy longlegs spiders (though they aren't actually spiders for some inexplicable reason. Whatever.) just in my cell. I did find a cricket one night. No vehicles, which I don't miss, but all kinds of carts and buggies with wheels. AND WHY IS THERE HAIR EVERYWHERE?! This can't be healthy.

My feet hurt. Not from standing on them. Not from any kind of

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injury, but because the concrete floor is *so fucking cold!* It feels like icicle daggers piercing the soles of my feet. My ears are so cold it hurts. It is spreading to my temples; feels like a vice grip clamping down. It is giving me one of my migraine headaches. My cheekbones. It is a physical pressure, like compression, crushing my head from all angles at once. I just got out of the hot shower! *So cold already!*

The thing about solitary confinement is, it's never solitary. I wish it was. At least I could suffer in peace. No. That would be too humane. Instead, you have multiple officers and their radios, and jingling, clinking keys; numerous inmates who love to flush these loud ass toilets over and over and over and over... and over and over... who scream at each other to have conversations because you can't be heard otherwise... yelling and yelling, back and forth, three, four, five peoples' voices reverberating cacophonously for hours and hours. Gangsta rap stars pounding cheap beats on their doors while they rap the same three lines over and over and over and over and over... for hours. And hours. This can't be healthy.

So... damned... cold. COLD. Oh my God, why is it so cold? You would think after so many years your body would adjust. I don't think it is a natural kind of cold. This cold drains your life force. I think it is a property of the steel and concrete when kept at refrigerating temperatures permanently, that they extract from the body some vital aspect of the being. The life itself. That's why it causes this inexplicable pain in my bones as I sit on this cold, cold steel stool to write on this cold, cold, cold steel table. Hold on, I need to activate my aforementioned heating system...

So much better. I can feel stiff muscles loosening. Muscles that have been stiff so long that I didn't even realize they were until they began

loosening. There are two bunks in each cell, meant to hold two people. Being the only person in the cell, one is open. I sleep on the top bunk. Many people have asked me why. I'm sure you're probably wondering yourself. There are numerous reasons, some of them quite technical, dealing with physics, relativity, time and all that. I have told people numerous reasons. The one nobody has heard, since it is the least relevant, is, simply, heat rises. You'd think contrarily that this should make it ~~quite~~ relevant. You'd be wrong. It is ~~so~~ cold, there is no heat to rise. Even that produced by one's body is defeated before it can leave the body. Indeed, I fear without my heating techniques and thermal clothes, I would probably have been drained of all warmth and dead long ago. The longer you spend in here, the colder you get. Take that how you want to. A function of time. It does make a difference when my heating system is in effect. This can't be healthy.

One of the principle goals of solitary confinement is to take away any and all forms of entertainment. Anything that can occupy a person's time, and thus keep him sane. TV, radio, reading material, recreation time (and activities), phones, visits; in other words, they want to make sure you have to suffer as much as possible. Another, and closely related principle that extends to the entire legal system, but is especially concentrated in the solitary confinement arena since it is "justifiable" (note the root word: justice), is trying to break up relationships. Family, friends, any and all access to support at all. As time has progressed, visitation has become more and more restricted and strenuous until it becomes no longer worthwhile.

These days, a person receiving a visit only sees his visitors through multiple panes of chicken-wired glass that are scratched and nearly impossible to see through in little rooms smaller than most closets. Alternatively, the modern technique is a video screen where you speak through a phone.

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No more kisses, no more hugs. No more holding hands. No more smelling cologne or perfume. All the things that can give emotional support to people who are struggling. Inside and out. Take that how you want to.

Phone calls that cost more than any pay phone ever did. Well over three dollars for a fifteen minute call, when cell phones can have ~~un-~~limited calls and texts and data for fifty dollars a month. Or less. They make sure inmates have no legitimate way to support themselves so those they rely on have to do it, then make it as expensive and difficult as possible so they don't want to (or can't). Then take away even that in the name of "punishment." I mean, how, why, what justification is there for charging me seventy cents for a stamped envelope when postage is only fifty-five cents?

One more closely interrelated issue. Information. News. Media. They restrict access to information the same way. As mentioned, the TV, radio, phone, even limiting one to five books and/or magazines. If a person has a Bible, a dictionary, a thesaurus, and a book to read for entertainment (because God knows you need *something* to do), that leaves room for one book or magazine. I try to educate myself, so I forego the entertainment to have more educational material. You know one (or even two) book(s) is (are) never enough in education. All textbooks in college courses require supplemental reading. If you are a Biblical scholar, a concordance is a must have. Not to mention the abundance of books one needs to read on interrelated issues. I myself study the Bible, as well as other religions, quantum physics, relativity, astronomy, calculus, English (particularly etymology) and the list goes on. This does not leave much room for world news publications. If you have people who are able and willing after all the stress and financial strain to buy them for you.

Although all of this is a direct, blatant, intentional, and absolutely revolting violation of our first ammendment rights, they get away with it in the name of "punishment." News flash, from the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident... that [we] are endowed by [our] Creator with certain *unalienable* rights." These rights, which are "incapable of being alienated, surrendered, or transferred," are those that the ammendments seek to expound upon, meaning that our first ammendment rights *cannot be given up. Period.* Yet, here we sit. One phone call every fifteen days. At least here. Most places don't give any. No television. Outrageous prices on communications. Every limitation they can get away with in place, and still trying to make more.

Cold, cold stark walls. Not allowed to put up pictures. No color. All browns, grays, and some dingy version of off-white. I couldn't put a name to the color of the table I'm writing on. Something like a washed-out pea soup? No color. No lights besides these white flourescents and cheap yellow "night lights." No traffic lights, no L.E.D.'s, no moon, no sun, nothing so constantly dull. Dreary. Dim, mercilessly barren. For years. And years. Minutes turn to hours to days and weeks. Months roll by with no weather. No seasons. No moon and stars. No sun. No way to mark time. Just this constant, bitter cold. This can't be healthy.

If once you had a circadian rhythm, you will not any longer. Sleep is not a regular thing. Or a guaranteed thing. Or even a likely thing in some places. I've been in a number of them. Places where four or five inmates are screaming at each other, all kinds of: "I'm gonna fuck you in the ass, bitch!" "I'm gonna have my people rape your daughter!" "I know your name! I know where your family lives, bitch! They're all dead!" All day, through the night and the next day. For weeks. For months. I once suffered through listening to

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this for six months solid. Day and night, with no relief whatsoever. Not that it stopped at that point, it just decreased in frequency. Frankly, it's a wonder I have any sanity left at all. Circadian rhythm. Ha. What a joke. I didn't even mention the banging on the doors, or when someone takes a battery to thin plate metal repeatedly to drown out everybody. Not that it works. They just keep going. Apparently, the goal, instead of talking trash to each other, is just to make noise. No wonder, with nothing else to do. This can't be healthy. This definitely can't be healthy.

Cold. So cold. Cold. Cold. Cold. Cold. Cold. So fucking cold. Cooo!!!!ddddd. God, this can't be healthy. I find it interesting that all this time marijuana has been illegal, yet pretty regularly available in prison black markets. All of a sudden, now that they have begun legalizing it, the medical benefits being touted, it has become impossible to get in prison. Although any and every other deadly, dangerous and illegal drug is still readily available. Especially "mental health" drugs. Drugs the pharmaceutical companies will make so much money from. And in great quantity. You can generally tell what kinds of drugs are available by the ebb and flow of chaos. Some have similar effects on the chaos as others. Definitely can't be healthy.

It is quite disturbing to hear the guy in the cell next to you talking and laughing hysterically for hours and hours by himself. Not speaking to anyone... that you or I would see or hear, but definitely holding a conversation. Day after day. He has been incarcerated for eleven years and hasn't even gone to court. The last seven years straight was spent in solitary confinement. Hasn't even been to court. Seven years. Eleven in total. This can't be legal. This is obviously not healthy.

So cold. So not legal. At least, not okay. So not healthy. I listened to him for three years. Yet the people treated this way... The people put

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through all this, some for years; years and years, these are the same people, some of them, who will be released back into society. This might be your son or daughter one day. Your mother or father. Brother or sister. It could be your barber. The guy at the Food Lion stocking shelves. The delivery driver bringing your pizza to your wife at your front door. What do you expect to happen? *This can't be healthy.*

I have been jumped and beaten while in cuffs with no provocation by the same officers who fed me for the next two-and-a-half years. I'm supposed to eat that? Yet there is certainly no other food. Can't order or receive any in solitary. The same officers who are supposed to keep me, us, all of us safe. Yet I'm supposed to sleep? The same officers who I have to give my outgoing mail to. The ones who deliver my mail to me. The same ones I've seen jump no less than two others in the time I was there (and heard many reports from others). Definitely not healthy. Definitely not legal. Definitely not okay. I'm not getting out, but others have experienced worse than me. What do you expect?

So cold. So very, very cold. I have watched people throw shit and piss on people. One of those had HIV. I have seen a shit/piss/milk brew that had been left to ferment for a week flung all over the walls, doors, ceiling and floor. There was an inmate trapped in the cell behind one of the doors. I was next door to him. His food was passed through the narrow opening in that door three times a day for months before he was released to civilization. Definitely not healthy.

So, what do you expect? Do you think your family is safer because that man went to prison for *whatever* crime he had committed? Do you know who that man is? When you are at the hardware store and the store clerk is walking you past hammers, saws, machettes and

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screwdrivers, how do you know it isn't him? Do you think he's mentally stable? Could you even tell? THIS, people, THIS is what we are doing to ourselves. THIS is what we are doing to society. Where *your* grandchildren will grow up with *their* grandchildren. Is this healthy? Is this okay with you?

So cold. So damned cold when society turns its collective back and allows such inhumane, cruel, depraved practices to go on unchecked and unabated. If society doesn't care about the "offender," why, when the offender is released, should he care about society? Yes, THAT MEANS YOU. YOUR KIDS. YOUR PARENTS. YOUR SIBLINGS. YOUR WIFE. YOUR HOME. YOUR BOAT. YOUR CAR. Everything you care about. This can't be healthy.

We have tried incarceration... we have tried solitary confinement. Obviously it doesn't work. It hasn't worked for *thousands of years*. Should we keep trying the same thing expecting different results? Is this not the definition of insanity? Isn't it time to try something new?

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