

Blog 4HR

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First, I want to thank Between the Bars and the Ella Baker Center for giving me a chance to share my experience and opinion for Int'l. Human Rights Day.

I am a prisoner at the Federal Supermax prison ADX Florence in Colorado. Known as the Guantanamo of the Rockies this is a place of misery, death and hopelessness on a grand scale.

Here prisoners are confined to their cells 22 hours a day in solitary confinement. No one ever has physical contact with anyone except prison guards and only then while in handcuffs with one officer menacingly holding a baton.

The length of time prisoners are in solitary varies. Some spend 5 years. Some have been in solitary since 1980, before I was even born. Prisoners interminably wail, scream and bang on the walls of their cells. Some mutilate their bodies with razors, shards of glass, writing utensils and whatever else they can obtain. Others carry on delusional conversations with voices they hear in their heads oblivious to reality. Many are simply

mad beyond helping-

Prison officials downplay our suffering to the media and courts when challenged then viciously return to retaliate against those of us who dare to raise our voices to challenge the status quo. We are beaten, sprayed with mace and restrained to a concrete slab for days or even weeks. This is a place one Reporter called, "a place of unspeakable cruelty and state-sponsored wickedness." See: WWW.SUPERMAXLAWSUIT.COM

Every day I think of suicide. This isn't even a unique thought. Dozens have tried and many have succeeded. Yet even as we die our news media is silent. So focused on Guantanamo and Bagram they ignore the plight of those who suffer in equal or greater proportion to those men at the hands of the same Government.

Two years ago the law firm of Arnold & Porter and the Washington Lawyers Cmte. For Civil Rights & Urban Affairs joined our struggle to be treated with basic human decency. The fight has just begun but one thing has returned to the ADX that staff fought brutally to extinguish forever: Hope. This in itself is a victory.