

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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James Riva W38533

OCCC

1 Administration Rd.

Bridgewater, MA 02324

<http://betweenthebars.org/blogs/339/>

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AND  
[www.jamesriva.info](http://www.jamesriva.info)

I'm not so sure I would be a suitable contributor to your panel discussion on solitary confinement because I have only had minimal experience with that condition, and then only in what is considered a mild prison. My experience:

I had in 1990, ten years served on a second degree life sentence. I had pled not guilty by insanity to a murder charge and the jury had lowered the degree of guilt from first to second degree murder by mental impairment. I had been on substantial doses of antipsychotic meds the whole ten years.

Some psychiatrists had opined that someday perhaps I could cease taking meds, but most doctors opined I must remain medicated for life.

The guys I lifted weights with kept calling me a junkie. They told me I don't need meds- I had been brainwashed into believing I need them.

I stopped my meds and after a week began acute paranoia and remaining awake for days at a time, sleeping only 30 minutes, then remaining awake for many days. The other inmates goofed on me and were amused by my crazy speech and paranoid delusions. The psych staff at the prison were divided as to my cessation. Some encouraged me to continue the stoppage while others even threatened me if I insisted upon not taking meds. I had no days off assigned to me at my job in the kitchen. I had been in a discussion with the sergeant and told him that if you are not going to give my friend a day off from work that I won't take one either. I was tired but could not sleep. The sergeant then gave my friend a day off per week but not me.

I thought one of the officers in the kitchen had drained off half my spinal fluid with his keys.

I heard "telepathy" from the nurse I loved (one sided) that if I stunned that officer, they would take some of his spinal fluid and put it into me so I would not die. I stuck an icepick into the officer's head- nearly killing him on the spot and then weeks later he had problems with infection.

I was rushed to a forensic mental hospital after a thorough beating.

I was placed into solitary, but I was seen every week or so by psych staff. I was observed but not talked to every 15 minutes.

The cell had a light that stayed on 24 hours a day 7 days per week- a bright one. It had a filthy vinyl covered mattress. I had a blanket caked with shit. The walls and floor had shit dried on everywhere. The water in the sink was left off. The toilet could not be flushed unless I begged the officer to turn on the water which he sometimes would do. I bathed twice in three months, one of those times only so they could bring me before a judge to obtain an order for forced medication. I was fed once a day or twice a day. Sometimes I would get both a piece of cornbread and tainted coffee and fake juice for breakfast AND a ham sandwich for lunch, or either one by itself. I had told them I was Muslim so I guess that is why they only gave me ham sandwiches. Every meal had a lump of shit either in my sandwich or next to it or on top of it.

I was given very large doses of Haldol twice a day. I took them willingly because the tablets were shaped like spinal vertebrae so I thought here is my life saving spinal fluid. After three or four months I was given a shower, shave, clean clothes and put on a medical ward where I was permitted to talk to other prisoners and beautiful young female mental health workers sat down and played cards with me.

I relished food in normal amounts without the filthy ingredient. I had a one day trial in which I was found not guilty by insanity for having stabbed the officer. I was thoroughly chained in the courtroom and I turned my face to my victim and started to say, "I'm sorry." and the court officers and other DOC people tackled me and carried me out of the courtroom over their heads horizontally.

The next day I was transferred to a maximum security unit from which I was sometimes given a two or three day stay in solitary. After eight months or so I went to a minimum security unit, (inside a maximum security facility so its an oxymoron). So my stay in solitary was bad but at least I survived and did not catch hepatitis.

Another inmate at that same forensic hospital had stabbed an officer in the chowhall in the neck with a fork leaving only a superficial wound. Weeks later he was found dead in four point restraint with a sock and an eyeglass lense jammed into his throat. The official version of how he died after an investigation was that somehow he unlocked the four point restraints- all four of them, obtained a sock, and an eyeglass lense, stuffed them down his throat and then locked himself back into four point restraint.

Most prisoners have done very bad things that have hurt people severely. Thus the rationale for the wink and a nod to look the other way when they are abused.

