

## The Prison Within The Prison: My Experience in Solitary Confinement And Administrative Segregation

Recently, I read an article in the Prison Legal News about an inmate who was released from prison after serving long periods of time in Solitary Confinement and Administrative Segregation. When this inmate was released from prison he murdered someone. This article has inspired me to share and write about my own experience in Solitary Confinement and Administrative Segregation (Also known as, "the hole") I am in no way justifying an inmate getting out of prison committing a murder as I read in the article. But I am making an attempt to shed some insight into the negative effects that long-term time in the hole can have on a person. Some may even feel that inmates should spend long periods of time in the hole in order to protect the safety and security of the prison, prison staff and other inmates. Whether this is true or not I don't know, but what I do know is that one day these same inmates will eventually be released back into society. I believe that spending long periods of time in the hole can change a person, for the good or for the bad. I know this for a fact because I am one of those people who the hole had a very tremendous impact on, some good, some bad. Simply put, the hole will "make you" or "break you".

In 2000, I spent three years in the hole due to an altercation with another inmate. I thought my time in the

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hole would only be "temporary." Little did I know that "temporary" would turn into three years. They call it (23 and one), meaning your confined to a cell for 23 hours a day with one hour out on the exercise yard. Suddenly, I started finding myself in a bad mood more than usual. For 23 hours, this tiny little cell became my world. Being so closed in forced me to pay attention to <sup>every little</sup> detail more than I ever had before. There's a lot of noise, yelling and arguments about everything from sports to religious debates. It seemed as if I was always in a bad mood and everytime the officers upset me, I responded in a bad or negative way. All the other inmates around me ~~were~~ <sup>were</sup> doing the same thing, so I never felt left out. Eventually I kept digging a deeper hole for myself by receiving numerous disciplinary write-ups for abusive language and threats against correctional officers. At this point I found myself serving more hole time than what was expected. During my 35 months in the hole, I had so many negative thoughts that was usually triggered by something that happened as soon as I got out of bed. I thought everyone was against me, including family and friends. It's as if the hole did something to me. Even inmates that I knew that were of a very sane mind seemed to loose it in that hole. I knew of several inmates that had committed suicide in the hole. I knew that every inmate had a breaking point and I always wondered what lead to their breaking point to cause them

to commit suicide. I could definitely relate to their pain, but not the suicide itself. I would always think about the family and friends that these men would leave behind.

There is some kind of negative energy or force that exists today in the holes in many prisons all over the country. Call it what you want, but it still exists, I know, I've been there.

In 2003, nearly after three years of being in the hole, I was finally released back into regular prison population. I wasn't out of prison, but at least I was out of the hole. After spending three years in the hole I found out that I had to get used to interacting and socializing with people again, something that I had never expected <sup>that I would have</sup> to learn how to do all over again prior to coming to the hole. When I look back on my experience in the hole, I am very blessed to say that I survived the experience without physically hurting myself or anyone else. The letters and support I received from family and friends also had a huge positive impact on me during my three years in the hole. Just someone writing a letter or a card scribbling the words, "hang in there, we love you," can mean a lot to someone in the hole. It definitely meant a lot to me. Myself, along with so many others both prisoners and non-prisoners all agree that there should be a limit on how much ~~a~~ time a person should spend in the hole. If you have a family member,

loved one, friend, spouse, etc., living in the hole - the prison within the prison - I would urge you to support them and show them that you care and that they are not alone during this difficult time in their lives. Trust me, it will definitely make all the difference in the world. It did for me.

To read more about the effects that long-term solitary confinement and administrative segregation can have on a person go to: [www.prisonlegalnews.org](http://www.prisonlegalnews.org) (be sure to click on "the June 2014 issue").

Also check out:

[www.humanrightsdefensecenter.org](http://www.humanrightsdefensecenter.org)

[www.courthousenews.com](http://www.courthousenews.com) (click on "March 13, 2013")

[www.solitarywatch.com](http://www.solitarywatch.com)

At [solitarywatch.com](http://solitarywatch.com) - they have very interesting stories and information about inmates in solitary confinement. If you want to know the truth about what happens to inmates all across the country in solitary confinement, instead of a "watered down" version that the cable channels and media depict, please check out this website. It will probably make you think twice about what you thought you knew about solitary confinement.