

Solitary Confinement In WI Prisons: Still Crazy, After All These Years

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Jamär Cunningham (D.O.C. # 5700268) is 27 years old, 5'8" ... and weighs 112 pounds. At the age of seven he was diagnosed with Bi-Polar Disorder (B.P.D.; a.k.a. manic-depression). Thus began his life of entering and exiting the revolving doors of the state's mental-health and juvenile-detention facilities.

He and his twin sister experienced severe childhood trauma. When I asked him to describe the trauma (we speak through the vent that connects our cells), he anxiously replied, "I don't wanna talk about it!" They were and are both diagnosed with acute and chronic post-traumatic stress disorder (P.T.S.D.).

Males, however, tend to respond to childhood trauma differently than females,^① acting in anti-social ways that evoke little sympathy from a system as a whole in America that prefers to punish rather than heal people. Inevitably, Jamär wound up in prison, convicted of battering another prisoner while he was in jail for assaulting a psych-care tech (p.c.t.) in the WI Resource Center (W.R.C.), a psych. facility for prisoners), was out on extended supervision, got revoked ... and put in solitary confinement, a.k.a. "Restrictive Housing" (R.H.).

Despite WI Dept. of Corrections (W.D.O.C.) spokesman Tristan Cook's occasional announcements that the W.D.O.C. doesn't keep mentally ill prisoners in solitary confinement and "cares" about prisoners' mental health, the facts reveal otherwise,^② including the facts in Jamär's case.

While Jamär is clearly depressed (he only weighs 112 pounds

F.N.1 As discussed in A Mother's Touch: Surviving Mother-Daughter Sexual Abuse, by Julie A. Brand, Trafford: Victoria, B.C., pp. 154-55.

F.N.2 See, e.g., "Supermax: Psychologist alleges Dept. of Corrections retaliation", a 2013 post on www.thedailypage.com/isthmus/

because he's too depressed to eat), he's also diagnosed with schizophrenic personality disorder. He's prescribed five different psych. meds, but only takes three of them, refusing to take lithium, for example, against his psychiatrist's advice.

Despite the W.D.O.C.'s supposed policy of not housing prisoners with serious mental illness(es) (s.m.i.(s)) in solitary confinement, Jamär has been held in such at the WI Secure Program Facility (W.S.P.F.) since Jan. 2015.

Three times he was found not guilty by reason of insanity (N.G.I.) for assaults on staff, twice for assaults on p.c.t.s at W.R.C., once on a guard at the Waupun Correctional Institution (W.C.I.). The third time Jamär pled N.G.I., the D.A. didn't even go to trial; he agreed that Jamär was N.G.I. and dismissed the charges on the condition that Jamär went to therapy twice a month, which was half as often as he was seen by prison psych. staff

For years the W.D.O.C. has labelled Jamär as a M.H. II A., meaning he has at least one s.m.i and Psych. Services Unit (P.S.U.) staff must see him at least once a week. But here he is in solitary confinement, three cells down from me, on the most restrictive unit that W.S.P.F. has.

After hanging himself on a Friday mid-January, he was held in "Obs. status" (suicide watch), in a cold cell, without any clothing other than a kevlar "suicide-proof" smock, in a cell soiled with past residents' body wastes and food. They let him out on Monday. That Wednesday he severely cut open his left forearm with a sharpened washer he found, resulting in a trip to the hospital, 15 stitches, nerve damage, and continuing physical therapy. As punishment for cutting himself, P.S.U. kept him in Obs status for 10 days. His assigned psychologist, Ms. Lemieux, told him that every time he tried to or did hurt himself they'd keep him in obs. status longer.

"Sometimes I don't know if I'm real," Jamär recently told me through the vent that connects our cells, "I think I'm a cartoon character, that little Martian in Bugs Bunny cartoons."

When I asked him how he felt in that cell—approximately 6' x 12', gray concrete floor, white walls and ceiling, slit along the

top of the back cell's wall with a window allowing us to see pipes and ductwork⁽³⁾ His response was, "This ain't real." After a couple moments he said, "They're lucky I'm not in my reincarnation phase."

He avoids even looking in guards' faces, as he's afraid he'll lose control and his 112-pound body will try to hurt them. This is something I've heard from other prisoners, who aren't diagnosed as s.m.i., yet sure seemed to be so. Guards are always taking something, whether it's a ketchup pack we saved from our tray to use with a later meal or a photo of our loved ones beyond the allowed limit (50), they are the puppets for the would-be Orwellian administration here, which is still - despite W.S.P.F. "no longer" being a "supermax" - striving to brainwash prisoners into being "compliant" by using Biderman's Coercion Techniques that are deemed to be "torture"⁽⁴⁾

P.S.U. staff told Jamir that if he does "the program" - i.e. the High-Risk-offender Program (H.R.O.P.), which applies all of Biderman's Coercion Techniques, they'll let him go back to W.R.C. after six months.

Even sane(ish) prisoners have difficulty doing the H.R.O.P., the standards in which are arbitrary, based on staffs' whims (and schemes - they always seem to put enemies around each other, who then fight get kicked out of the H.R.O.P., and must start the process again). Those in the H.R.O.P. must fill out over a dozen repetitive booklets and packets of paperwork, strictly obey hosts of petty rules (e.g. no taping a calendar or anything to your wall, keeping your shirt on while at outdoor rec., not saving condiments from meal trays for later use), and not react to guards' efforts to rile you (e.g. by calling you a "bitch", slamming the hammer-head sized bolt that doubly secures the trap-doors in our doors through which meals, etc. are passed in/out).

Many sane(ish) prisoners have been in and out of the H.R.O.P. for years, some (e.g. James Terry) for over a decade. Staff put such prisoners

F.N.3 A very accurate drawing of one of the larger cells at W.S.P.F. can be seen in Em Daer, vol. 1, pg. 10, on <http://prisoninmates.com/NateLindell303724>

F.N.4 Go to <http://www.afsc.org>, find their Survivors Manual: Surviving in Solitary, which at pages 57-58 has a chart explaining how Biderman's Coercion Techniques are applied to prisoners.

in a lose-lose situation, as they did with me in 2010⁵. Then they kick the prisoner out and make him beg to be allowed back in their torture program.

These are all Biderman's Coercion Tactics, described as torture in a 1973 Amnesty International Report (see source in F.N.4, above) and are used by abusive spouses (see <http://www.refocus.org/coerchr.html>).

After Jamär cut his arm open, on the 2nd of March 2017, someone from W.R.C. came to see him. That official upgraded Jamär's M.H.II.A. to an M.H.II.B, meaning Jamär was deemed to have severe mental illnesses, needed to be seen twice a week by P.S.U. staff. That official said the warden here and the security director agreed to fast-track Jamär out to go to W.R.C. ... if W.R.C. staff agreed to that, the three p.c.t.s Jamär battered — with his anorexic body — several years ago.

Apparently those p.c.t.s did not agree, because the recently arrived current and former head of P.S.U. here (the guy who did my I.Q. test) dropped Jamär's mental-health classification down to M.H.II-A, again, which still requires that Jamär be sent out of W.S.P.F., but it hints that what happened in the article noted in F.N.2, above, is a foot.

The returned P.S.U. head — Dr. Scott Rubin-Asch — told Jamär, however, that he (Dr. Rubin-Asch) was arranging for Jamär to be sent either to W.R.C. or "another institution."

You can't believe what prison psych staff say, as exemplified in these two posts on my blog:

- posted 3 May 2016, "An Example of a Wisconsin D.O.C. Psychologist Deliberately Misdiagnosing a Prisoner to Justify Denying Treatment for P.T.S.D.," and;
- posted July 2016, "WI Prison Psychologists Falsely Accused Me of Misconduct & Diagnosed Me As Narcissistic to Punish Me for Helping Mistreated Inmates File Complaints & Lawsuits."

Keep in mind that the P.S.U. staff Jamär was dealing with here

F.N.5 That situation is detailed in Em Daer, vol. 1, too. see F.N.3 It is why I will never again even try to do the H.R.O.P.

wanted him to participate in a torture program, for six months, before they'd provide psychologically appropriate housing, which would be mandatory if he was still deemed M.H. II B.

Jamär's story could be lifted from the pages of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel's series "A Time to Heal" (see <http://www.jsonline.com/time-to-heal>), except he's male, not photo- and literogenic enough to have his story told by them. Our prison system is geared to punish, to degrade, and W.R.C. too is tainted with that mentality,⁶ which does not work with someone like Jamär, who's already been severely abused/punished and recognizes and lashes out at it immediately (hence his assaults on W.R.C. staff).

For reasons similar to Jamär, I too have P.T.S.D., which leads me to boil over at any abuse. No surprise then that I've spent over 14 years at W.S.P.F., in solitary confinement.

Farther down the hall, on range two of Alpha unit, where Jamär and I reside, there's another prisoner with s.m.i. Well, he was deemed M.H. II A when he arrived here. Then the same P.S.U. staff (i.e. Dr. Stacey Hoem) who insisted Jamär do the H.R.O.P. dropped this guy's M.H. II A down to M.H. I. The guy is Michael Harmon (D.O.C. # 267028), and he takes three potent psych meds: Wellbutrin, Seroquel and just switched Haldol for Abilify. Mike told me that "From the time I wake up until I go to sleep I hear voices telling me to 'Kill yourself!' 'Kill! Kill! Kill!' " and that he's constantly punching himself in his head to try and silence the voices.

"You're not crazy," Dr. Hoem told him, smiling, Mike told me. "You just wanna be crazy."

Folks, sane people would be unconscious taking the meds these guys take. Seems that not only the captives here go crazy.

There's only a couple hundred beds at W.R.C., by the way, and they're always full. So, if Jamär is sent there, he'll need to strap on his straight-jacket, rock back and forth while he waits for his turn.

F.N. 6 As revealed in "Supervisor was hired despite troubled past," by Jason Stein, A1, A10 of the 27 April 2017 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, WI's psych.-care facilities habitually hire former prison staff as supervisors

If he's sent to "another institution," there's a fair chance he'll be kept in solitary confinement there, possibly in worse conditions than those here, ⁽⁷⁾ because the punitive mentality of prison staff will lead to violent conflicts with Jamär

The moral stupidity and evil of this scene is should bother you, but, if not, think of all the money spent for medical expenses alone (for Jamär and those he's assaulted) due to this sick yearning to punish and degrade humans who need... a time to heal too.

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