

Reply ID: "Solitary Panel"

Daniel Gwynn

Date: 2/4/13

Subject: "My Greatest Fear"

June 12th, 2001, (my aunt) Marian Bently passed; March 29th, 2002, (my grandmother) Beatrice Gwynn passed; March 5th, 2007, (my cousin) Michele Dotson passed; and December 6th, 2012, (my niece) baby Danielle was stillborn, and my sister almost died due to the complications. I wasn't there for any of them, and it is breaking my heart. I also didn't get to say goodbye, and I didn't receive the news for months; all because I'm on Pennsylvania's Death Row since 1995 for a crime I didn't commit. This angers me!

Every morning, I wake up and prepare myself for another day of wading in the darkness of my mind & environment. One of the hardest things to do is find something to do everyday. Time ticks away so slowly, and all of my senses are under attack by smells, noises, foods, and limited visual stimulus. I fuel my mind, body & spirit as best as I can, but the administration doesn't concern itself with rehabilitation. They're more concerned with tearing us down by employing oppressive rules & regulations, sensory deprivation and depriving us of any dignity (strip searches, malevolent guards, no privacy, oppressive restrictions, etc.). I'm forced to suppress my emotions by threats of being sent to the "Hole" (a prison within a prison) for speaking my mind.

I seek nourishment & exercise regularly for my mind, body & spirit, but I still feel my health failing mentally & physically. I've become moody & withdrawn, fearing to open up to anyone. The food isn't edible, so my body is starved for proper nourishment. My eyes are failing, due to the affects of the constant illumination I'm forced to live in. I've reported my body wracked with constant pains (Arthritis), and my teeth are falling out from gum disease. My mind is also under assault by the cries of other prisoners' sufferings, and the lack of any meaningful stimulus. I've reported my complaints to medical who basically informed me that there was nothing they could do, then fed me Ibuprofens for my pain, and told me to turn away from the lights when I sleep. I've also witnessed many prisoners succumb to health issues exacerbated by the conditions of solitary confinement, before the execu-



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tioners' needles could find it's mark, or the relief they so longingly fought for come to pass.

I'm a block worker now, so I get to walk around a bit without restraints. I get to walk by other prisoners' cells, and I'm disheartened by the sights & smells of the worst prisoners affected: "One prisoner paces back 'n forth, ranting at the phantom of his past (guards) that crippled his body & mind some years ago"; "Another stands at his window masturbating as a female nurse is walking up the pathway." Not all prisoners are broken like this, but it can happen.

I use to bounce off the walls like everyone else: working my case; reading law books; watching TV; & painting. The only in-cell program is permitting us to purchase art supplies. There aren't any other in-cell programs to help combat the stresses of solitary confinement. (The loss of loved ones; legal battles; disrupted/delayed communications; lack of privacy; declining mental & physical health; lack of human contact; loneliness; etc.) These are just a few of the high costs of our confinement. It's tearing apart families, friendships & dreams. I've dreamt of having my own family some day, but that dream seems to grow dimmer with each passing day.

I'm trapped in a box, tormented by my failings as a man, and the failings of a broken system. Year after year, I sit here locked away in perpetual solitary confinement (a virulent isolation & incommunicado) stewing on the festering anger of my wrongful conviction without reprieve. I want justice! I want my freedom, because the high costs of my wrongful conviction are too high a price for me to pay. My greatest fear is that I'll continue to die inside from the losses & injustices I've suffered, and lose my humanity. How can I possibly be a productive member of society once I'm released without an ounce of my humanity left? "Solitary Confinement" is cruel & unusual punishment.

