

## **INSIDE THE WALLS OF AN INDIANA STATE PRISON**

A Political Press Release by Khalfani Malik Khaldun

“...when the prison gates slam behind an inmate, he or she does not lose their human qualities; their minds do not become closed to ideas; their intellects do not cease to feed on a free and open interchange of opinions; their yearnings for self-respect do not end, nor are their quests for self-realization concluded...” (Thurgood Marshall)

In 1987 I entered the Indiana Department of *Corruption* as a street-oriented Black kid, who thought he knew everything. However, I would come to learn how little I really knew. Prison is nothing but a mere microcosm of the larger society. The many life contradictions existing in the world exist also inside these decaying prison walls...just on a smaller scale. This, I realized, is a fact.

Prison environments are extremely stressful. Prisoners may possibly experience depression and high blood pressure that, if it goes unchecked for many years, will cause long-term damage to the body. Couple this with the psychological and physical agony from being separated from loved ones, children and friends, prisoners may choose a variety of tactics to get away from their harsh and desperate condition. Some have been driven to commit suicide, which is, in this writer's opinion, the ultimate sacrifice – one's own life.

The Federal Courts have held that prison officials violate the eighth amendment if they are cognizant of the significant likelihood that a prisoner may seek to take his own life, but fail to take reasonable steps to prevent the prisoner from doing so.

The IDOC (Policy 02-01-111: the use and operation of adult administrative segregation) has no tentative release date for prisoners under these strictures. So, when they remove prisoners from general population, it is part of a process that can stretch indefinitely. Because of this long term unending reality, prisoners are spending multiple years on these units. It is indisputable that the treatment a prisoner receives in prison, and conditions under which they are confined, are subject to scrutiny under the eighth amendment. A prison's failure to provide sustenance for its prisoners “may actually

produce physical torture or a lingering death.”

“Prisoners retain the essence of human dignity inherent in all persons. Respect for that dignity animates the eighth amendment prohibition against *cruel and unusual punishment*. The basic concept underlying the eighth amendment is nothing less than the dignity of man.”

Society has to know that the conditions the state of Indiana is refusing to change as relating to its “segregation units” (for a long time now) has compelled multiple suicides. The IDOC clearly acknowledges that long term segregation will exacerbate a prisoner's mental illness.

In 2007, 23 prisoners committed suicide, seeking to stop the enduring pain and agony of being confined to a cell 23 hours a day. Eleven of these suicides were committed by mentally ill prisoners in a segregation setting. Thus, nearly one-half of the prisoner suicides during this period of time were committed by 22% of the total IDOC prisoner population. Not changing any of these conditions, but rather removing such inmates to other units inside the department, thus maintaining long term exposure to toxic settings continues a slow deterioration of those not scheduled for release, whether diagnosed as mentally ill or not. This is why administrators in charge of the IDOC are liable for civil action, in violation of the eighth amendment.

On Halloween night 10/31/13, a prisoner named Logan Green, known to the prison population as “Italy,” committed suicide. Another prisoner relayed information the next day detailing his observations, as told by this next door neighbor. “Italy” appeared fine throughout the day. He engaged in positive dialogues with his comrades. He had a sanitation range job on the hundred range of D-block segregation. The shift working never conducted their last round of security checks, which by policy the officers were required to do. Had this been done, Logan Green could possibly have been saved.

Logan Green, according to his neighbor, picked up his range's breakfast trays that morning, then went to his assigned cell, wrote out a five-page suicide note, braided up two large see-through trash bags into a thick rope, and hung himself from the cell's front

door bars. He was found dead by the day shift, who cut him down and tried to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

He was gone; couldn't be revived. He had defecated himself.

This situation kinda made me think of how callous and unsympathetic the administration here is: just as soon as his body was removed, and the cell cleaned up, someone was placed in that cell. Then the prison was back to business as usual.

As a political prisoner who has been locked down since 1987, who has also been held in solitary segregated confinement since December of 1994, I can attest to having to endure conditions tantamount to a tortuous and slow and agonizing death. I have experienced many moments where I have been stripped buck naked and chained to a bed simply because I would not abandon my politics nor submit to the powers that be. I have wanted it to all end, and to alleviate my agony and pain.

As I continued to rebel against the repression from those in charge, they would pass by my cell daily, whispering "kill yourself, nigger." They hoped that I would take my own life. When they saw that I was full of determination to live, they had no other choice than to leave me alone. Federal law on torture prohibits conduct specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain and suffering. The severe mental suffering from protracted solitary confinement will and has put the confined at risk for brain impairment.

The public needs to know that brain studies reveal durable impairments and abnormalities in individuals denied social interaction. Plainly put, a lot of prisoners lose their minds. In an article, "Hell Hole," in the March 30, 2009 New Yorker, Atul Gawande, a surgeon who writes on public health issues noted that "one of the paradoxes of solitary confinement is that, as starved as people become for companionship, the experience often leaves them unfit social interaction."

In 1842 Charles Dickens said that after a visit to a penitentiary that opened in 1829 in Philadelphia (Easter State Penitentiary): I hold this slow slow and daily tampering with the mysteries of the brain to be immensely worse than any torture of the body. And

because its ghastly signs and tokens are not so palpable to the eye and sense of touch as scars upon the flesh, because its wound are not upon the surface and it extorts few cries that human eyes can hear is a punishment that slumbering humanity is not roused up to stay.”

Someone should be held responsible for not ensuring that all security protocols were followed to prevent Logan Green from committing suicide. May your soul find peace and warmth, “Italy,” and an uncomplicated resting place. As for me, my struggle continues.

You, the people, may join in with us and call, or write, or fax a protest letter in support of my release from long-term department wide administrative segregation. You may do so by contacting the following:

Senator Dick Durbin	Dushan Zatecky Supt.
711 Hart Senate Bldg.	Pendleton Corr. Facility
Washington, D.C. 20510	4490 W. Reformatory Rd.
(202) 228-0400 Fax	Pendleton, IN 460604
(202) 224 2152 Phone	(765) 778-2107
or Chicago Office	
230 S. Dearborn suite 3892	
Chicago, Il 60604	
(312) 353-4952 Phone	
(312) 353-0150 Fax	

Bruce Lemmon, Commissioner  
Indiana Dept. of Corrections  
302 W. Washington St. Rm. 334  
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