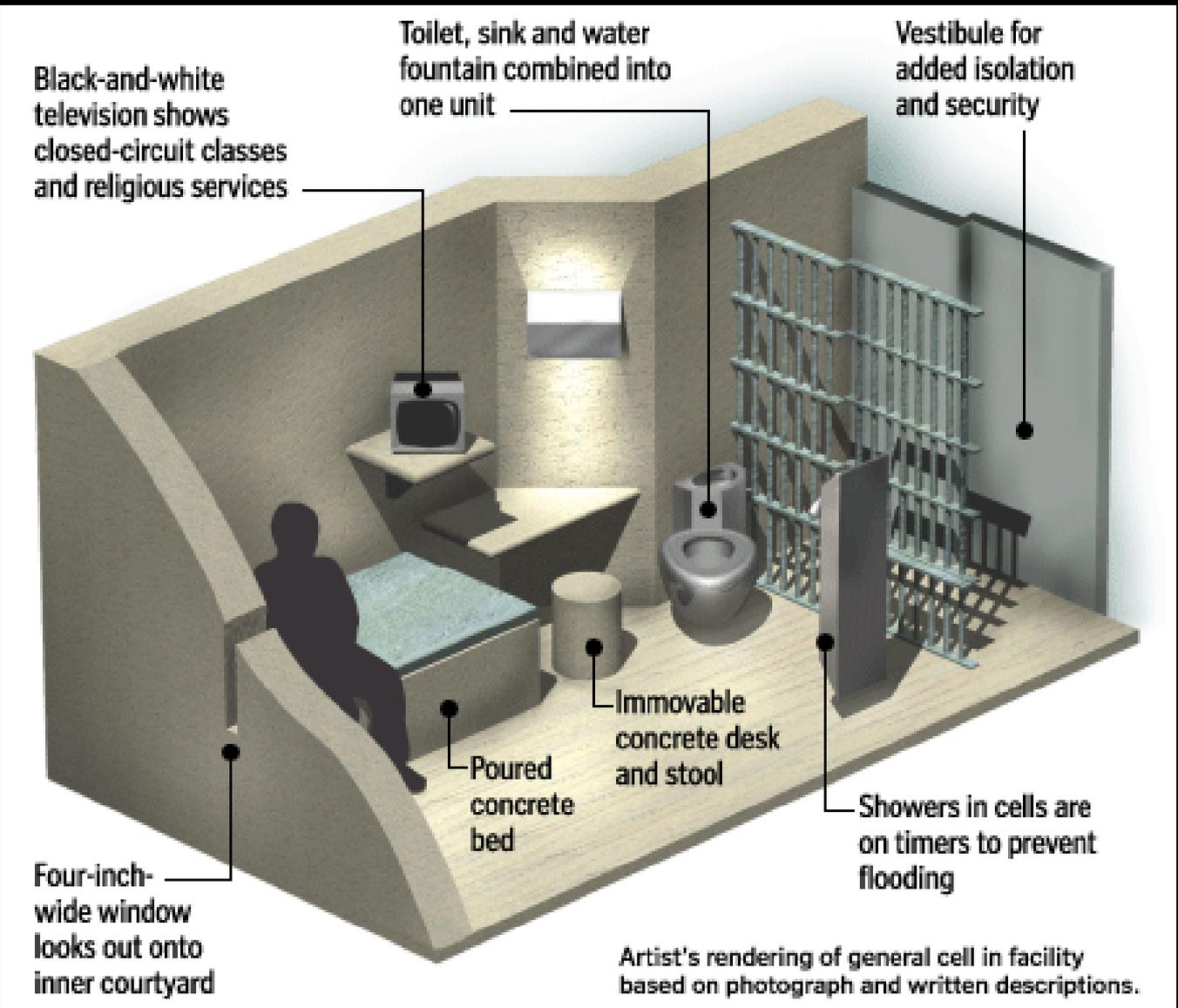


# The Rise (and Fall?) of Supermax Prisons



How did we get from here... to there?





Black-and-white television shows closed-circuit classes and religious services

Toilet, sink and water fountain combined into one unit

Vestibule for added isolation and security

Four-inch-wide window looks out onto inner courtyard

Poured concrete bed

Immovable concrete desk and stool

Showers in cells are on timers to prevent flooding

Artist's rendering of general cell in facility based on photograph and written descriptions.









# Common effects of prolonged solitary confinement

- Affective disorders such as anxiety, paranoia, uncontrollable rage, and depression
- Cognitive disorders such as confusion, inability to focus, oversensitivity to stimuli, obsessive rumination, and memory loss
- Perceptual disorders such as visual and acoustic hallucinations
- Physical disorders such as headaches, lethargy, insomnia, digestive problems, heart palpitations, fainting spells, and bodily aches and pains
- In extreme cases, psychotic breakdown, self-mutilation, and suicide

*Dr. Stuart Grassian's interviews at  
Walpole Penitentiary, 1983*

Melting,  
everything in the cell  
starts moving;  
everything gets darker,  
you feel you are losing your vision.

I seem to see movements –  
real fast motions in front of me.  
Then seems like they're doing things  
behind your back –  
can't quite see them.  
Did someone just hit me?  
I dwell on it for hours.

I can't concentrate, can't read...

Your mind's narcotized...

sometimes can't grasp words

in my mind that I know.

Get stuck,

have to think of another word.

Memory is going.

You feel you are losing something

you might not get back.

# How did we get to this point?

- Cold War sensory deprivation research
- Repressive state reactions to the political resistance of prisoners
- Reluctance of the courts to condemn solitary confinement as “cruel and unusual punishment”

# Cold War Sensory Deprivation Research



# Donald Hebb's lab, 1956

*After 6 days of sensory deprivation:*

“The whole room is undulating, swirling. . . . You were going all over the fool place at first. The floor is still doing it. The wall is waving all over the place--a horrifying sight, as a matter of fact. . . . The centre of that curtain over there--it just swirls downward, undulates and waves inside. . . . I find it difficult to keep my eyes open for any length of time, the visual field is in such a state of chaos. . . . Everything will settle down for a moment, then it will start to go all over the place.”

# The Power to Change Behavior Conference (1961)

James V. Bennett, director of the federal Bureau of Prisons from 1937 to 1964:

[W]e have a tremendous opportunity here to carry on some of the experimenting to which the various panelists have alluded. We can manipulate our environment and culture . . . What I am hoping is that the audience here will believe that we here in Washington are anxious to have you undertake some of these things. Do things perhaps on your own--undertake a little experiment of what you can do with the Muslims--undertake a little experiment with what you can do with some of the sociopath individuals . . . [Y]ou are thoughtful people with lots of opportunity to experiment--there's lots of research to do--do it as individuals, do it as groups, and let us know the results."

# Repressive state reactions to prisoner resistance



# Attica Declaration (1971)

“We are firm in our resolve and we demand, as human beings, the dignity and justice that is due to us by right of our birth. We do not know how the present system of brutality and dehumanization and injustices has been allowed to be perpetuated in this day of enlightenment, but we are the living proof of its existence and we cannot allow it to continue.”

Demands included:

- Legal representation at parole hearings
- Adequate medical care
- Improved visiting conditions
- End the persecution and segregation of political prisoners
- End the racist treatment of black and brown prisoners
- Right to unionize
- Access to meaningful education

# Marion Penitentiary (Illinois)



CardCow.com

# History of Marion Penitentiary

- 1963 – Opened as a replacement for Alcatraz
  - Ralph Aron, former warden: “The purpose of the Marion Control Unit is to control revolutionary attitudes in the prison system and in the society at large.”
  - Politically active prisoners held at Marion have included Leonard Peltier of the American Indian Movement, Sekou Odinga of the Black Liberation Army, Alan Berkman of the Resistance Conspiracy case, and Oscar Lopez Rivera of the Puerto Rican nationalist group, FALN
- 1968-72 – Behavior modification programs implemented by Dr. Martin Groder: Asklepeion and CARE (Control and Rehabilitation Effort)
- 1973 – Long term control unit established in response to prisoner strike, in response to the beating of a Chicano inmate by a guard
- 1983 – Murder of 2 prison guards by members of the Aryan Brotherhood
- The entire prison was locked down for the next 23 years, making Marion the first de facto supermax prison

# Cruel and Unusual Punishment?



# Madrid v Gomez (1995)

- Judge Thelton Henderson: “Conditions in the SHU may well hover on the edge of what is humanly tolerable for those with normal resilience, particularly when endured for extended periods of time. They do not, however, violate exacting Eighth Amendment standards, except for the specific population subgroups identified in this opinion.” (at 1280)
- "Segregated detention is not cruel and unusual punishment per se, as long as the conditions of confinement are not foul, inhuman or totally without penological justification" (cited at 1262).

# Pelican Bay State Prison, California



# Pelican Bay SHU Short Corridor



# Pelican Bay SHU Cell



# Gang Validation

On Friday, March 25, 2011, an investigation was completed into your suspected membership and/or association with a prison gang and/or disruptive group recognized by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation as defined in Section 3000 of the California Code of Regulations. The investigation revealed sufficient evidence to identify you as a:

MEMBER  ASSOCIATE of the  PRISON GANG  DISRUPTIVE GROUP:

An interview relative to this investigation and suspected gang affiliation shall be held not less than 24 hours from the date of this notification unless otherwise requested by you in writing. During this interview, you will be given an opportunity to be heard and have your opinion documented relative to the evidence considered in this validation. Written rebuttals may be submitted at the time of the interview.

## DISCLOSURE OF EVIDENCE

The following source documents were considered in your identification as a member or associate of the aforementioned prison gang or disruptive group. All confidential documents shall be disclosed via CDC Form 1030, Confidential Information Disclosure Form. Each source document shall be identified by type (I.E. CDC 128B, CDC 115, Confidential Report, etc.), date, and author of the report.

SELF ADMISSION:

TATTOOS AND SYMBOLS: CDCR 128-B, dated March 18, 2011, authored by E. Duarte, Correctional Officer. CDCR 128-B dated February 15, 2011, authored by E. Duarte, Correctional Officer.

WRITTEN MATERIAL:

PHOTOGRAPHS:

STAFF INFORMATION:

OTHER AGENCIES:

ASSOCIATION:

INFORMANTS: Confidential Memorandum, dated November 15, 2010, authored by Correctional Sergeant H. Groth. Confidential Memorandum, dated September 27, 2010, authored by Correctional Sergeant E. Uribe. CDCR 128-B, dated March 24, 2011, authored by Correctional Sergeant E. Duarte.

OFFENSES (GANG RELATED):

LEGAL DOCUMENTS:

VISITORS:

COMMUNICATIONS (MAIL/NOTES): (Direct Link) Confidential Memorandum, dated March 18, 2011, authored by E. Duarte.

DEBRIEFING REPORTS:

Copies of all documents and/or disclosures were provided to the inmate as required per CCR section 3378 and Department Operations Manual (DOM) 52070.21.1 by:

# Pelican Bay-SHU Short Corridor Collective

## Five Core Demands

- to end group punishment for individual rule violations
- to reform gang validation policies
- to comply with the recommendations of a national commission on long-term solitary confinement
- to provide adequate and healthy food
- to expand rehabilitation and recreation programs



**CALIFORNIA FAMILIES**  
**TO ABOLISH SOLITARY CONFINEMENT**  
[www.abolishsolitary.com](http://www.abolishsolitary.com)

**CR IS LYING THE PRISONERS ARE DYING**

**23 YEARS IN THE CELL**

**SUPPORT CALIFORNIA PRISONER STRIKE!!!**

# Proposed Legislative Reforms in CA

(Sen. Loni Hancock and Rep. Tom Ammiano)

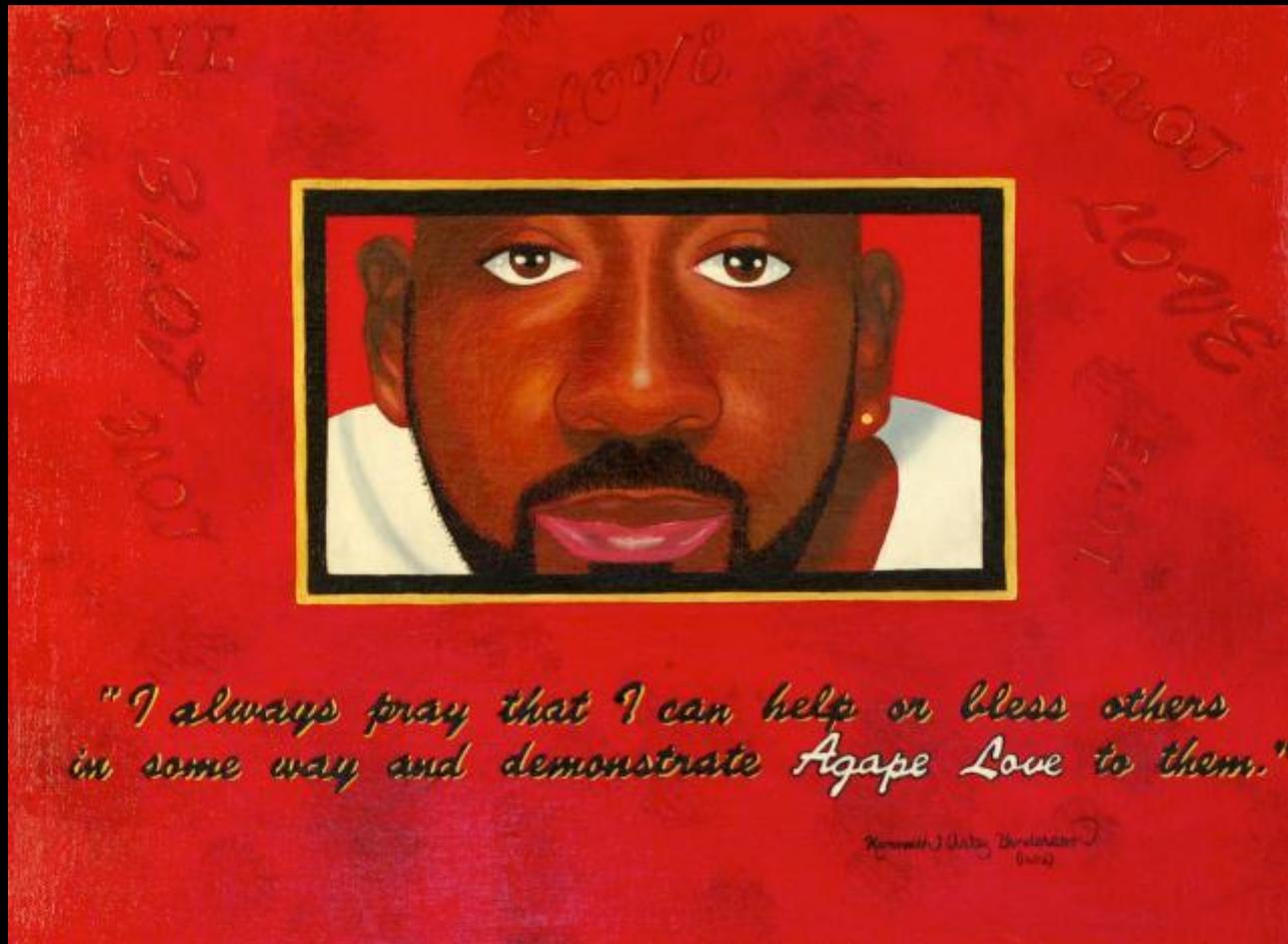
- **Establishing independent outside oversight** by requiring the Office of the Inspector General to review indeterminate solitary confinement detention cases and to conduct regular reviews of each inmate serving an indeterminate SHU term.
- Strengthening integrity in the system by requiring CDCR to provide inmates with **an advocate throughout the SHU detention process** and creating a new position specifically to assist inmates and their families with issues such as visitation rights and access to support networks.
- **Prohibiting the placement of seriously mentally ill inmates in solitary confinement** and requiring that every inmate in solitary confinement be evaluated by a mental health professional every 90 days.

- **Establishing “exit roadmaps” by creating individual rehabilitation plans** for all SHU inmates and re-entry plans for inmates who may be paroled directly to the street from solitary confinement.
- **Streamlining the “Step Down” program** for return to the general prison population and providing inmates with regular reports on how they are progressing.
- **Establishing more humane conditions in solitary confinement** by providing inmates with physical and mental stimulation, including opportunities to interact with other inmates and staff, access to educational programs, and creating an incentive program for inmates to earn privileges such as a monthly phone call, photographs or yard time.

# Riverbend Maximum Security Institution, Nashville



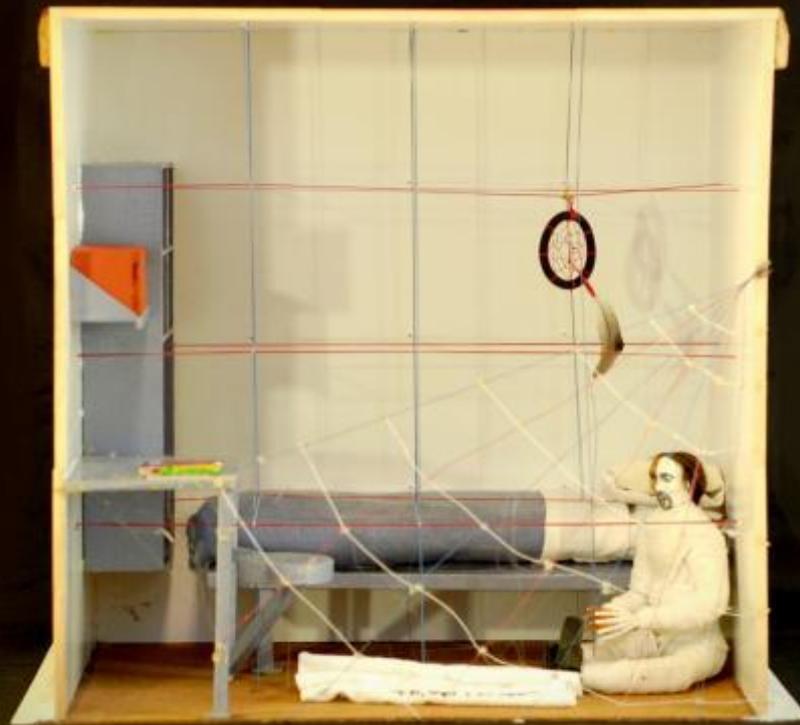
# *Agape Love* by Kennath Artez Henderson, prisoner on death row in Tennessee



*Solitary Confinement*  
by Kennath Artez Henderson



*If My Journey...* by Derrick Quintero,  
prisoner on death row in Tennessee



[www.reachcoalition.wordpress.com](http://www.reachcoalition.wordpress.com)

