

**Title:** Saving the Isolated: The Pathway to Eliminate Solitary Practices  
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In a 2015 *Solitary Watch* article, “Voices from Solitary: ‘Where Cold, Quiet and Emptiness Come Together’”, Cesar Francisco Villa has been confined to his cell at Pelican Bay State Prison Security Housing Unit (SHU) and has documented his soul-crushing experience in prolonged isolation. Villa exclaims that “the first week I told myself: it isn’t that bad, I could do this. The second week, I stood outside in my underwear shivering as I was pelted with hail and rain. By the third week, I found myself squatting in a corner of the yard, filing fingernails down over coarse concrete walls.” Week after week, Villa slowly lost willpower. As he lay on the concrete floor with his bloody clothing clinging to his body, his faith in goodness evaporated. Solitary confinement has shifted his mentality to the sudden darkness. Villa is one of the 80,000 inmates nationwide who are subjected to restrictive housing in correctional facilities. As the problem of solitary confinement continues to exacerbate, its psychological effects — intense anxiety and sensory deprivation— impacts an overwhelming community of inmates. Solitary confinement is actively harming the prisoners mentally and physically without truly providing necessary rehabilitative lessons to reinstate these prisoners back into society.

While the fact that restrictive housing is counter-productive to the purpose of correctional facilities is a huge problem to the society, it does not compare to the financial toll it has on the entire country. Assistant Majority Leader Dick Durbin has researched that the solitary practices “costs more than \$60,000 yearly to house a prisoner in restrictive housing compared to an average of \$22,000 for inmates in other prisons.” Therefore, solitary confinement nationwide is contributing to overarching immense debt which is ultimately counterproductive to correctional facilities' main objective. Over the course of history, solitary practices have evolved

into a destructive force paving the pathway to a generation of mentally disabled inmates. Activists have tried to abolish prolonged isolation several times. However, their attempts fall short due to a faulty legislative system. Therefore, prisoners resort to drastic measures such as a hunger strike for their cause to be heard nationwide. This is unacceptable. Various social reforms advocate politicians and wardens to alter prison regulations in hopes to protect prisoners. While solitary confinement may exacerbate existing stress and generate psychological trauma in inmates, an alternative rehabilitation program, therapeutic group counseling, can mitigate stress and educate prisoners about their wrongdoings.

#### Works Cited

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“Voices from Solitary: ‘Where Cold, Quiet and Emptiness Come Together.’” *Solitary Watch*, 21 Oct. 2015.