

## **Michael's Story:** Torture starting at age 15 in Adult Prison

I would like to share with you a letter I wrote to "mental health" while I was in a single man solitary confinement. The letter is entitled "Stigmatized." They actually tried to put me on suicide watch for sending this LOL!

Anyway, I'm 27 years old right now, and have been incarcerated for almost 12 years. I was certified as an adult at 15 and from age 15 to 17 I was kept in a cell by myself for 23½ hours a day. And by the time I was 20 I'd done almost 4 years in solitary or ad seg. Note: from age 15 to 17 it was because I was too young to be around adult inmates.

As of right now I've done almost half of my prison bit in ad seg or solitary, many long stretches and short ones. Most of these years wasted in ad seg are for petty infractions. I wrote this letter because while you're in ad seg, every week an angry mental health therapist will come and bang on your door and ask you how you're doing—like some sick joke.

Anyway, this is a letter I wrote telling them how I felt. Maybe you can share it with others. At any rate it's yours to do with as you please. Thank you guys for caring. They just recently gave me a parole date for next year. And although I don't have anybody out there and I've been in here since I was a teen, it's people like you guys that inspire me. And although I'm nervous about my future, I have faith in my success.

### **Stigmatized**

*The truth is sad because the essence of my truth is cloaked in darkness. It's a staring monster that will never be satisfied. And yes, by my existence they justify its feast. I weep to admit that I've become its most wholesome prize. This disease has consumed me in its destructive capacity. But I am mature and wise enough to realize the lie in which my life plays out. I used to be hateful, jaded and angry. My heart used to beat venom against everything and everyone inside this place. Now I realize the wasted efforts of those unrestricted emotions and how they plunged me to the depths of this darkness.*

*It is true character that blossoms in our darkest hours. The nature of its rawness allows nothing but the truth to filter from our most dark depravity. In this place we either break or exist. And the saddest truth of all is that most of us break. And when we break we cease to see the beauty that lies beyond the razor rows that confine us. We become content in our self-destruction until we can no longer see how dark and destroyed we've truly become. And in that place there is little hope.*

*I used to think this was a battle between me and the system, that I should direct all my hatred towards those who keep me confined. But now I know that the battle has always been with myself, against my deepest fears and uncertainties. This stigma that will forever mark me will become a reminder of these dark hours. And although I will always battle this label of disgrace, I will not be claimed by its definition. And the person I've become, I know this too shall pass.*

*For beyond these razor rows lies a world of hope and possibility. And no amount of time in prison or solitary will strip me of that faith and knowledge.*

*I know as staff members it's hard for you to see. And that for you this is just a job. Yes, as criminals we deserve the wrath of 'justice' for the things we have done, some more than others. But is there not a better way? I'm 25 and I've spent years in solitary confinement. And in doing so I've seen men fall apart under the burden of this sickness, this stagnant inactivity of existence inside this small box. Can you please tell me how this helps?*

*Your psychotropic drugs mixed with solitary confinement are turning broken people into horrible human beings, plunging them so far into darkness that they may forever be lost, ruined and unfixable. What do we become in this darkness but monsters of our inner solitude? We are your faceless men as we slip from the reality of our own existence—until we exist only in the reality of your degradation and painful solitary. Our mirror image reflecting the hollow shell of a stranger we can no longer identify with. Weeks, months and years erasing our nature of humanity until we're lost in the confines of our own confusion.*

*So now I scream in falsettos of wicked rage. Painful inhumanity consumes me, conspiring to destroy my mental flesh in the jaws of its spike-filled maw. I become your conflicts keeper, confined in the matrix of night's affliction, deprived of all senses, laid to rest within the walls of this living tomb, alive through the nightmare of your psychological attrition. But intrepid in the face of your brutality.*

*You cannot breathe the blackness of my suffocation. So you gaze through the glass in wonder as I survive your mental execution. DO YOU SEE? CAN YOU FEEL THE THUNDER OF MY HEART? It smashes at the walls of my being with the insidious vibration of a caged monster. Do you know what you have done?!! I weep not at the painful crack of your whip but at the void it leaves within me. The powerful blow of each strike vaporizes the fibers of my soul until I'm left with the burden of a tattered fabric that flutters in the breeze of my destruction.*

*I am alone but unafraid. Here in this putrid place of solitude you have confined me to a death far worse than physical murder. And although I am alone here in this tomb, I suffer this destruction with thousands of others like myself. And they too weep in the blackness of their solitary pain.*