



INSIDE Journal

PRISON FELLOWSHIP'S NEWSPAPER FOR AMERICA'S PRISONS VOLUME 23, NO. 3 SUMMER 2014

The Power to Forgive

by Kate Campbell

“I was a judge you really didn’t want to appear in front of,” says Tom Kohl, presiding judge in Washington County, Oregon. “I was really harsh, especially toward drug addicts that were charged with crimes.”

An estimated 30,000 people abuse alcohol or illicit drugs in Washington County, and Tom felt little compassion when they appeared before him in court. But Tom’s attitude changed when he learned that his own daughter, Megan, was abusing drugs. As he saw her sinking deeper into drug abuse, his sympathy for drug addicts grew, and he began a drug court in March 2005 to help people like her.

Drug court is an intensive treatment program for addicts who have been charged with crimes. It involves counseling, group therapy, employment, and a weekly meeting with a judge. “Our mission in drug court is

to save people’s lives, to break the cycle of addiction, and to restore family relationships,” says Tom.

Tom hoped that drug court would help his addicted daughter.

“[My wife and I] were praying that Megan would be brought into the system because she wasn’t being accountable to anyone,” says Tom. “People who are moms and dads of addicts can understand that prayer.”

The Kohls’ prayers were answered when authorities charged Megan with meth distribution in May 2006, but she would never have an opportunity to face justice.

On July 21, 2006, at the age of 21, Megan was murdered.

“It’s a parent’s worst nightmare,” says Tom. “When I received word from the police officer ... there was so much sorrow, despair, hopelessness.”

‘I Turned to God’

In the midst of tragedy, Tom found hope in his relationship

with God.

“You either turn to God or away from God in situations like that,” says Tom. “I turned to God.”

This decision to turn to God saved Tom from being unforgiving toward Robert, the man who murdered his daughter.

“Unforgiveness turns into bitterness and anger, and that can just ruin your life,” says Tom. “Unforgiveness is a prison. When you come to a point when you can forgive, you’re set free.”

During the trial, Tom came face to face with Robert.

“I had a chance to tell him in court that I had forgiven him before I even met him, which was only possible through the presence of Jesus Christ in my life,” says Tom.

On April 9, 2009, the jury sentenced Robert to life without parole.

A Father Becomes an Author

After the trial was finished, Tom felt compelled to write a



Photo provided by Tom Kohl

Tom Kohl prays with an inmate at Louisiana State Penitentiary, where he shared his story of forgiveness.

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Brotherhood Behind Bars

by Quovadis Marshall and Jesse Wiese

Quovadis Marshall is the director of spiritual development at Prison Fellowship Ministries. Jesse Wiese is a policy analyst for Justice Fellowship, a branch of Prison Fellowship Ministries that works to improve the criminal justice system. These long-time friends sat down together with Inside Journal to discuss what it takes to form lasting friendships behind bars.



Quovadis Marshall and Jesse Wiese formed an unusual friendship in unlikely circumstances.

Photo by Kate Campbell

“We both received the same sentence, and we were both serving the same amount of time. We were even released within two weeks of each other. But besides being in the same prison at the same time, we were as different as black and white, in every sense of the word.”

Jesse is an introvert, but I

(Quovadis) am an extreme extrovert. I grew up poor, but he grew up pretty affluent. He went to private Christian schools, so I think I was the second black friend he had.

From our personal differences to the distinctions of prison culture, there were plenty of barriers to our friendship. But we found that we did have something in common – we were both fallen men in need of a Savior, and that brought us together. What drew us together was our depravity; what solidified our friendship was that we had become new men, and we had been invited to be brothers in the family of God.

A Friendship Begins

Our friendship actually started off on a bit of a rough patch. I (Jesse) worked in the library, and Quovadis used to come in all the time with all these young guys, and it would annoy me. They would talk about the Bible

and different theological topics, and I thought a lot of what he said was wrong and inaccurate.

One day, I (Quovadis) was in the library, and Jesse joined in on the conversation, and we ended up having somewhat of a lively debate. I remember thinking, ‘Who’s this white uppity rich kid?’ But I still saw him in the library every day, and after a while, we just began to strike up conversations. As soon as we got to know each other, it became obvious we would be friends for life. As much as we would get on each other’s nerves, we both knew we were in it for the long haul.

Jesse and I were part of the InnerChange Freedom Initiative, which is a reentry program run by Prison Fellowship. Going to that program was culture shock for me. Prison is highly segregated, but in this program, I saw hundreds of men, black and white together, singing songs and praising God.

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Letters to the Editor

Dealing With Grief

When I was first told about my father's passing, I instantly went into the state of sadness, and denying to myself that he was gone. What really helped me cope with the loss of my father was... knowing even though I am in prison, there were people, both inmates and staff, that ... were there for me ... Going to church was also a real big help. All of the Christian brothers were very, very supportive. ... You might think you are alone in grief and the pain, and have nobody to talk to, but there is always someone that can help you through. Also pray to the Lord and ask Him to give you comfort, and peace.

— J. W., Pennsylvania

Becoming a Better Dad

I have turned my life over to my Father in Heaven to do with as He sees fit. I got a newspaper from a fellow Christian at our last prison church service. ... One article in particular drew me to my knees and made me cry and beg God to forgive me and help me with my journey of repairing my relationship with my three boys (ages 13, 18, 19). The article was entitled "Becoming a Better Dad." I want to be a good father, like my Father in Heaven is to me.

— J.M., California

Stopping the Shooting

The way to keep children safer is to stop trying to make laws that infringe upon a person's Second Amendment rights so that they



Photo: iStockphoto.com

can protect their children and families. Allow everyone, regular citizens or ex-cons (because I'm soon to be one), to have their Second Amendment right to bear arms. To reduce the rate of gun violence, teach more gun safety and how and why guns are really to be used.

— W.S.R., North Carolina

Crime's Hidden Victims

I am contacting you for two purely selfish reasons. The first of which is to thank you for the

wonderful and inspiring articles in your spring 2014 Prison Fellowship newspaper. I recently (May 2014) had the opportunity to read volume 23, no. 2; and was truly inspired by Ann Edenfield Sweet's 'Crime's Hidden Victims' because I have found myself in the same exact situation, with the very same concerns that she spoke on. And I have found that the advice she gave is sound, practical, and effective. Many thanks and may God continue to bless her with the wisdom and inspiration that she shares with people like myself all over the world.

I would also like to thank and commend Mr. Quovadis Marshall for his excellent and touching guest column 'A Parent's Job,' and though I am sad to say it touched me in a more profound way 'personally,' nonetheless I can truly say that it also helped to open my eyes to the reality of 'my' situation. And may God continue to bless him also.

—J.L., Florida

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Power to Forgive

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book about his experience. Tom finished his book, "Losing Megan," in November 2010; but he likes to say that he had one more chapter to write.

"God put it on my heart to visit the murderer of my daughter and talk with him," says Tom.



Photo provided by Tom Kohl

"Megan had a heart for people who were down and out," says Tom.

"People asked me why I [was going] to visit him, and I said, 'I don't know, but God is preparing my heart.'"

During the prison visit, Tom spent an hour with Robert. Tom recalls that after 15 minutes, he had nothing left to say. That's when he asked Robert if he had any questions in return.

"[Robert] said, 'I'm so sorry, Judge. ... how can you be so kind to me?' At that point, I knew that Jesus had opened the door for me to talk about the Gospel," says Tom.

Tom spent the rest of his visit



Photo provided by Tom Kohl

Through his position as a drug court judge, Tom has the opportunity to share his story of forgiveness with many families.

telling Robert about his faith in God.

The finished book, published in 2012, has taken Tom to places he never expected to go.

"I thought I was writing the book for people who had suffered the loss of a child," says Tom. "But the door opened for me to start going into prisons to speak about hope and forgiveness and Jesus Christ."

Brotherhood

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In prison, there are unspoken social expectations. You find brotherhood with those who are the same, and the first factor is skin color, the second is gang affiliation. The status quo in prison is that you stay with your own people. But when we entered this program, all of those things went away. And we quickly learned that in the Kingdom of God, you can find brotherhood with those who are different.

We ended up being roommates for a while before we were both transferred to a minimum security facility. We worked to plant a church in that facility, and we fought hard and learned a lot. We learned that it's good that we're different and that we have different spiritual gifts. We complement each other well. We relied on each other. There's a tie that binds us that is stronger than our differences.

We've been friends now for over 12 years. We were each other's best men at our weddings, and we began working together at Prison Fellowship Ministries. We are advocates together for restoration. We view each other as more than just a faithful friend, but a brother.

Finding Friendship Behind Bars

When people go to prison, they aren't looking to make friends. No one is in prison because they want to be. Though prison may not seem like an ideal place to forge lifelong friendships, friendship can be found by all who seek it. Friendship takes trust and it takes time. It's about vulnerability, it's

about fighting for each other's greatness, it's about loyalty and commitment, and it's about honesty.

You're bound to meet someone who is interested in the same things as you are; it's really about putting yourself in the best position to meet those people. If you like to read, go to the library. If you like to shoot hoops, go to the basketball courts. If you're studying to get your GED, find other people to study with. If you're a father, spend time with other men who have children. Keep in mind, though, that you become like who you hang out with. The adage remains true: "Show me your friends and I'll show you your future."

If you want to meet people on the Christian journey, you need to put yourself where Christians go. See what kind of classes or programs you have that will give you the opportunity to meet people who are on the same journey as you. Find like-minded people who are going the same direction. Trust that the Lord will bring people to you.

Remember that developing relationships while you're in prison doesn't mean they end when you are released; the friendships that begin in prison can continue past the gates. Our friendship was founded on something greater than ourselves. When you meet someone with the same mission and vision as you, you're always going to meet them along that path at some point. Community is not determined by where you live or what you choose to be a part of; community is shared values, shared faith, and shared suffering. Community can happen anywhere. ■

The Story Spreads

Tom began sharing his story in prisons around the country, and is even traveling to Rwanda, a country in Africa, to speak in the prison system there.

Everywhere he goes, Tom meets someone who has been impacted by his story.

"Once at a luncheon I attended, I sat down next to a man I did not know. He asked me if I was Judge Kohl and cautiously told me that he used drugs with Megan. He told me that when she was murdered, it

affected him so much that he stopped using drugs," says Tom. "Megan's death gave this man life. Only God can do something like that."

Ultimately, Tom hopes his story is an example of the freedom possible through forgiveness.

"There are a lot of people in prison who have that unfor-giveness," says Tom. "You have to ask God for the power to forgive. We all struggle with it ... you need to get down on your knees every day and ask God to help." ■

PRAYER WARRIORS CORNER

This summer, please pray for these concerns:

- That you and your fellow prisoners would grow in love for God, people of different races and backgrounds, and those working for the DOC
- For believers in Jesus to grow in their understanding of how to live like Him and for Him
- That your prison/jail would be peaceful and free from violence and hatred
- That families of prisoners would receive comfort as they live without their loved ones

Kidnapped and Held Captive

by Kate Campbell

CHIBOK, NIGERIA – While hundreds of female students were sleeping at their boarding school the night before their final exam, many were awoken – not by pre-test jitters, but by kidnappers, who stole more than 200 of them from their beds the night of April 14, 2014. An extremist Islamic terrorist group, Boko Haram, loaded the girls, aged 16 to 18, into trucks, taking them away from their families, friends, and future. Boko Haram has publicly announced its plans to sell the girls into child slavery and forced prostitution. The girls will be offered for as little as \$12.

Many reports speculate that the girls are being held captive somewhere in Nigeria's forests, but the Nigerian military has not yet searched the area. Frustrated by the government's lack of action, many local hunters, armed with homemade weapons, have prepared to join the search for the kidnapped girls. The United States and the United Kingdom have also sent military experts to Nigeria to help search for the girls.

Boko Haram has staged countless attacks in Nigeria since 2002. The group, whose name means "Western education is forbidden," rejects democracy, opposes the education of women, and justifies violence and slavery as acceptable practices.



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The news of the kidnapping of over 200 Nigerian school-girls gained international attention and sparked the trending hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. Even first lady Michelle Obama showed her support.

The Thief Comes

Boko Haram came as a thief in the night, abducting the girls from their families, burning down buildings, and taking many lives in the process. Jesus Christ once spoke of a similar thief, saying, "The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life." (John 10:10, NLT) The thief Jesus describes isn't a literal thief like Boko Haram. In this passage of the Bible, the thief is Satan, God's enemy. Satan desires to steal, kill, and destroy our lives through sin, the self-centered thoughts and actions that hurt God, other people, and ourselves. The Bible says that living in sin is like being a prisoner. "An evil man is held captive by his own sins; they are ropes that catch and hold him." (Proverbs 5:22, NLT) Jesus even compared sin to slavery: "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin." (John 8:34, NLT)

Each person is born as a slave to sin, but it began with Adam and Eve, the first humans. When God created the earth, it was a perfect place without sin. However, Satan tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God, and when they chose to disobey, sin entered the world. Ever since, people have continued to sin, so that every generation lives estranged from God and from one another. The cycle never stops.

Setting Captives Free

How, then, can we experience true freedom from this slavery? God sent Jesus Christ to bring us freedom and life, "to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed." (Isaiah 61:1, NLT) Jesus lived a sinless life, but He took the punishment for all of our sins so that we could be freed from the slavery of our

Free Indeed

We are all held captive to sin, but Jesus is the only person who is able to free us from that slavery. We can experience freedom through a relationship with Jesus Christ. When we pray to God from our hearts, He hears us and answers us:

God, I know I've chosen to be a slave to sin, but today, I want freedom. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to bring me freedom through His death. I want to have a relationship with You so I can know what it means to have life to the full. Forgive me for the ways I've sinned and give me Your Holy Spirit to help me be free from sin every day.

If you've decided you want to know more about experiencing freedom from the captivity of sin, Inside Journal wants to help. Write to "Free Indeed," c/o Inside Journal, P.O. Box 1790, Ashburn, VA, 20146-1790. We'll connect you with a partner organization that provides a free correspondence Bible study and a Bible, if you don't have access to one through your facility.

Even after Jesus died, He wasn't finished with His mission! God raised Him from the dead to show that He had even freed us from the power of death, and we could have life with Him forever. Because Jesus has come to rescue us from slavery, we are freed from captivity to sin! "So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free." (John 8:36, NLT) Through a relationship with Jesus Christ you can experience true freedom from sin. Sin will no longer steal your life like a thief, but instead you can experience life to its fullest through Jesus Christ – a life full of joy, love, peace, redemption, and freedom.

Sometimes, we find it hard to believe that Jesus really freed us from our sin, when we feel like sin has destroyed our lives. In chapter 23 of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus had another encounter with a thief. As Jesus was being put to death, hanging on a cross, there were two other men alongside him being put to death for their

crimes: "One of the criminals hanging beside Him scoffed, 'So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!' But the other criminal protested, 'Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.' And Jesus replied, 'I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.'" (Luke 23:39-43, NLT)

Jesus invites every person into His Kingdom, no matter what they've done. Jesus loves each of us so deeply that He died so we would be freed from sin, and now God sees you as completely sinless and forgiven when you have a relationship with Jesus Christ. In that relationship, you can experience life to the full, like Jesus promises! ■

Connect With Your Child This Christmas!

A Gift From Your Heart to Theirs ...

This summer is the time to sign your children up to receive a Christmas present from you through Angel Tree. **Applications for Christmas 2014 must be postmarked by September 2, 2014.** Ask your chaplain or program coordinator for an application, and either the chaplain or program coordinator must submit it for you when you are done.

There are some important restrictions to the Angel Tree program, so please read carefully before filling out an application:

- 1) You **must** be the child(ren)'s father, mother, stepfather, or stepmother.
- 2) There **must not be a court order** restricting your contact with the child(ren) or their caregiver(s).
- 3) Your child(ren) must **live in the United States.**
- 4) Your child(ren) must be **18 years old or younger.**
- 5) The form must be filled out completely and legibly.
- 6) The form must be signed.
- 7) The form must be **postmarked by September 2, 2014.**

Get an application and sign your kids up today! A special gift from you at Christmas will help them know that you love them, and it will connect them with a church that can come alongside your family in your absence. Best of all, it will give them an opportunity to experience the transforming love of Jesus Christ.

Angel Tree makes great efforts to serve every eligible child. Sometimes, however, if we are unable to locate your children's caregiver, if the caregiver refuses to participate, or if there are not enough Angel Tree volunteers in a local area, we may not be able to deliver gifts to your children.

If your facility is not signed up and has not received applications, your chaplain may contact **1-800-55-ANGEL** for more information on how to participate.



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Author of 'Crazy Love' Speaks to Prisoners

by A. R. Quinn

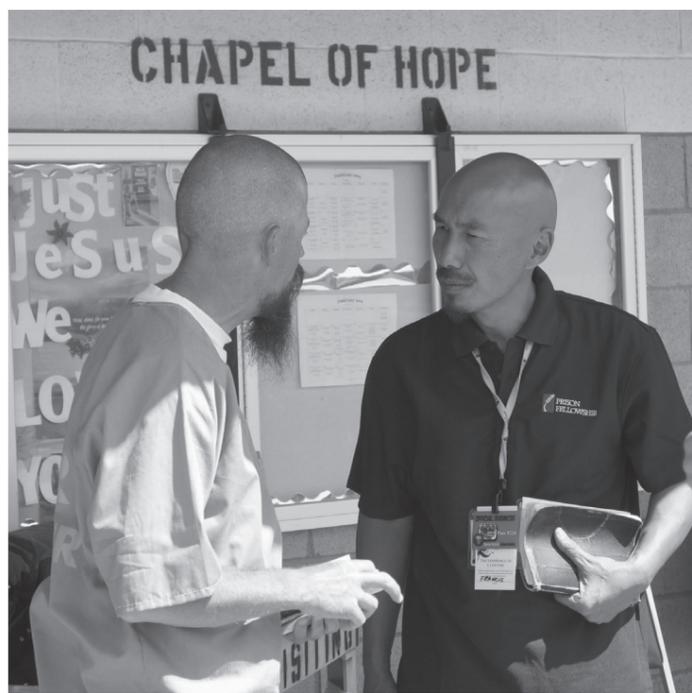
Francis Chan, a nationally known author, speaker, and pastor, volunteered to speak at a Prison Fellowship yard event in April 2014. He sat down with Inside Journal to discuss his message for men and women behind bars.

IJ: What got you interested in prison ministry?

Francis: My interest in prison ministry started ... when I started to study the Word a little bit more deeply and understood the types of people that God typically chooses. They're not the people the world would typically choose to do great things. In my early years, I would pursue the rich, pursue the famous people, thinking, 'Wow, if we got them, they would just draw so many people to themselves,' but then as I studied the Scriptures, I saw that that's not typically who God chooses. In fact, He would choose the people that no one else would, and I began going to the poor, began going overseas. ... [I] started thinking, 'You know, I bet you that's where the leaders are going to come from.'

IJ: Is there a particular Bible verse that sparked your thoughts about prison ministry?

Francis: One of the passages that really got to me was in



Francis Chan talks with a prisoner at a California prison. Chan spoke at a Prison Fellowship event during Easter weekend.

Photo by Joe Avila

1 Corinthians, chapter one, where Paul says, "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God." (1 Corinthians 1:27-29, ESV) And He says, 'OK, I'm actually going to specifically pick people that the world would typically discard, because I'm going to raise these people up to the top, and they're actually going to shame the ones that think that they know it all or they've got it all together.' ... I

thought, 'OK, if that's who Jesus chose, then why am I going after these other people?'

IJ: Why did you decide to spend Easter weekend with prisoners?

Francis: [W]hen I was invited to come out here for Easter, I thought, 'What better way to spend my Easter weekend than going and just sharing the Good News with some of these people who may end up being the future leaders of the Christian movement in America?' ...

... This isn't typically how I would choose to spend Easter weekend. I've got my five kids at home, and haven't seen them from traveling and everything

else. Yet if I believe that Jesus really rose from the dead, and now can enter into a human being and that the risen Christ is here, and everything in His word tells me that here's a chance that the dead could come to life today. ...

... I've met guys in prison who say, 'Man, I met Jesus here and I would rather be locked in this cell for the rest of my life knowing Jesus than being out there, because out there, I didn't know him, I was blind,' and they've come to life here. And to think, that type of resurrection power can happen today? To sacrifice a few hours of my life to get to experience that moving of God, of course it's worth it.

IJ: Tell us about your involvement with prisoner reentry in San Francisco.

Francis: I'm currently helping with reentry in San Francisco. ... It was definitely a God thing. ... I was just walking down the street one day and a guy from a halfway house that was coming out pretty soon recognized me from having done a DVD series in prison. ... We started talking, and I started understanding his life and what it's like to try to get back into the world after seven years of being gone. Now he's got two kids that he's never fathered that are 7 and 8 now, and he's got a wife and then she was pregnant again, and so it's like, 'Wow I've got three kids, no job, nowhere to live,' and yet I saw the Holy Spirit in

this guy. ... I saw something in his eyes. I saw a joy on his face, and as terrified as he was of all the pressure out there and all the temptation, there was a sense of, 'No, Jesus is going to take care of me,' and I just fell in love with this guy and said, 'You know what, I'm going to walk through this with you. You are my brother now.' ... I was able to get him an apartment and help him get a job, and now, two years later, he's a pastor. He's running my ministry in San Francisco, we got a whole house that is all about discipleship and getting guys that are coming out of prison and giving them just that little chance, getting them a job. ... I really believe that if we would just give some of these guys an opportunity, they're going to be amazing pastors and leaders.

IJ: Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?

Francis: To those of you who are reading this Journal, [I would say,] believe that God can do the same things you read about in Scripture. ... I've seen it in people's lives, and God has always blessed and honored the person who believes in Him. It's all about faith. And the world's going to try to tell you, 'No, it can't happen,' or, 'You can't pull this off,' but it can happen, and so don't let anyone talk you out of what you read in [the Bible]. It happens today, and don't let Satan rob you of that faith. ■

Ohio Changes Policy on Solitary Confinement for Juveniles

by Kate Campbell

Ohio will drastically reduce the use of solitary confinement as a punishment for juveniles in its correctional system, with plans to eventually get rid of the practice altogether, according to a Department of Justice (DOJ) press release on May 21, 2014.

The DOJ issued an order for all Ohio correctional facilities to limit the length of solitary confinement for young prisoners and ensure that they receive proper mental health care. According to a report by news radio station WBUR, the order will limit seclusion punishments to four hours for Ohio prisoners ages 10-21, and will phase out the practice completely after time. The changes will begin September 1, 2014.

Research Shows Effects of Solitary Confinement

Research from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has shown that solitary confinement

can be especially damaging to juveniles. Because mental health problems often cause behaviors that land kids in solitary confinement, the overuse of solitary confinement only continues the cycle. Representatives from the DOJ hope that this order will encourage correctional facilities to provide better mental health programs that address juvenile prisoners' mental health needs.

According to the press release, the DOJ began investigating the conditions of Ohio juvenile correctional facilities in 2007 and found many problems, including poor care for the mentally ill and excessive use of solitary confinement. The DOJ moved in 2008 to fix the violations, but data gathered in 2013 showed that Ohio prisons continued to rely too much on solitary confinement.

The DOJ gathered data from the all-male juvenile facilities in Ohio. Reports found that in the second half of 2013, 229 boys with mental health problems spent a total of 60,000 hours in solitary confinement. Many of the juveniles were experiencing suicidal thoughts or had

harmed themselves during their confinement.

Remembering the Purpose of Solitary Confinement

In spite of the downsides of solitary, it is sometimes necessary as a safety measure, and can be effective when used with limits and for a short time. Rick Raemisch, executive director

of the Colorado Department of Corrections, voluntarily spent 24 hours in solitary confinement in February 2014, just to know what it is like. In the op-ed article he wrote for The New York Times, Raemisch says that solitary confinement "allows a prison to run more efficiently for a period of time."

However, Raemisch empha-



Research has shown that excessive use of solitary confinement can have negative effects on incarcerated juveniles.

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