

R.R. L. Railroad Line

By Paul Changa Rogers

The Restricted Release List (RRL) is a policy that was initiated under the former D.O.C. Secretary Jeffrey Beard's supervision. It gives the D.O.C. secretary the final say on when a person can be released from solitary confinement who was placed on this list. It's widely believed that this policy of abuse under Secretary Beard's regime, he denied staff recommendations to release prisoners of the RRL based on his personal bias and retaliatory attitude that he exhibits against prisoners who legally challenge his authority and his policy. Upon learning that Secretary Beard had retired, many prisoners on the RRL had renewed hope our conditions would improve, and the procedures would change. Instead we are witnessing more deceptive and disguised similar treatment under Secretary John Wetzel. This maybe the result of his subordinates picking up where Secretary Beard left off, using the RRL for retaliation, intimidation and psychological torture.

This is accomplished by administrators on the institutional level, who aren't recommending prisoners to be released from solitary confinement in spite of their positive adjustment reports. All attempts to inform Secretary Wetzel of our plight have been ignored or referred to staff assistants, whose response are not substantive or meaningful to the issues. I personally wrote to Secretary Wetzel, as well as my family and concerned prison activists.

It's perfectly clear to me that the RRL policy must be abolished and all forms of long-term solitary confinement. We all were warned in 1983 U.S. Supreme Court case of *Hewitt v. Helms* that dealt with solitary confinement being used as a pretext for indefinitely confinement. In a dissenting opinion Justice Stevens stated, "conditions including Helms own attitude, the attitudes of other prisoners toward him and toward each other and the disruptions caused by the riot, simply do not remain static." For me to be held in solitary confinement, twelve years after the initial cause for such confinement, is in fact a pretext for indefinite solitary confinement. Prison administrators and security officers are using a pretext for torturing and breaking prisoner's minds through sensory deprivation and indefinite solitary confinement. With a simple stroke of the pen, a person can be classified as a security threat and placed on the RRL. The procedures in place are perfunctory, meaningless and paper shuffling as prisoners develop mental health issues and serious psychological effects from on-going solitary confinement. Even those who manage to maintain their mental health suffer from depression, episodes of anxiety attacks and misery.

This is really harsh for someone who no longer exhibits the behavior that caused his initial confinement while other prisoner's behavior is a result of their condition and the psychological toll of indefinite confinement. Just weeks ago, over thirty prisoners went on a hunger strike in SCI Smithfield protesting their conditions

in solitary confinement. These men who are usually at odds with each other and disorganized, and out of desperation formed an organized strike in solidarity.

The torture and suffering are real and this rally (*A rally against solitary confinement held in Philadelphia on September 17, for which this statement was written.*) represents the best of our aspiration and humanity. I thank you all for the attending this rally and being involved in this movement to stop excessive use of solitary confinement. May the source of universal power grant you good and strong spirit. May our global collective ancestors continue to bless you all with wisdom, insight and compassion and may our children of the future speak your name with reverence.

Yours in solidarity,

Changa Asa Ramu a.k.a Paul J. Rogers

SCI Smithfield, September 12, 2012

(typed by Lois Ahrens)