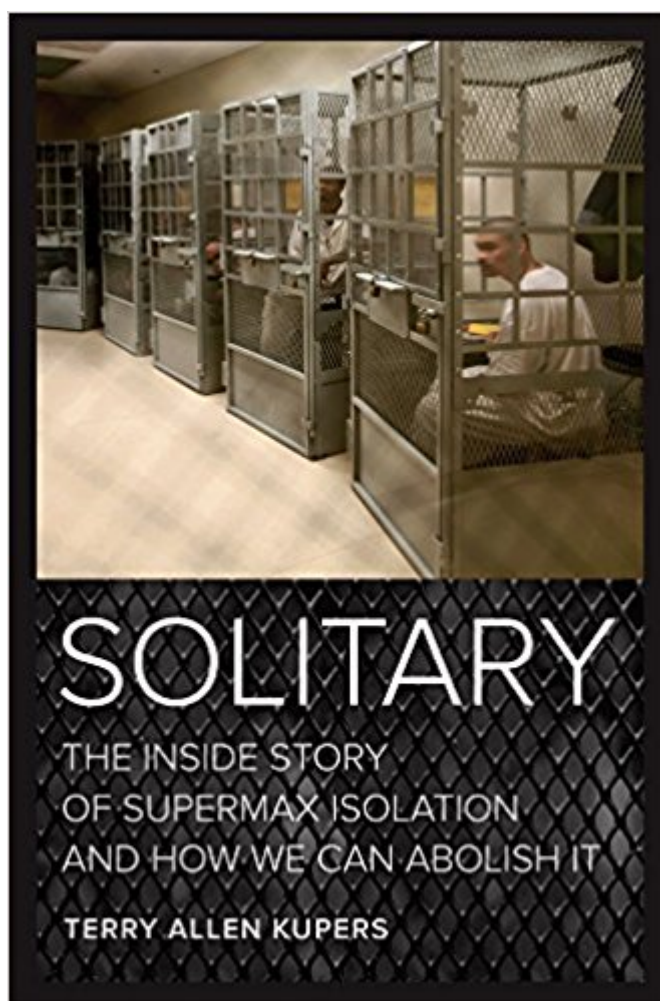


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# Solitary: The Inside Story Of Supermax Isolation And How We Can Abolish It



## Synopsis

“When I testify in court, I am often asked: ‘What is the damage of long-term solitary confinement?’ Many prisoners emerge from prison after years in solitary with very serious psychiatric symptoms even though outwardly they may appear emotionally stable. The damage from isolation is dreadfully real.” • Terry Allen Kupers • Imagine spending nearly twenty-four hours a day alone, confined to an eight-by-ten-foot windowless cell. This is the reality of approximately one hundred thousand inmates in solitary confinement in the United States today. Terry Allen Kupers, one of the nation’s foremost experts on the mental health effects of solitary confinement, tells the powerful stories of the inmates he has interviewed while investigating prison conditions during the past forty years. Touring supermax security prisons as a forensic psychiatrist, Kupers has met prisoners who have been viciously beaten or raped, subdued with immobilizing gas, or ignored in the face of urgent medical and psychiatric needs. Kupers criticizes the physical and psychological abuse of prisoners and then offers rehabilitative alternatives to supermax isolation. *Solitary* is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding the true damage that solitary confinement inflicts on individuals living in isolation as well as on our society as a whole.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Terry Kupers’s sustained focus on psychiatry and social justice has helped us to understand the dangerous symbiotic relationship between the failures of the public mental health

system and the growth of the prison industrial complex. In *Solitary*, Kupers exposes the devastating consequences of solitary confinement and offers a valuable analysis of the racism and criminalization of mental illness that undergird it. An exceptionally well-researched account and a compelling call to action.

—Angela Y. Davis, Distinguished Professor Emerita, University of California, Santa Cruz

“I had the good fortune to meet with Dr. Kupers shortly after my release from thirty-one years in prison, twenty-nine of them in solitary confinement at Louisiana State Prison in Angola. The depth of his understanding of the experience of solitary confinement and his compassion and wisdom were a welcome relief and comfort at this transitional time for me. This book accurately captures the moral depravity of this particular form of incarceration that has sadly burgeoned throughout the country in the last decades. Thanks to work like that of Dr. Kupers, it is possible that we may see an end to this brand of torture.”

—Robert Hillary King, member of the Angola Three

“This is one of those practices that many of us are now saying, what were we possibly thinking? The author opens a door for the reader that had previously been closed twenty-three hours a day, seven days a week.”

—Rick Raemisch, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Corrections

“Terry Kupers is a genuine hero in the fight to bring an end to the torture of solitary confinement. His work has given him a nearly unparalleled understanding of how solitary confinement operates on the ground and how it destroys the minds and wrecks the lives of those condemned to live in concrete boxes for years or even decades. His book is an impassioned, informed, down-to-earth, and highly readable account of all he has learned over the years, full of the real stories of people in solitary, insights of other experts, and concrete ideas for how prison officials, advocates, and mental health professionals can work together to end this human rights crisis in our midst.”

—James Ridgeway, investigative journalist, director of Solitary Watch, and coeditor of *Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement*

“Dr. Kupers gives us a front row seat to America’s tragic experiment in mass incarceration and one of its most devastating, cruel, and painful practices: solitary confinement. Kupers’s unflinching insight into the hidden world of prisons exposes America at its darkest, but at the same time offers concrete solutions and hope for a safer, more effective, and humane criminal justice system.”

—Amy Fetting, Deputy Director, American Civil Liberties Union National Prison Project

“Terry Kupers’s wisdom, humanism, and generosity have helped advocates and litigators across the United States—not to mention countless prisoners—seeking to curb solitary confinement. His commitment to the well-being and dignity of every person behind bars has shaped his work and immeasurably enriched the prison

reform movement. We are all in his debt. • Jamie Fellner, former Director, US Program, Human Rights Watch • “The most prominent psychiatric expert witness in prison solitary confinement litigation is now the most important author in the field. The analysis is powerful and fits within a dramatic narrative of actual cases: inmates broken by the terrifying isolation that is solitary confinement.” • Fred Cohen, Professor Emeritus, University at Albany, State University of New York, and Executive Editor, Correctional Law Reporter

Terry Allen Kupers is an award-winning psychiatrist and Professor Emeritus at The Wright Institute Graduate School of Psychology. As one of the nation’s foremost experts on the mental health effects of solitary confinement, he has testified in over two dozen class action lawsuits about jail and prison conditions, the quality of mental health care “inside” and the effects of sexual abuse behind bars. He is a frequent consultant to the ACLU’s National Prison Project and Human Rights Watch and the author of *Prison Madness*.

Across the United States, in remote fortresses hidden far from public view, advanced technology has been harnessed to produce a dystopian nightmare for thousands of forgotten Americans. At “supermax” sites in more than 40 states, prisoners deemed management problems or unsafe in the general population are isolated in 8x10 cells, deprived of meaningful human contact for years and sometimes even decades. In their windowless cages, they undergo a quiet torture that drives many mad. Permanently damaged, many are ultimately unleashed onto an unsuspecting public. Award-winning psychiatrist Terry Kupers is perhaps the world’s foremost expert on this uniquely American penal architecture. As an expert in dozens of class-action lawsuits, he has spent decades investigating systemic abuses at far-flung sites from Parchman, Mississippi and Boscobel, Wisconsin to the infamous Pelican Bay in California. Kupers uses powerful prose and first-hand narratives to draw back the veil of secrecy surrounding this failed experiment into behavioral modification. He tells of prisoners being viciously abused both mentally and physically. He explains how solitary confinement is used disproportionately against vulnerable populations, including the mentally ill, trans prisoners, and racial minorities. He describes its pernicious effects on women and youth. He explores the “post-release syndrome” that people undergo after long-term solitary confinement. And, finally, he issues an urgent call for more humane and rehabilitative practices. This thoughtful and well-written book is a must read for anyone interested in contemporary

U.S. penal practices.

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