

Ariel Castro's Suicide and the ODRC Status Quo **by Sean Swain**

Ariel Castro may save lives. It's still too early to tell if anyone officially scrutinizing the Ohio Department of Retribution and Corruption has any integrity or not (The fact of their employment by the government in any investigative capacity mitigates against it, of course.), but if investigators do, then Ariel Castro's suicide in ODRC custody may lead to changes that will save the lives of others. We will see.

Castro became infamous when Amanda Berry and two other missing Ohio women were found captive in Castro's home. After a month in prison on what would have been a life sentence, Castro was found dead in his cell of an apparent suicide. Now, the situation is being investigated.

Good thing Castro was famous and news media brought all that attention to the ODRC. I say that because [prisoner] Billy Slagle wasn't famous and when he died of an apparent suicide just a month prior, it was business as usual for the ODRC. Back at the beginning of the year at Mansfield Correctional Institution, four prisoners died in the course of about a month.

Nobody cared, not even when it was publicly revealed that two of those men died in an area that even staff referred to as Torture Cell Row. I was kept there for two days last September before friends raised public pressure to end the State's regimen of torture employed upon me. I was held without outside communication in freezing temperatures, no bed, no toothbrush, no shower, no recreation. I was sleep-deprived and hallucinating, pacing 24 hours a day to stay warm.

No one, and I mean no one, can create an absolute sense of hopelessness and break down a human being the way the ODRC does it. They're experts. Ask Ariel Castro.

At Toledo Correctional, on order of then-warden Khelleh Konteh, I was held in what was called a "suicide cell" for 15 days. I wasn't suicidal. I had reported harassment and abuses by staff to ODRC Central Office. Warden "Killer" Konteh's response was to disassemble me in the absolute deprivation of a "suicide cell." Strange, but the place prison officials put prisoners in order to prevent us from killing ourselves is the exact same place they put us in order to drive us to suicide.

Thing is, this is no secret. I reported the use of suicide cells for purposes of torture back in 2002, writing to then-Senator Robert F. Hagen of the Corrections Institution Inspection Committee, an oversight committee of the legislature that monitors the prisons. I told him about Torture Cell 182 at Richland.

I wrote the Corrections Institution Inspection Committee to report torture at Toledo a few years later.

Last year, I wrote the Correction Institution Inspection Committee to report torture at Mansfield.

The executive branch quietly believes that torture is its business. The legislature believes it too, and the inaction, the absence of any purposeful response, has emboldened torturers. Whatever the atmosphere and circumstances that led to Ariel Castro's suicide, they've been an accepted component of a state-terror program that's existed for more than a decade, uninterrupted by directors or wardens; senators, representatives, directors of oversight committees ... all cashing pay-checks on your dime ... not doing their jobs ... making your world ever more dangerous ... turning a blind eye to deliberate torture.

Good thing Ariel Castro was famous. His suicide may bring necessary scrutiny that will save lives. Or, the powers that be will act concerned until the spotlight fades and then return to using the oppressive machinery to satisfy their personal grudges against prisoners they don't like, or against prisoners whose "ideology" offends them.

If the last decade is any indicator, probably the latter rather than the former.

A comment from Jason Goudlock:

Unsurprisingly, now that the media spotlight from Ariel Castro's suicide has been dimmed, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction is back to its inhumane business-as-usual operating of its for profit dressed-up concentration camps. In less than four months after the above mentioned August 4, 2013 suicide of prisoner Billy Slagle, the ODRC announced under a "last chance agreement" that it's reinstating the corrupt correction officer who falsified the electronic log that was used to document the frequency in which security checks were being made on Slagle throughout the day leading up to his suicide. ... If only the Ohio Parole Board was as forgiving as its conjoined ODRC government entity, perhaps, I might be able to receive a "last chance" parole.

Contact Jason Goudlock (#284-561) P.O. Box 80033 , Toledo, OH 43608 and visit freejasongoudlock.org to learn more about his struggle for freedom. Read more from Sean Swain at swainswain.org.