

# California Prison Hunger Strike – So What’s It Really All About?

✘ On July 8<sup>th</sup>, a reported 30,000 prisoners started a hunger strike in California prisons, most in Pelican Bay State Prison. At the end of the month, only about 600 inmates were still refusing two of their three daily meals. This so-called “hunger strike” was the brainchild of convicted killer, Todd Ashker, a member of the Aryan Brotherhood, and three other inmates, representing the Mexican Mafia, Nuestra Familia and the Black Guerilla Family, four of the most violent and influential prison gangs in California, according to a recent op-ed piece in the L.A. Times.

When I first read about this hunger strike, I said to myself, “what kind of hunger strike allows you one meal a day?” To me, a hunger strike is a hunger strike – you give up food during the strike, thus the word “hunger” is applicable. As far as I’m concerned, if you’re eating one meal a day, it’s not a hunger strike.

I guess their big complaint is that too many of these animals are kept in “solitary confinement.”

According to the op-ed piece, the Security Housing Units at Tehachapi, Corcoran and Folsom allow for direct sunlight and at Pelican Bay, they have skylights.

In all the facilities, they have FREE radios and color TVs. I have to pay for my radios and color TVs.

They have FREE access to cable channels. I have to pay for my cable television.

They have FREE weekly access to a law library. I have to pay

a monthly subscription fee for my access to an online law library in addition to the books on appellate and dependency law I need in my office.

They have FREE daily exercise time. I have to pay for my annual gym membership.

They have FREE computers. I had to pay for every piece of equipment in my office.

They can earn degrees for FREE. Killer, Todd Ashker, earned a paralegal degree behind bars. I had to pay for my law degree.

Since 1987, Mr. Ashker has filed or been party to 55 federal lawsuits against the CA prison system, winning the right for inmates to order books and collect interest on prison savings accounts. I'd bet money that he didn't have to pay one filing fee for any of these lawsuits, yet, I would have to pay thousands of dollars in filing fees for 55 lawsuits.

They can send letters for FREE. I have to pay for my own postage.

Their FREE food is the same kind and amount as the general population inmates. I have to pay for everything I eat.

Their utilities are provided to them for FREE. I have to pay for my own electricity, water, oil, propane and garbage disposal.

They are provided with FREE clothing. I have to pay for all my own clothes.

They are provided with FREE laundry services. I have to pay for all my water, detergent, softeners, bleach and dry cleaning services.

They are provided with FREE air conditioning. If I had air conditioning, I would have to pay for it myself.

They are provided with FREE medical and dental services and free prescriptions. Prisoners are now expecting the taxpayer to pay for their hormone therapy and sex-change operations. I have no dental insurance so I have to pay for my own dental work as well as medical insurance, services not covered by insurance and prescriptions.

If they're getting interest on their savings accounts, they're earning money. Are they paying Social Security like the rest of us?

I love how these guys complain about the inhumane conditions under which they purportedly have to live in a place like Pelican Bay. I have absolutely zero sympathy for any of them. I'm more concerned about the inhumane and cruel punishment they inflicted on their innocent victims.

Having your food, clothing, medical and dental, utilities, postage, computer access, educational opportunities, fitness equipment and everything else paid for by the American taxpayer can hardly be considered punishment.

As I expected, it wasn't all about unwarranted "solitary confinement" in the SHUs, but rather the gangs' need to assert their power in prison. According to the op-ed, many of the inmates "say they want to resume eating but are afraid of the retaliation they will suffer at the hands of the other inmates acting on orders from their gang leaders." These four gang leaders are directly responsible for at least five murders, 35 violent assaults, including stabbings, and have racked up more than two dozen violations for possession of weapons and other contraband.

If I were Empress of the World, I'd have Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio in charge of each and every one of these prisons in California. I'd also have each of these prisoners doing hard labor on chain gangs and not hanging around pumping iron on the taxpayers' dime.

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.