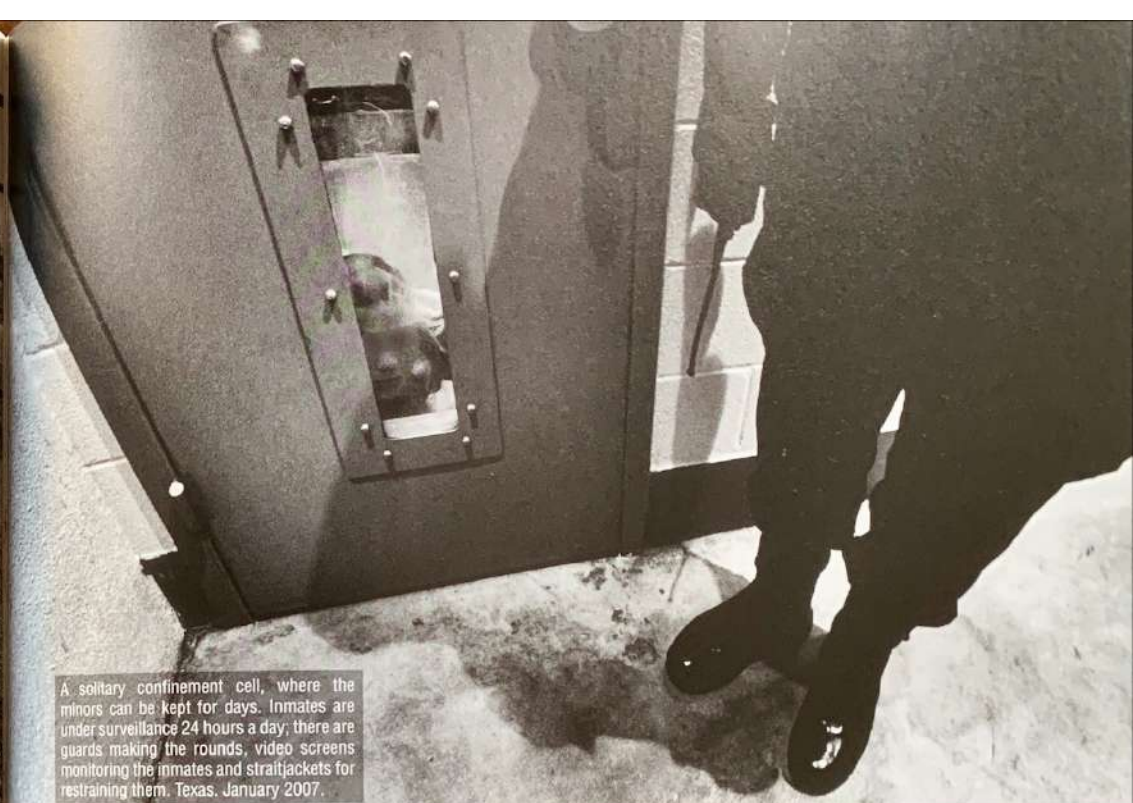




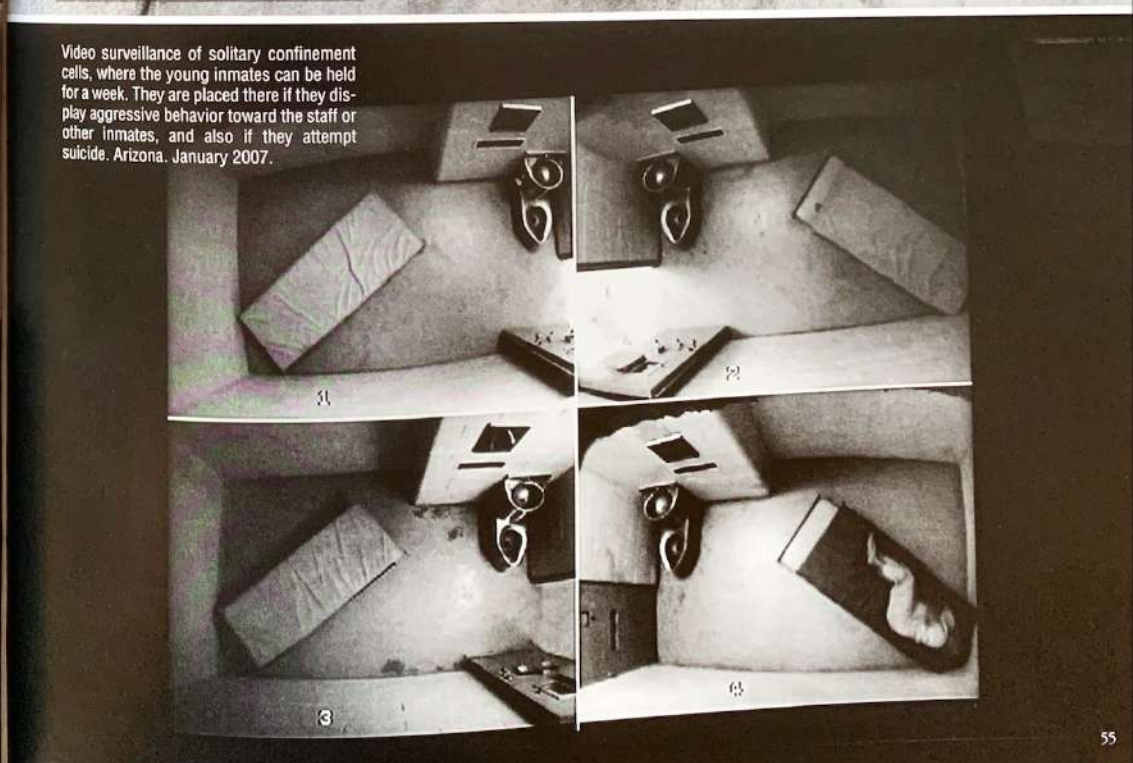
Juvenile inmates have to push a tire through sand over and over again. The guard here is making fun of this boy in front of everyone. Bullying and humiliation are part of the admission process in these boot camps. California. February 2007.



A solitary confinement cell, where the minors can be kept for days. Inmates are under surveillance 24 hours a day; there are guards making the rounds, video screens monitoring the inmates and straitjackets for restraining them. Texas. January 2007.



Inmates do community service, while armed guards keep watch in case any gangs turn up and try to eliminate one of their rivals or help one of their own members to escape. The young inmates are put out on the roads "for taxpayers to see," as the county sheriff said. Arizona. January 2007.



Video surveillance of solitary confinement cells, where the young inmates can be held for a week. They are placed there if they display aggressive behavior toward the staff or other inmates, and also if they attempt suicide. Arizona. January 2007.

DAYS JAPAN  
International  
Photojournalism  
Awards

Special Prize  
by Jury

# Lizzie SADIN

## USA—Minors Behind Bars



above: As soon as they are out of the prison van — handcuffed and legs in chains — the minors are yelled at nonstop. They are bundled off, heads down. For hours, they have to go through a number of stages of discipline and a series of ordeals. California. February 2007.

below: Three instructors scream and provoke an inmate. He must be docile and obedient, and the slightest slip is punished with a series of press-ups. The admission process will continue the next day, starting with military exercises at 5:30 a.m. Texas. January 2007.



Juvenile inmates in a military-style boot camp, are sent off to be shaved and shorn in a hanger, while a guard bellows and hurls a bench against the walls to terrorize the others waiting outside. Inside, another guard screams nonstop into the ear of the boy who is being shaved. California. February 2007. (all photos taken in the USA)

## Tough Discipline in America's Juvenile Justice System

More than a million children around the world are in custody without any recourse to lawyers, and often in countries where there are no juvenile courts, no judges specializing in juvenile affairs and where minors are held in flagrant violation of international treaties.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) stipulates that no child shall be deprived of freedom in any unlawful or arbitrary way. And yet, there are a number of countries with re-education camps, prisons, enclosed centers, custodial

establishments, penitentiary camps and penal colonies for children which invariably keep the young detainees in conditions that are not only repressive and arbitrary, but also humiliating and inhumane.

It is standard practice around the world for minors to be held with adult detainees, forcing them to cope with violence, abuse, physical punishment, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, rackets and gangs. The minors have no access to education; family visits are rare or nonexistent; and over-

crowding in prisons, promiscuity, malnutrition, poor hygiene and a lack of medical care are all common occurrences. I have seen it in quite all the countries I have been to during the eight years I was documenting this work.

But in the USA, the problem resides much more with the psychological aspects. An example of this is the experience minors have when they arrive at "boot camp" for the first time, which is made to be as unsettling as possible — a genuine shock to their

senses.

These military-style American boot camps for kids are based on the belief that tough discipline is a form of education, when it is little more than obedience and constraint. An absence of dignity gives rise to hatred and rebellion; similarly, the failure to bring these young people back into mainstream society leads to recidivism, or repeated criminal offenses, once they get out. And in the U.S., the figures of recidivism are very high, up to 80 percent.

I encountered enormous difficulties — and that is an understatement — in getting the authorizations needed during the eight years that were devoted to this project. For example, it took me 18 months to get through the procedures to be allowed just 90 minutes in each of the three prisons I visited in Russia. In the United States, the procedures took three years. Some of the conversations I had with the youths will remain with me forever. I was moved by the words of Sacha, Ali, Ron, David, Swasan, Sabrynn, Mike and so

many more.

I was driven on by the idea of providing people with a view inside these juvenile detention centers and of conveying the views of the inmates to the outside world. I wanted to restore dignity to these young people, to break the silence surrounding them and, most importantly, to break their isolation. It is a story designed to bring them out of the shadows.

Text by Lizzie SADIN