

Faces of Silence - Artist Christine Shields Joins Forces with Voice of Witness to Shed Light on Solitary Confinement

Artist Christine Shields Illustrates "SIX BY TEN - Stories from Solitary", the latest book published by Voice of Witness.

SAN FRANCISCO - Oct. 16, 2018 - [PRLog](#) -- The successful recent release of Voice of Witness' new book: *SIX BY TEN – Stories from Solitary* has prompted people to ask: "Who is the illustrator who has uniquely captured the likeness of these inmates?"

The book is an enlightening exploration into the prison system and civil rights in America. It is narrated by thirteen people who have served time in solitary confinement. Each of their unique and compelling stories are accompanied by a portrait, done in black and white.

The book has come out only moments after the world watched United States inmates embark on a national prison strike in an effort to address prison reform and restore voting rights.

We are here with painter, illustrator, and musician, Christine Shields:

Can you tell us a bit about your background?

I have been an artist most of my life, starting when I lived in the woods of Northern California. I graduated from the San Francisco Art Institute, having studied various mediums as well as performing. That experience shaped me not only as a visual artist, but as a musician as well. I have traveled the world doing art and playing music. My experience in illustration spans way back to when I lived in New York City and got my start doing work for magazines. That being said, I also enjoy painting very much.

How did you come to work on this book?

I got involved in the project through Mimi Lok who is co-founder and executive director of Voice of Witness. Mimi was interested in connecting for a book project for a while. The publishing branch of V.O.W (they also have an educational component) produces books about human rights issues in the United States. V.O.W was also co-founded by author Dave Eggers and physician Lola Vollen.

What inspired you to want to do this project?

Awareness of prison life in the United States, especially solitary confinement is extremely important, and the work that V.O.W does is powerful. My own artwork is not overtly political, but it is about the human condition. It was important for this to be respectful and very human. I wanted honor the stories with good portraits.

I also spent a summer at an artists' residency - Blue Mountain Center in New York. There was a strong focus on social justice. There, I befriended artist Jackie Sumell, who worked with Herman Wallace, one of the Angola Three. Wallace had served much of his life in solitary. Jackie worked with him on the project *Herman's House*. Jackie's work was incredibly moving to me. I came away with a deeper awareness of solitary confinement when the opportunity came for *SIX BY TEN*.

What are some more thoughts on the subjects and the system which they are part of?

It reinforced what I already knew: treating people inhumanely will not make anything better, causes more suffering in the world. When you hear a person's story in their own words you can feel what it means to suffer in these ways. We have a corrupt system that is based on money, not people.

In regard to your portraits specifically, what do you hope readers will get out of them?

I want the reader to look into the eyes of the portrait and feel a human in there. In this context it was vital that the human spark was felt through the portraits.

Thank you, Christine, and congratulations on your new release.

The book is available at the Voice of Witness website: <http://voiceofwitness.org/six-by-ten/>

Christine Shields is now working on the next book for Voice of Witness, *Solito, Solita*.

Visit her website for more art and upcoming music shows: www.christineshields.net

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