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NAVIGATING SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN RUTH FIRST'S *117 DAYS*

Abstract: *Despite benefiting greatly from apartheid, a small number of white South Africans decided to join the war being waged by black South Africans because they were revolted and appalled by the system's abuses. These people renounced the privileges bestowed upon them by the apartheid regime to devote their lives to fighting injustice and attaining their objective of a free and democratic South Africa for all. One of these white anti-apartheid activists is Ruth First, a journalist, who was detained under the 90-Day Law in 1963 and was kept in solitary confinement for 117 days. Given that research indicates the practice has widespread detrimental impacts on health, solitary confinement is the harshest penalty that can be legally imposed on detainees and prisoners, apart from the death sentence. This study undertakes a literary analysis of Ruth First's prison memoir,* 117 Days: An Account of Confinement and Interrogation under the South African Ninety-Day Detention Law. *It examines her experience of solitary confinement, response, and adaptability to such confinement using Gresham Sykes' deprivation theory. The memoir provides an insight into the harmful effects of imprisonment in general and solitary confinement in particular.*

Keywords: *Solitary Confinement, Apartheid, South Africa, Prison Memoir, Ruth First, Deprivation Theory.*

1. Introduction: Repression in South Africa

Detention and imprisonment were major instruments of repression in the era of apartheid in South Africa. Apartheid, a system of institutionalised racial segregation that existed in South Africa from 1948 after the National Party came to power,

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until the early 1990s, was characterised by an authoritarian political culture, which ensured that the country was dominated politically, socially, and economically by the nation's minority white population (Foster, 1989). As a result, the majority black population resisted this imposition in various ways. Consequently, between the 1950s and 1990, successive National Party governments relied extensively on detention without trial as well as solitary confinement to combat political opposition, growing resistance and insurrection in the country.

According to Foster (1989), the Public Safety Act of 1953, which permitted detention during times of a state of emergency, provided the provision for detention during peacetime. Following the Sharpeville massacres in 1960, this Act was first put to use. During the course of 1960, more than 11,000 persons were detained under its expansive powers. The Public Safety Act of 1953 was used to impose the current state of emergency in South Africa, which has been in effect since 1985. The provision for detention outside of emergency legislation entered into South African law permanently in 1965 and has remained since then. Thus, opponents of apartheid were continually detained. Often referred to as political prisoners, this category of detainees/prisoners includes Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Robert Sobukwe, who were held in solitary confinement for several years on Robben Island.

However, it was not only the black majority that revolted against apartheid. People of other racial classifications (White, "Coloured", and Indian) also joined in the struggle. Despite being a major beneficiary of apartheid, a small number of white people decided to join the fight being waged by black South Africans because they were repulsed and appalled by the injustices of the system (Clark & Worger, 2013). These people gave up the privileges the apartheid government had granted them and committed their lives to fighting injustice and achieving their goal of a free and democratic South Africa for all. The white anti-apartheid activists include Lionel Rusty Bernstein, Lionel Bram Fischer, Denis Goldberg, Joe Slovo, Patrick Duncan, and Trevor Huddleston.

Also, it is worthy of note that some of the white anti-apartheid activists were women including Helen Joseph, Ruth First, Helen Bernstein, and Helen Suzman, who actively participated in the struggle. Some of them were held in solitary confinement for months and were subjected to brutal torture in a bid to force them to testify against their comrades. Ruth First documents her experience in her prison memoir, *117 Days: An Account of Confinement and Interrogation under the South African Ninety-Day Detention Law* (1965).

Ruth First, a South African white activist, journalist, editor and writer, was born to Jewish parents who immigrated to South Africa from Bauske, Coutland in

Latvia, Eastern Europe. Through her investigative reporting, she bravely exposed the wrongdoings of the apartheid regime. By writing on the experiences of Black, Indian, and "Coloured" people, she raised awareness of the effects of the racial rule on the labour force. She also made public ANC comments, Indian resistance campaigns, the misery of Africans working in mines and on potato farms, and the oppression brought about by repressive laws, depicting apartheid as a weapon of oppression before her arrest and detention. Also, her prominence in the anti-apartheid struggle attracted the attention of South Africa's Apartheid regime, leading to her detention under the 90-Day Law on August 9th, 1963. She was kept in solitary confinement for 117 days, 89 days in the cells of Marshall Square police station as well as 28 days in Pretoria Central Prison.

Apart from detailing her story, the memoir, *117 Days,* acts as a movement's collective portrait. The stories of her fellow prisoners' imprisonments are interwoven with the exact details of her incarceration, including the interrogations, sounds, smells, and routines of prison life, perceptions of the guards, and the impact of deprivation and psychological torture on her alert mind. She uses all of her perceptive abilities to describe other prisoners, jailers, procedures, and locations as well as her own sentiments about being incarcerated after the initial 90 days had passed without knowing when she would be released from her confinement. She also depicts the protracted and cruel interrogation tactics used by the interrogators to break her through repeated offers of immediate release in exchange for the smallest amount of information.

Ruth First's memoir is a narrative of the experience of incarceration and solitary confinement of a female white anti-apartheid activist and journalist. The case of Ruth First was peculiar in two ways: she was white and female. In addition to confirming that women actively participated in the anti-apartheid movement in their own right, her memoir makes a significant contribution to the field of apartheid prison memoirs and writings. Her narrative also vividly demonstrates the role that prison played in apartheid South Africa as well as the potential for other forms of resistance. The memoir stands out because it is mostly about and arises from one particular historical reality: a period of solitary confinement in the police cell and prison of apartheid South Africa.

Ruth First belonged to the South African Communist Party and was linked to the Rivonia incident, which resulted in the incarceration of Nelson Mandela and others. She managed to avoid capture at Rivonia, but three weeks later she was captured and held without being charged. Ruth First had worked as a journalist in different capacities prior to her arrest in 1963. Before it was outlawed, she had

served as editor of the left-wing *Fighting Talk* newspaper in South Africa for nine years. The government later banned her from writing, publishing or entering any newspaper premises as a result of her writings. Hence, shortly before her arrest, she enrolled in a librarianship course.

With the aid of Gresham Sykes' deprivation theory, this article examines the experience of solitary confinement, response and adaptation to such a confinement in Ruth First's prison memoir. The memoir has extensive parts that discuss the psychologically damaging effects of imprisonment in general and solitary confinement in particular. Through this analysis, the article aims to promote greater empathy and awareness regarding the realities of incarceration and its profound implications for the individual's well-being and human rights.

Though scholars like Foster (1989), Mubangizi (2002), Roux (2005), Louw and O'Brien (2007), Abiama and Etowa (2013), Munochiveyi (2015), Agboola (2016), and Wadari (2017) have examined the uses and effects of solitary confinement in Africa from various disciplines and perspectives, this present study's analysis extends previous research in two significant ways. Firstly, it addresses a notable gap in the literature by focusing on life writings, particularly prison memoirs, within the context of incarceration in Africa. Secondly, it sheds light on a neglected aspect of African literature by examining the human cost of solitary confinement. By doing so, this article adds to the broader conversation surrounding incarceration, emphasising the enduring relevance of Sykes' theory in understanding the profound impact of confinement on individuals.

2. Conceptualising Solitary Confinement

The United Nations General Assembly (2016) defines solitary confinement as 'confinement of prisoners for 22 hours or more a day without meaningful human contact. Prolonged solitary confinement shall refer to solitary confinement for a time period in excess of 15 consecutive days.' The inmate is taken out of the main population and put in a "prison within the prison" where they have very little to no contact with staff members, other inmates, or the outside world. Food is delivered, in most cases, via a hole in the door, while access to activities and facilities like the library, bathing, fresh air, and exercise are either limited or forbidden. Solitary confinement is also referred to as segregation, isolation, administrative segregation, observation, special handling, or secured housing.

Shalev (2008) notes that prisoners may be placed in solitary confinement for a brief period of time as punishment for offences committed while incarcerated, or

for an extended period of time for their own safety, at the prisoner's request or at the administration's discretion. In some situations, prisoners may be kept apart from their fellow inmates for months or even years due to administrative reasons, such as, holding political prisoners deemed to pose a threat to national security or as a long-term strategy for handling difficult inmates. Finally, while being interrogated or having their case investigated, detainees who have not yet been charged or are in custody may be kept apart from other people.

Solitary confinement is one of the longest-standing and most common prison practices. The "separate" and "silent" penitentiaries of the 19th century were where solitary confinement was first applied widely and consistently to reform prisoners. It was thought that once inmates were left alone with their consciences and the Bible, they would ponder inwardly, realise their mistakes, and transform into law-abiding citizens. However, it soon became apparent that many convicts developed mental illnesses rather than being reformed, and there was little proof that the newly constructed, expensive jails were any more effective than those erected before them at lowering crime.

Lobel and Smith (2019) aver that solitary confinement is the harshest punishment that may be legally imposed on inmates, short of the death sentence as research shows that the practice has widespread negative health effects. It can exacerbate or cause sleeplessness, anorexia, palpitations, and illnesses like depression, anxiety, paranoia, delusions, and psychosis. In addition, self-harm, violence, and suicide have all been linked to periods in solitary confinement. Solitary confinement is viewed as a harsh jail practice that should only be used as a last resort and then only for brief periods of time by monitoring bodies, who also acknowledge the possible harmful impacts of the practice.

A 1975 investigation of the usage of administrative isolation in Canadian prisons concluded that it posed a "major hazard for convicts." Two years later, a study by the Council of Europe (1977) claimed that long-term prisoners who were kept in close quarters experienced a condition known as "separation syndrome," which encompassed emotional, cognitive, social, and physical issues. According to Benjamin and Lux (1977) evidence:

> 'overwhelmingly [indicates] that solitary confinement alone, even in the absence of physical brutality or unhygienic conditions, can produce emotional damage, decline in mental functioning, and even the most extreme forms of psychopathology such as depersonalization, hallucinations, and delusions.' (p.262)

In fact, the United Nations went so far as to demand its abolition in 1990 after expressing grave concern over the use of solitary confinement as a form of punishment.

Sachs (1990) describes some of the psychological effects of being in solitary confinement in his prison diary:

> 'Sleep is a haven, for my pain is during the day [...] Sleep has no borders. I might be at home. The loneliness, the moments of verging on despair, the hours and hours of agonizing unhappiness, the pondered suicide. In addition, I have mental processes that are disintegrating, like neutrality, depersonalization, and absurd phobias.' (pp.49, 186)

Guenther (2013) also points out that people subjected to solitary confinement tend to hallucinate. They begin to see things that do not exist, and may not see things that do exist. Their sense of their own bodies, even the most basic ability to feel pain and distinguish it from other people's pain, gradually deteriorates to the point where they are unsure of whether they are being hurt or if they are harming themselves. Prolonged solitary confinement puts at risk not only psychological or social identity but also the most fundamental sense of self.

Describing his time on Robben Island, Mandela (1995) writes:

> 'I found solitary confinement the most forbidding aspect of prison life. There is no end and no beginning; there is only one's mind, which can begin to play tricks. Was that a dream or did it really happen? One begins to question everything.' (p.494)

In essence, due to its potential negative effects, solitary confinement is viewed as a harsh and unwelcome prison practice that should only be used when absolutely necessary and for the shortest amount of time possible. In some cases, it may also be against international law.

3. Exploring *117 Days* Through the Lens of Gresham Sykes' Theory of Deprivation

This study adopts Gresham Sykes' theory of deprivation to examine the memoir, *117 Days*. Sykes (1958:p.9) asserts that the purpose of imprisonment is "to impose painful conditions" in addition to depriving people of their freedom or liberty. According to him, prison life is characterised by five fundamental deprivations, known collectively as the "pains of imprisonment" (Sykes, 1958:p.63). These are: the loss of liberty, desirable goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy,

and security. A close reading of the memoir, *117 Days*, shows that the protagonist, Ruth First, is subjected to these five types of deprivation.

Loss of Liberty

One of the fundamental aims of prisons is to remove or restrict liberty. Sykes (1958) notes that inmates are physically confined to the facility and all of its stringent guidelines. They are also cut off from friends and family. As social links deteriorate, people are reminded that they have been morally rejected by society, which makes it harder for them to deal with than physical confinement. Describing how she was arrested in the library where she now worked after being banned from practising journalism by the South African government, leading to her loss of liberty, Ruth First writes:

"'The two stiff men walked up.
'We are from the police.'
'Yes, I know.'
'Come with us, please. Colonel Klindt wants to see you.'
'Am I under arrest?'
'Yes.'
'What law?'
'Ninety Days,' they said.' (First, 1965:p.18).

Ruth First notes that her house was searched for several hours, worse than the raids of previous years. She makes a conscious decision to hide her anxiety about the possibility of being placed in solitary confinement while crammed in the front seat next to two large detectives and three other rugby-built passengers (First, 1965:p.19).

As Sykes notes, the incarcerated are physically confined and also deprived of contact with family and friends. Thus, from the first chapter, titled "The Cell", Ruth First clearly shows that her detention obviously connotes a loss or deprivation of liberty, saying "I, a prisoner held under top security conditions, was forbidden books, visitors, contact with any other prisoner" (First, 1965: p.42). Gready (1997) asserts that being detained or locked up is equivalent to being buried alive. The statement made by Gready emphasises the peculiar nature of prison, where being incarcerated means existing in a state that is halfway between being alive and being dead.

Deprived of her liberty, Ruth First describes the small, bleak space of the police cell to which she is confined:

> 'Seen from the door the cell had been catacomb-like, claustrophobic. Concrete-cold. Without the naked electric bulb burning, a single yellow eye, in the centre of the ceiling, the cell would have been totally black; the bulb illuminated the grey dirt on the walls which were painted black two-thirds of the way up. The remaining third of the cell wall had been white once; the dust was a dirty film over the original surface. The window, high in the wall above the head of the bedstead, triple thick – barred again and meshed – with sticky black soot on top of all three protective layers, was a closing, not an opening. Three paces from the door and I was already at the bed.' (First, 1965:p.16)

Ruth First's language conjures up images of death and captivity, suggesting that in such a setting, memory functions and narrative processes would be severely disrupted. Creativity is impossible in the cramped, lifeless environment of the cell, which resembles a graveyard. The triple-barred, darkened window is not an opening; rather, it has come to represent closure that suffocates memory and thought. She describes her state of mind and her claustrophobia of the cell further:

> 'Yet, not an hour after I was lodged in the cell, I found myself forced to do what storybook prisoners do: pace the length and breadth of the cell. Or tried, for there was not room enough to pace. The bed took up almost the entire length of the cell, and in the space remaining between it and the wall was a small protruding shelf. I could not walk round the cell, I could not even cross it. To measure its eight feet by six, I had to walk the length alongside the bed and the shelf, and then, holding my shoe in my hand, crawl under the bed to measure out the breadth.' (First, 1965:p.17)

Ruth First also narrates her deprivation of social links in the form of family visits and contact. She writes:

> 'Major Bowen [second in command to the prison commandant] was exceeding himself as a host but by his query to the Matron accompanying him on the inspection, we both understood that he knew nothing about the conditions of Ninety-Day detention. "Have you told her she can have her family to visit?" he asked, probably thinking that as I was dressed in my own clothes, I must be an awaiting-trial prisoner. "Oh no!" the Matron said. "She can't see anyone. The Security Branch said so".' (First, 1965:p.68)

She is, however, allowed a surprise visit by her mother after a long time in detention, a preference she enjoys because she is white: 'I was taken out of my cell one morning to meet not Nel [the interrogator], but my mother. The Grays had granted permission for an interview to discuss business and family affairs only'

(First, 1965:p.87). A day before the expiration of the 90 days, she is also privileged to a visit from her mother as well as her children. Ruth First is equally surprised and has a sense of foreboding as expressed:

> 'The next morning was Monday and to my astonishment, I was called out for a visit from the children and my mother. I was taken aback, but as I sped along the corridor to the little interview room, I said to myself, "This is a bad sign, not a good one. If they're planning to release you at the end of ninety days, which is tomorrow, they would not grant a visit from the children today." I had no time to consider what they were planning. The three bright faces rushed at me as I entered and we had a fevered session of hugging, with the three taking turns to sit on my lap with their arms round my neck.' (First, 1965:pp.108-109)

This shows how the pain of separation from her family, especially her children, who could not stop hugging her and sitting on her lap just to savour the moment of their being together. With this, it is inferable that the effect of incarceration is not only felt by the inmate but also by the family members. Also, her pains even from the moment she was whisked away from her home to detention can be felt as she writes: 'I tried to put firmly out of my mind the faces of the children as I was driven away' (First, 1965:p.19).

Deprivation of Goods and Services

The second form of deprivation identified by Sykes is that of goods and services. Most often, all of the prisoners' basic needs, including food, clothing, and housing, are provided by the prison while they are incarcerated. Personal belongings are taken away, and buying 'luxury' goods like cigars and special meals is usually restricted. Individuals who are imprisoned have feelings of inadequacy and frustration as a result of not having their own personal belongings. The average prisoner is placed in a harsh, Spartan setting that Sykes describes as painfully depriving. This is also portrayed in *117 Days.* On arriving at the police station, Ruth First's 'carefully packed' suitcase was taken away from her, depriving her of her personal belongings. She expresses her frustration about this development:

> 'I felt ill-equipped, tearful. I had no clothes. No daily dose of gland tablets (for a thyroid deficiency). My confiscated red suitcase, carefully packed from the accumulated experience of so many of us who had been arrested before, was the only thing, apart from me, that belonged at home, and in the suitcase were the comforts that could help me dismiss police station uniformity and squalor. I sat cross-legged on the bed, huddled against the cold, hangdog sorry for myself.' (First, 1965:p.23)

She is lucky to get it back, though, after complaining vehemently, however, Ruth First reveals that black prisoners did not enjoy the same privilege:

> 'Throughout my stay in Marshall Square, my suitcase was the difference between me and the casual prisoners. I lived in the cells; they were in transit. I had equipment, reserves. Their lipsticks were taken from them, and their combs, to be restored only when they were fetched to appear before a magistrate in court. The casuals were booked in from the police van in the clothes they had worn when arrested, and if they wanted a clean blouse, they had to plead with the wardress to get the cell warder to telephone a relative. I could go to my suitcase. I had supplies. I was a long-termer in the cells.' (First, 1965:p.24)

Ruth First, nevertheless, describes the frustration of having a bath, which has become a luxury due to her incarceration. If she was used to having a long bath under the shower in her home, this becomes impossible as she was only availed a bucket of water to have a wash into a basin. According to her:

> 'For the first few days, I grappled with the water in the bucket unsuccessfully. To pour it over me would have been a wonderful splurge but of a few seconds' duration. If I stood in the bucket, it would be like an uncomfortable stork, more out of the water than in it. In time I improvised a bath by acrobatics. I poured the water into the basin and perched on it in an inelegant squat, face and stomach towards the wall, legs dangling. Then I poured water over myself with cupped hands.' (First, 1965:p.44)

In essence, due to the societal emphasis on material possessions as a measure of personal worth, the deprivation of goods and services constitutes an assault on the fundamental aspects of one's identity.

Deprivation of Heterosexual Relationships

Sykes (1958) notes that the loss of heterosexual relations is a profound loss for prisoners as visits between partners are frequently denied. When this is allowed, visits with spouses and significant others take place under the close observation of guards and typically involve face-to-face phone communication and a plate glass window. Living with people of the same sex and having an ongoing urge to participate in sexual behaviour combine to provide a persistent source of frustration. He avers that some people turn to homosexual activities as a means of releasing their dissatisfaction, which results in feelings of humiliation.

Although Ruth First did not mention this in her narrative, it could be deduced that she also suffered deprivation of sexual relationships as she was married at

the time of her detention. She was married to Joe Slovo, a lawyer, an activist, and war veteran in 1949, and the couple settled in the Roosevelt Park neighbourhood with their three daughters. Ruth and Joe were both influential figures in the anti-apartheid campaign. Thus, separation from her husband can be linked to emotional loneliness, which would likely affect her psychological well-being.

Deprivation of Autonomy

While incarcerated, inmates lose their power to make decisions and are subject to a massive number of guard-imposed restrictions that completely and minutely control every aspect of their lives. Typically, incarcerated individuals forfeit their capacity to make even rudimentary decisions regarding their daily routines, including choices about meals, bodily functions, and movement within the prison's confines. They are required to adhere strictly to the rules and regulations set by the prison administration. Significantly, there is a prevailing belief among many individuals that these regulations are unnecessary, serving primarily as a means to assert the prison's authority and control over them.

Corroborating this, in the memoir, Ruth First recounts her struggle with the limitation placed on her inability to do things her way. She says: 'I was isolated but utterly dependent on outsiders – my jailers, my enemies. I had to shout or bang on the door when I wanted to use the lavatory. The wardress stood by while I washed. The daily programme, whatever I pretended, was not mine but theirs' (First, 1965:p.35). Even, after taking her bath, she becomes idle:

> 'Bath over, it was the start of a new day, another day of torpid inactivity. Lying in bed at night could be excused as a retreat from inactivity. Lying in bed by day had to be an activity in itself, and each hour spent lying flat on my back or leaning against the propped pillow was an exercise in trying to cajole a state of resigned semi-consciousness out of myself.' (First, 1965:p.44)

Also, she notes that she 'was given no work to do, had nothing but the Bible to read' (First, 1965: p.68). She read the entire Bible, beginning with the Old Testament and ending with the New. She resumed reading from the first page after turning to the final one and also memorised the proverbs and psalms.

Ruth First compares her confinement in Pretoria Central to 'being enclosed in a sterile glass tank in an abandoned aquarium' (First, 1965:p.74). The memoir connects the description of the desolate prison with the fact that she "became progressively subdued," suggesting that the sterility and brilliant harshness of the setting (which "shone of bright polished steel") threaten to suffocate her physically as well as her spirit (First, 1965:p.74).

Deprivation of Security

Generally, a prison can be an unsafe place, especially when violent or aggressive prisoners are incarcerated there. Incarcerated people constantly worry about their personal safety when they are close to those who are aggressive or have a history of being violent. They are always afraid of being attacked physically and feel vulnerable. In addition to the fear of physical assault and the exploitation of one's person or property, Sykes notes that threats to a prisoner's reputation and level of respect can also constitute a loss of security.

In the case of Ruth First, her loss of security is reflected in her vulnerability and her loss of confidence in her ability to hold out after the first 90 days to the point that she attempts suicide. She notes that Nel (the interrogator) made fun of her with the Security Branch formula when she got upset and protested about being imprisoned indefinitely: 'We're not holding you, you're holding yourself. You have the key to your release. Answer our questions, tell us what we want to know, and you will turn the key in the door. Make a statement and in no time, you will be back with your children' (First, 1965:p.86). She further demonstrates her vulnerability by explaining:

> 'I was appalled at the events of the last three days. They had beaten me. I had allowed myself to be beaten. I had pulled back from the brink just in time, but had it been in time? I was wide open to emotional blackmail, and the blackmailer was myself. They had tried for three months to find cracks in my armour and had found some... I could no longer hold to an intransigent stand because I had already moved from it. It was too late to say stoically that I would say nothing, not one word, to them... I had too little emotional resilience left to resist a savage new onslaught on my vulnerable centre: that above all I was fighting to salvage my respect in myself, in the hope that my associates in the political movement could preserve confidence in me.' (First, 1965:p.129)

Ruth First believes that the Security Branch was preparing a character assassination against her. She would refuse to provide them with information out of loyalty to her friends, but they would finally break her with some carefully placed indication that her friends had left her because she had betrayed them, or at least that is how the Security Branch would arrange for the story to be told. Even before it happens, she believes she lacks the strength to survive this abandonment, which she would not be able to handle. There was only one way out, before she lost her mind and to give the clearest sign to anyone who was curious that she had not let the Security Branch get their way completely. Hence, she writes:

> 'I wrote a note that apologized for my cowardice, loved the children once more, tried to say words that would have a special meaning for Joe, and indicated that I had not given in, that those still free should not panic and should proceed in the knowledge that I had kept their secrets. After the last inspection of the night, I reached for the phial of pills (which the wardress had left in the cell quite inadvertently the day two doctors had called, my own and the prison one), and swallowed the lot.' (First, 1965:p.132)

However, Ruth First survives as the doses were not sufficient to kill her, and lives long enough to document her incarceration. When she was in exile in Maputo, Mozambique, she was targeted by the apartheid government and assassinated on August 17, 1982, by a letter bomb she received in her office.

As shown in the memoir, *117 Days,* all of the deprivations identified by Sykes are amplified by solitary confinement. Naturally, the prison experience isolates inmates from their regular social networks, but solitary confinement is a more severe type of isolation. It may be particularly challenging for women to deal with this because it means they are shut off from all relationships, even their fellow inmates. Through her time spent in solitary confinement, Ruth First learns that the self becomes elusive and difficult to define without human interaction and exchange. She understands that the self becomes insane and hard to describe outside of the communal, saying 'I was lonely, I was anxious, I longed for human company…' (First, 1965:p.116).

Thus, incarcerated persons placed in solitary confinement suffer more than the average prisoner. The person lives in a setting with little stimulation and few opportunities to engage himself or herself since he or she is confined to a small, poorly furnished cell with restricted access to fresh air and natural light as well as little to no view of the outside world.

4. Conclusion

In Ruth First's memoir, *117 Days: An Account of Confinement and Interrogation under the South African Ninety-Day Detention Law*, the "pains of imprisonment" are vividly portrayed. This article explored the application of Sykes' theory of deprivation to the incarceration experience of Ruth First, illustrating how her confinement encapsulated the five fundamental deprivations that characterise prison life: loss of liberty, desirable goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy, and security.

Ruth First's narrative underscores the profound impact of these deprivations, particularly compounded by her placement in solitary confinement. The analysis reveals how her deprivation of liberty and autonomy was not just physical but also psychological, as she grappled with the loss of control over her environment and her life. Furthermore, the denial of desirable goods and services, coupled with the absence of meaningful social interactions, intensified her sense of isolation and vulnerability. As the first white woman detained under the ninety-day detention law, Ruth First's treatment by the South African police exposes the lengths to which the apartheid government was willing to go to subdue rebellious white population members who were committed to a democratic South Africa, especially those who, like her, were ardent socialists.

Despite these adversities, Ruth First's resilience and determination shine through in her memoir, highlighting the human capacity to endure and resist even in the most challenging circumstances. Her story serves as a heartbreaking reminder of the enduring effects of incarceration on individuals and underscores the importance of understanding and addressing the "pains of imprisonment" in carceral contexts.

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САВЛАДАВАЊЕ САМИЦЕ У РОМАНУ *117 ДАНА* РУТ ФЕРСТ

Резиме

Иако су имали користи од апартхејда, мала група бијелаца из Јужноафричке Републике одлучила је да се укључи у рат који су водили црнци из истоимене државе зато што их је државни апарат својим злостављањем ужаснуо и натјерао на побуну. Поменута група одрекла се привилегија које им је режим апартхејда додијелио да би се посветила борби против неправде и да би досегла свој циљ о слободној и демократској држави за све њене грађане. Један од ових бијелих активиста била је и новинарка Рут Ферст, која је 1963. године завршила у притвору на основу одредаба Закона о 90 дана и коју су држали у самици током периода од 117 дана. Ово истраживање указује на бројне погубне утицаје овакве праксе на здравље ако се има у виду да је боравак у самици најстрожа казна која се, поред смртне казне, може изрећи притвореницима и затвореницима. Ова студија представља књижевну анализу затворских мемоара Рут Ферст под називом *117 дана: Опис боравка у самици и испитивања у складу са одредбама Закона о 90 дана притвора Јужноафричке Републике*. У њој се испитује искуство боравка у самици, те одговори и прилагођавања таквој врсти утамничења у односу на депривациону теорију Грешама Сајкса. Мемоари пружају увид у штетне посљедице боравка у затвору уопште, те посебно у самици.

▸ ***Кључне ријечи***: боравак у самици, апартхејд, Јужноафричка Република, затворски мемоари, Рут Ферст, теорија депривације.

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