

I arrived in Guantanamo in the Winter of 1994 as a psychiatrist I went there to evaluate what was going on psychologically with the refugees. Some of the children that had the most problems were those that had been abruptly separated from their parents during the migration. For example, there was a 12 year old girl whose mother had contracted hepatitis in the camps so the mother was airlifted to a naval hospital in Virginia so the girl became profoundly depressed and suicidal and after a couple of days she became immobile and would not speak or eat and these were the kinds of cases we saw on an emergency basis daily and in large numbers at the military camp unit where we were operating.

here is an example of a 12 year old girl and she expresses how she feels and she writes in Spanish, "I am already crazy. The only thing I see is barbed wire everywhere and this terrifies me." Families with children ended up living in very close proximity with strangers that they had never met. There were a number of hardcore criminals, antisocial individuals, and marginal individuals from Cuban society as well as other individuals that had been infiltrated on purpose among the refugees by the Cuban government in order to sabotage the whole process. In addition there were a number of very seriously mentally ill individuals and criminals that were very violent. There were frequent riots and frequent fights in the camps, so sometimes the military in riot gear had to go in in the middle of the nights and raid the camps looking for weapons and then separate these individuals that were disruptive and aggressive and children would get very traumatized as a result of these experiences.

This girl was one of the girls that we saw in the infirmary. and what they are saying there is they are asking for water. They are yelling, "agua, agua!" This is what our consultation room looked like. It was a tent, no air conditioner. Between 12, noon and 3 o'clock it was probably like 120 degrees Fahrenheit in there. Here is a little boy that has.. he is psychotic. He is out of touch with reality. He has become very depressed and he drew the barbed wire on his legs with a pen. This mother had tried to commit suicide early that morning by swallowing a bottle of chlorine that was given to the refugees to do their laundry and she is breaking into tears. As you can see, she is crying over here and I am taking the picture - I am over here with the camera and the two girls are smiling to the camera as if nothing is happening while the mother is breaking down and saying, "I almost tried to kill myself and the only thing that stopped me from following through was my 2 daughters - I have to care for them and so..."