

"THIS IS THE
CALIFORNIA STATE
PENITENTIARY.
TODAY YOU ARE
A GUEST.

NO LIGHTS.
NO TRIPOD.
NO PROPS."

DEATH ROW

Industry: Editorial Location: San Quentin, CA Story: Six Inmates on Death Row

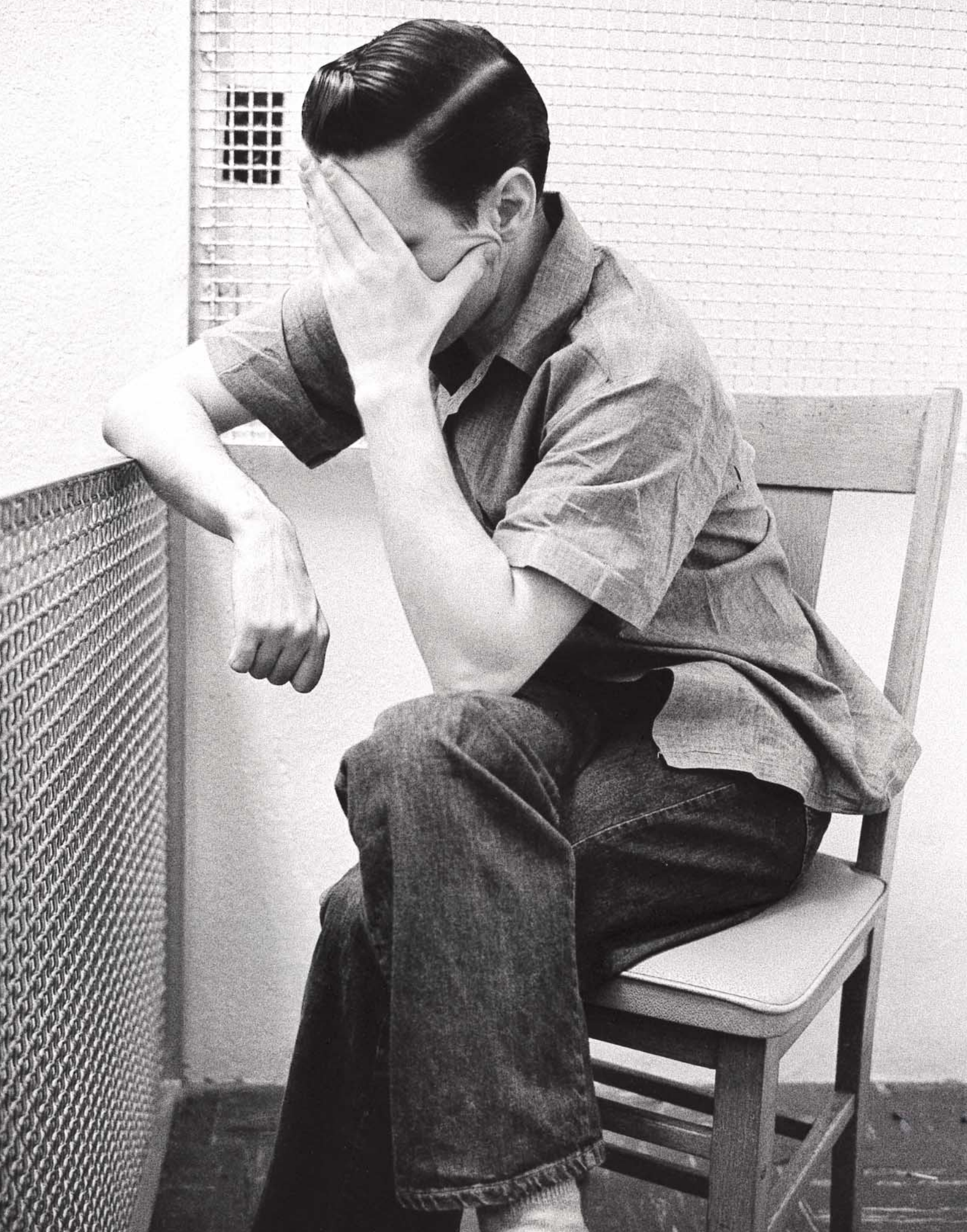
San Quentin sits at the water's edge on the north shore of San Francisco Bay. Its formidable walls are a bright creamy color; the air, moist off the bay. Extending above the roof of the tallest building, among the TV antennas and weather vanes, is an innocuous looking, black gas-vent. This catches my eye as I enter the prison compound.

Inside, I feel naked and apprehensive, unnerved by the enormous implications of confinement and all that waiting for death suggests. I wonder if my photographs will be sympathetic portraits or images of evil? I want them to be honest, at least; emotionally powerful, at best.

The visiting room is small, perhaps 8'x8', with a high ceiling, off-white walls and dark green linoleum squares on the floor. A rigid, steel mesh divides the space in half. There are two heavy wooden chairs, one on each side. It is stark, unadorned, institutional.

I am painfully aware of my own presence in the empty room, and that of a guard standing just outside the cell block door. I wait in silence, preparing to be spontaneous, alert and productive for the 15 - 20 minute interviews.

The heavy door opens, and prisoner #1 enters the room, apprehensive and rehearsed. His complex presence fills the room, and for a moment, there seems to be nothing separating us but his crime.



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