

Statement by Ken Musen
Writer, Producer and Director of
Quiet Rage: The Stanford Prison Study



I first met Doug Korpi [former Prisoner 8612 in the Stanford Prison Experiment] in 1988. I had invited him to lunch in San Francisco as part of my research for a documentary project on Professor Philip Zimbardo's renowned 1971 psychology experiment. I discussed with Doug his potential involvement in the documentary as both a past participant in the Stanford Prison Study and as a current forensic psychologist in the San Francisco prison system. At that lunch, we discussed in great detail his perspective of the guard/inmate relationship that he has observed as a prison psychologist. Ultimately, the title for the documentary,

"Quiet Rage," was born from this discussion—a term he coined describing the bent-up aggression inherent in the guard/prisoner relationship. At that meeting, Dr. Korpi became both a collaborator and a willing interview subject for my documentary project.

Doug suggested that we film in his prison in the Bay Area where he worked. As a filmmaker, I could not have hoped for a better setting than a real prison cell in a working prison. My interview questions were honest, sincere and open-ended. We started with a chronology of the events that led up to his decision to participate in the study. He recounted his entire involvement starting with his "arrest." I remember he was very impressed with the level of realism Zimbardo created including having his fingerprints stamped and mug shot taken at the Palo Alto Police Station.

The interview became increasingly more intense as Doug recounted his 36-hour involvement and his eventual mental collapse. He remembered "never feeling that out of control" before in his life. He remarked that his decision to choose forensic psychology as a career was somewhat determined by his experiences in the study. "I wanted to better understand... how I could be so out of control." None of his remarks were coerced or manipulated.

In my preparation for his interview, I had listened to all the recordings Dr. Zimbardo and his graduate students recorded during the six days the study ran. The audio tapes fully document Korpi's collapse. It was genuine. Ethical or not, 21 year-old Doug Korpi was told by the prison staff that he could not be released from Zimbardo's jail. At that moment, Zimbardo's prison became "a real prison." This fact threw him into a frenzy that lasted over 3 minutes and ended in an expletive-laden breakdown. As a student of psychology, filmmaking and acting, I can without hesitation state that Korpi was not merely acting but reacting to his situation as he grew to understand it.

My relationship with Dr. Korpi continued throughout the production and postproduction of the documentary. Doug wanted to see the rough cut of the project, so we sent him the cut. I believe that he was embarrassed by the section in the video that recounted his breakdown where a portion of his screaming is played over an image of his face. It was one of the most disturbing sections in the documentary. He asked if I would lessen the amount of time spent on that painful moment, and based on our relationship, I agreed, cutting the section in half. Later, when the documentary was completed, Doug showed other forensic psychologists and colleagues the program believing he had participated in a worthwhile documentary that explores important psychology themes, including how the power of the situation can affect human behavior and choices.

Based on my experiences working with Dr. Korpi on “Quiet Rage: The Stanford Prison Study,” it is simply not true that he was unaffected by his time spent in the Stanford Prison or that he was only play-acting to get an early release to study for a test. From my time researching the subject matter and hours spent interviewing Doug Korpi for the project, I believe his emotional breakdown was a genuine reaction to his perceived environment.

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Note: To see a brief excerpt from *Quiet Rage* in which Dr. Korpi discusses the breakdown, please visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXOM8IK4H0s>