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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Solitary Confinement Reporting Project](#) | February 8, 2021

The following is a brief excerpt from an article published in [City Limits](#), tracing the struggle of returning to society in New York City with sparse resources to heal the layers of trauma accumulated through years in solitary confinement in New York state prisons. The article was written by Roshan Abraham with the support of a grant from the [Solitary Confinement Reporting Project](#), managed by Solitary Watch with funding from the Vital Projects Fund. Read the [full article on City Limits](#).

Of the 36 years he was incarcerated, Nathaniel Jackson, 57, estimates he served 16 of those years in solitary confinement.

He remembers in detail the order of his stays in New York prisons; he went from Auburn to Clinton, Clinton to Great Meadow, Great Meadow to Wende, and on. He had four separate stints in Clinton Correctional Facility alone, three in Great Meadow, two in Auburn.

And he remembers each of his stays in solitary. His longest consecutive stay, he says, was four and a half years. He also did three and a half years, two and a half years, eighteen months at a time. Usually it was for a disciplinary violation, but sometimes he was put into administrative segregation, ostensibly for his own protection.

When he was released from Shawangunk Correctional Facility in August of 2019, he went directly to New York City Human Resources, where he applied for emergency money and food stamps. Then he was sent to an intake homeless shelter, the 30th Street Mens Shelter, notorious for its dilapidated conditions and violence. After a few weeks he was sent to a homeless shelter in Brooklyn, at 1312 Atlantic Ave., where he remained for more than six months.

Like many who serve long periods in solitary, Jackson is reckoning with more than just material problems mentally, emotionally, and socially, he's been struggling with the long-term effects of extreme isolation. In a few months after his release, his relationship with his wife had dissolved, and he is going through a divorce. Because he lives in New York City, which is more resource-rich than less populated parts of the state, he has been able to find some help, commuting from the shelter to therapy in downtown Brooklyn four days a week. But finding therapists who can relate to his plight is difficult.

I catch panic attacks, I catch tremors, Jackson says, sitting on a park bench in Brooklyn, crowds walking by. Even sitting here, this feels funny.

Post-incarceration, Jackson found himself in a common situation for those who've been through solitary, with few resources available to help them cope despite the mental health-related disabilities that result from the experience. [City Limits](#) could not identify state-funded resources in New York specifically diverted for solitary survivors, who suffer from a unique set of pathologies. At the same time, New York is still isolating people in prisons including those with serious mental health issues despite the efforts of advocates who've been pushing for years for laws to curb the practice.

Jackson receives therapeutic counseling through a non-profit called Bridge Back to Life, but the group therapy sessions are for people who are experiencing substance abuse, some who have caught DWIs and are there for court-mandated sessions. He sees a one-on-one counselor on Fridays, but he doesn't expect them to understand his experiences.

How can they relate? I can't even relate, he says. I'm trying to understand this as it goes.

Read the rest [on City Limits](#).

The Solitary Confinement Reporting Project awarded grants to journalists on both sides of prison walls to report on solitary confinement.

Accurate information and authentic storytelling can serve as powerful antidotes to ignorance and injustice. We have helped generate public awareness, mainstream media attention, and informed policymaking on what was once an invisible domestic human rights crisis.

Only with your support can we continue this groundbreaking work, shining light into the darkest corners of the U.S. criminal punishment system.

by [Solitary Confinement Reporting Project](#)

February 24, 2022

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January 28, 2021

by [Solitary Confinement Reporting Project](#)

December 24, 2020

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