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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [James Ridgeway and Katie Rose Quandt](#) | April 5, 2017

Solitary Watch's James Ridgeway and Katie Rose Quandt have a [new story out today in the Village Voice](#), about a young man with multiple psychological disabilities whose time in New York's State prisons has included isolation, brutality and a new six-year sentence for a suicide attempt.

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Whenever he can, Adam Hall calls his mother and sister from the phones at Great Meadow Correctional Facility in upstate New York. When he has stamps he dictates letters. Sometimes he talks about how badly he wants to come home. But what he talks and writes about most is how he is trying to die.

In February he tried to do it by slicing up his arms. Before that, he tried to collect his meds for an overdose. Five years ago it was by setting himself on fire. As Hall, who struggles with severe mental illness, continues to rack up charges for suicide attempts and refusals to follow rules, he has seen probation turn into a three-year sentence and an arrest for stealing cigarettes escalate into an eight-year odyssey through the prison system.

If Hall is lucky, and nothing else goes wrong, he could be out by the end of 2018. But Hall has never been lucky, and his hope is gone.

At this point, says his mother, Carole Holleran, he just wants to die. He feels like he's never going to get out. They keep adding time, adding time. Every time he does something wrong, the bill adds up, adds up, adds up.

Hall has been diagnosed with a panoply of psychiatric disorders: ADHD, bipolar, impulse control, depression. He has violent outbursts, paranoia, and suicidal tendencies. Unable to follow rules, Hall has repeatedly been thrown into solitary confinement, and in those stints his condition has gotten worse. In a decade, he has been transferred between prisons at least seventeen times. In January, he went from the Attica Correctional Facility back to Great Meadow, a prison where his experience has been especially dire, and where last fall he filed a lawsuit alleging that four guards brutally assaulted him in retaliation for a suicide attempt.

Hall's mother has been fighting for him, with little success, since he was a young child. At age five, he tried to burn down his family home outside Utica in upstate New York. Afterward, he drew a picture of his family having a happy reunion in heaven.

In family photos he looks at the camera with a shy smile, revealing a distinctive gap between his front teeth, just a kid in a neat checked button-down. Behind the smile is an interior storm. There was no money for decent psychiatric help. Through most of his childhood, Hall was in and out of psychiatric institutions and group homes. Holleran says he was molested in two of them, but never effectively treated.

Like many such histories of abuse and mental illness, Hall's leads straight from childhood to prison

[Read the full story at the *Village Voice*.](#)

James Ridgeway (1936-2021) was founder and co-director of Solitary Watch. An investigative journalist for over 60 years, he served as Washington Correspondent for the Village Voice and Mother Jones, reporting domestically on subjects ranging from electoral politics to corporate malfeasance to the rise of the racist far right, and abroad from Central America, Northern Ireland, Eastern Europe, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. Earlier, he wrote for The New Republic and Ramparts, and his work appeared in dozens of other publications. He was the co-director of two films and author of 20 books, including a forthcoming posthumous edition of his groundbreaking 1991 work on the far right, *Blood in the Face*. Katie Rose Quandt is a senior contributing writer/editor at Solitary Watch and freelance journalist based in the Bronx. Her work has appeared in The Atlantic, Slate, The Nation, The Guardian, and Mother Jones. She is also a senior editor at the Prison Policy Initiative, and was an Alicia Patterson Foundation Fellow and Soros Justice Media Fellow. Find her [@katieorsequandt](#) and at [katieorsequandt.com](#).

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Good read! Thanks Solitary watch

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