

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2013/06/24/angola-3s-herman-wallace-gravely-ill-still-held-in-isolation/>

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by [James Ridgeway and Jean Casella](#) | June 24, 2013



Update, July 15: Over the weekend, Louisiana's Hunt prison reduced Herman Wallace's classification from maximum to medium, according to a source in his defense team. That means the terminally ill Wallace will stay in the prison hospital in a 10-bunk dorm, with access to a day room, and won't have to wear leg irons. His phone privileges are to return next week. There is no mention of any compassionate release. The move came after both Amnesty International and a group of U.S. Congressmen [condemned Louisiana's treatment of Wallace](#).

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Herman Wallace, 71, has been diagnosed with liver cancer. He is being held in a locked prison hospital room at the Elayn Hunt Correctional Center at St. Gabriel, Louisiana. The prognosis is grave, according to persons with direct knowledge of the situation. Wallace is one of the two members of the Angola 3 who, along with Albert Woodfox, is still being held in solitary after [more than 41 years](#).

Tessa Murphy, U.S. Campaigner for [Amnesty International](#), which has taken up the case, said in an email, The tens of thousands of Amnesty International supporters worldwide who have campaigned over the years for justice in Herman and Albert's case will be devastated by this sad news. Herman and Albert have been held in cruel conditions of confinement for over 40 years without meaningful review; neither of them have disciplinary records to indicate that they are a threat to themselves, fellow prisoners or staff, and the Louisiana prison authorities have since 1996 broken their own policy to justify the men's continued detention under these conditions.

Wallace and Woodfox were placed in solitary confinement at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola in 1972, following the murder of prison guard Brent Miller. The men believe they were originally targeted for the murder, and have been held in isolation ever since, because of their association with the Black Panther Party. (The third member of the Angola 3, Robert King, was freed in 2001 when his conviction for the murder of a fellow prisoner was overturned; he had spent 29 years in solitary.) Several years ago, the two men were transferred out of Angola and sent to separate, distant prisons, where they have remained in solitary.

Angola Warden Burl Cain has [stated in a deposition](#) that Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace are locked in time with that Black Panther revolutionary actions they were doing way back when. For this reason, he says, they must remain in solitary, because if he released them to the general population I would have me all kinds of problems, more than I could stand, and I would have the blacks chasing after them. Louisiana Attorney General James Buddy Caldwell has likewise promised to keep Wallace and Woodfox behind bars. (Caldwell [also claims](#) they have never been held in solitary confinement.)

Both men have been fighting to have their convictions overturned by the federal courts, claiming they are based on highly questionable evidence. Woodfox's conviction was [overturned](#) for the third time earlier this year, but he remains in prison while the state appeals. Wallace [lost](#) his latest challenge, but continues to fight in the courts. At the same time, a civil case has been filed challenging the men's four decades of solitary confinement on First, Eighth, and Fourteenth Amendment grounds.

For 41 years, Wallace and Woodfox have spent at least 23 hours a day in cells measuring 6 feet by 9 feet. They are sometimes allowed out one hour a day to take a shower or a walk along the cellblock. Three days a week, they may use that hour to exercise alone in a

fenced yard. In their civil suit, their lawyers argue that both have endured physical injury and severe mental anguish and other psychological damage from living most of their adult lives in lockdown. According to medical reports submitted to the court, the men suffer from arthritis, hypertension, and kidney failure, as well as memory impairment, insomnia, claustrophobia, anxiety, and depression. Even the psychologist brought in by the state confirmed these findings.

The injustice of being held under such harsh, restrictive and inhumane conditions for over four decades is compounded by the serious legal concerns that have emerged in their cases over the years of litigation, Amnestys Murphy said. Amnesty International will continue its fight for justice for Herman and Albert; with the terrible news of Hermans health, this fight becomes more important than ever.

Two months ago Wallace had complained of feeling ill. Prison doctors diagnosed his condition as a stomach fungus and put him on antibiotics. By last week, he had lost 45 pounds, and was sent to a local hospital, where he received the news that he has liver cancer. He was returned to prison after a few days.

A team of lawyers, an outside doctor who has taken care of Wallace for years, and a psychologist briefly visited Wallace last week in a prison hospital room. Wallace was not manacled or shackled. The door was locked. There is no television and little contact with the outside world. Telephone privileges which were made available in the beginning have been revoked by the prison. According to one source, a warden ordered visitors out after ten minutes. The level of inhumanity I am not used to, said [Nick Trenticosta](#), one of Wallaces attorneys in Louisiana. I am used to bloodthirsty prosecutors who want to kill people, but not this sort of thing.

For Albert Woodfox, 66, who lived in solitary nearby Wallace at Angola and still keeps in touch by letter, the news was shocking. According to his brother Michael Mable, who saw Albert over last weekend, his brother is depressed and afraid of dying in this prison. Mable was only able to see Woodfox through a glass partition, and Woodfox sat with his hands manacled and feet shackled while a captain and a lieutenant stood behind him, Mable said. Woodfox was strip searched, even though the interview was just a short ways from his cell. He is allowed one visit a month. Woodfox suffers from diabetes, high blood pressure, and hepatitis.

It is not yet clear what the next steps will be for Herman Wallace in terms of medical care. Because the prison medical record appears scant, doctors are anxious for Wallace to see an oncologist at an outside hospital. He may go there some time this week.

Asked whether the state would consider compassionate release or hospice care for Wallace, Pam Laborde, Communications Director for the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections, said, As you hopefully understand, I am not in a position to discuss an offenders medical condition due to privacy concerns.

In a 2006 letter to Jackie Sumell, an artist with whom he is collaborating on a project called [The House That Herman Built](#) (now the subject of a [documentary film](#)), Herman Wallace wrote: Im often asked what did I come to prison for; and now that I think about it Jackie, it doesnt matter. It doesnt matter what I came here for, what matters now is what I leave with. And I can assure you, however I leave, I wont leave nothing behind.

James Ridgeway (1936-2021) was the 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. Jean Casella is the director of Solitary Watch. She has also published work in The Guardian, The Nation, and Mother Jones, and is co-editor of the book Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement. She has received a Soros Justice Media Fellowship and an Alicia Patterson Fellowship. She tweets [@solitarywatch](#).

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 [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

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I think that Herman and Albert are Very Brave men, I hope they will let free from confinement soon; I wish I was as Strong as they are, let them know We are Praying for them. STAY STRONG!!!

I want to write to Herman and Albert. Does anyone have a current address for them?
Thank you.

Their addresses can be found on this site (scroll down left column): <http://angola3news.blogspot.com/>

Mimosha johnson from memphis,tnthis is america..the home of the free..right? Liberty and justice for all..u would think 2013the times would have changedno more good ole boy mentalitybut as the world can see the more things change the more they stay the same..my heart and prayers goes out to these injusticed menthat they be freed.before its too late for themin americathe united states.animals in shelters arent treated like this.america,america,america.wake upthis is so wrong and cant believe this is still happening.

Tragic and heart wrenching. When is enough enough?

this is unacceptable, someone needs to answer for it, it will not go unnoticed

how sad. human that we as humans,would sink so awfully low and animalistic yes demonic towards another human

Contact Bobby Jindal gov of Louisi

ana: http://www.gov.la.gov/index.cfm?md=form&tmp=email_governor

this is so heartbreaking, and even more so, its enraging. blessings to you both, Herman and Albert your profound witness and courageous struggle will help us someday put an end to this barbarism. I only wish it could be fast enough to let you both walk free together

Has he had human contact, contact visits phone calls, yard time with other humans?

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