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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2010/05/17/saving-jamie-scott-victim-of-prison-health-care/>

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by [James Ridgeway](#) | May 17, 2010



After being convicted on questionable evidence, Jamie Scott and her sister Gladys received two consecutive life sentences apiece for a 1993 armed robbery in which no one was hurt and the take was \$11. As [we wrote back in March](#), this unwarranted life sentence is at risk of becoming a death sentence for Jamie Scott, who is gravely ill, due to the care she is receiving at Central Mississippi Correctional Facility (CMCF) in Pearl. Since we first covered the story, Jamie's condition has, if anything, grown still more critical.

Now 38, Jamie has been diagnosed with end-stage renal disease, and requires dialysis to stay alive. Rather than let her leave for dialysis, the prison brought in a machine that according to Jamie broke down periodically. She has had one complication after another, including multiple infections at the site of her dialysis shunt. She has been rushed to the hospital several times, only to be promptly returned to prison the moment her condition is deemed stabilized. According to her mother, Evelyn Rasco, Jamie's most recent hospital visit took place when her veins collapsed and she was unable to walk. This time, according to Rasco, the doctor at the hospital said he refused to allow his patient to go back to prison because she would surely die there. But the Mississippi Department of Corrections had its way, and back she went.

In the following letter, written a few weeks ago, Jamie Scott says, I have witness many inmates die at the hands of this second rate medical care. I do not want to be one of them. The letter was provided to Solitary Watch by [Nancy Lockhart](#), a paralegal who works with the wrongfully convicted, and has been advocating for Scott for some time.

The living condition in quick bed area is not fit for any human to live in. I have been incarcerated for 15 years 6 months now and this is the worst I have ever experience. When it rain out side it rain inside. The zone flood like a river. The rain comes down on our heads and we have to try to get sheets and blankets to try to stop it from wetting our beds and personnel property. Because the floors are concrete and it have paint on it, it makes it very slippery when it rain and there have been numerous of inmates that have broke their arms and hurt there self do to this.

Above our heads there are rows and rows of spiders as if we live in the jungle. There are inmates that have holds in there bodies left from spider bites, because once they are bitten it take forever to get to the clinic for any help. There are mold in the bathroom ceiling and around the walls and toilets. The toilets leak sewage from under them and they have the inmate men to come in and patch them up occasionally. The smell is awful. The showers are two circular poles with five shower heads on each pole. The floor in the shower is also concrete and slippery. There is nothing to hold on to when you exit the shower so there have been many inmates that have hurt there self in the process. Outside the building there is debris where the unit is falling apart.

Each day we are force to live in these conditions. The staph infection is so high and we are force to wade in toilet and sewage water when we have to go to the bathroom. I have witness many inmates die at the hands of this second rate medical care. I do not want to be one of them.

When this is brought to the health department or anyone attention. The MDO tries to get the inmate to try to pamper it up so if someone comes in it want look as bad as the inmates said it did. I am fully aware that we are in prison, but no one should have to live in such harsh condition. I am paranoid of catching anything because of what I have been going through with my medical condition.

We are living in these harsh conditions, but if you go to the administration offices, they are nice and clean and smell nice because they make sure the inmates clean their offices each day. They tell us to clean the walls. Cleaning the walls will not help anything. Cleaning the walls will not stop the rain from pouring in. It will not stop the mold from growing inside the walls and around us. It will not stop the spiders from mating.

They have 116 inmates on each wing, and we live not five feet from each other in order to pack us in. We have the blowers on the ceiling and if the inmates are acting crazy or the staff come in mad they use the blowers as a form of punishment. The taxes payers really are lead to believe we are been rehabilitated. That is a joke. All we do is sit in this infected unit and build up more hate. Rehabilitated starts within you. If you want to change you will change.

One thing about MDOC, they know how to fix the paper work up to make it seen as if they are doing their job. You can get more drugs and anything else right here. I have witness a lot in my time here.

Do I sound angry, I am not I am hurt and sick. Because they have allowed my kidney to progress to stage five which been the highest. They told me years ago I had protein in my urine, but I went years without any help. Now, it seen the eyes are on me because my family are on their case. Every inmate is not without family. Yes, you do have many inmates that family have giving up on, but my sister and I are not them.

I do not want special attention, I want to treat, and to live how the state says on paper we are living. The same way when it is time for the big inspection we are promised certain food if we please clean up to pass this inspection. So I beg of anyone to please understand Mississippi Department of Correction is a joke. They will let you die or even kill yourself. We are told when visitors come into the prison do not talk to them. Well I have the right to talk to anyone and if the health department or anyone comes I will talk to him or her, because this is my life and I should or anyone else should be force to live like this.

They use unlawful punishments to try to shut us up. I need help. I need a inmate to help me, but for some reason they will not allow me to move with my sister, so she can help me. There are mother and daughter, aunties, and nieces housed together and also there are a total of 12 inmates acting as orally for others inmates. I have all the names of the inmates acting as a orally if need to be giving. However, the subject of my sister is been danced around. A form of discrimination. My sister [Gladys Scott] and I were housed together for over ten years and not once have we ever caused any problem. We were split up because in 2003 the Commissioner came with the order to separate all family members. Because its payback because my family is holding them accountable to do what they are paid to do. Also, do to the fact Mr. [Rip] Daniels on Its a New Day [\[talk radio show\]](#) & Grassroots are keeping the supports inform that is been pointed out to me in a negative way.

Now that I am sitting everyday because of my sickness I have time to use my typewriter. MDO have gotten away with too much. In addition, some of the things that go on here I truly believe that Mr. Epps [Commissioner of the Mississippi Department of Corrections] do not know.

More information on grassroots efforts around Jamie Scotts case, including a current letter-writing campaign to get her better care, can be found at [Free the Scott Sisters](#).



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.

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 [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

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ok as for this mississippi state you geting me ippised off with your river of shit i mean she needs care i do not care what doc saying please sue the pp out of mississippi doc they cant take you out of there if doters say no hicratic othes to help others all i saying is i like to open a

can of southern woopass on you state i would say they should go up thare river but somethign tells me thare head is allready up thare tell them to missippiss off or your will call the ACLU on thare ass that get the are head out they but fast mayby they even misspee them selfs lol

The horrible conditions that she describes reminded me of this stomach turning short story.

Charles P. Norman: Fighting the Ninja

Charles P. Norman was awarded First Place in memoir in the 2008 Prison Writing Contest.

Prison showers can be scary places. Im not talking about those old B movie scenes where the big hairy guy with a handmade blade shanks the hapless prisoner for refusing to star in a gang rape, grimaces of pain, blood swirling down the drain, last words of I love you, Mama, before the poor guy curls up and dies on the tiles.

Nowadays the showers are scary not from knives but from germs, leftovers from consensual acts clogging the pipes and floating sudsy sewage out into the hallways, catching those strolling unaware in flip-flops on a slippery stretch, skidding and cartwheeling, splashing onto their backsides into the mire.

Ive spent my life in prison, and Im not germaphobic by any stretch. Hell, I eat chow off those greasy, plastic trays every day, but at least they run them through hot water in some semblance of sanitation.

Every day someone asks me for a cigarette. I tell them I dont smoke, Im trying to get out of this prison alive, and lung cancers not part of my plan. Neither is catching some creeping crud from the drain monster.

When I first came to prison the older men would joke that there was so much spilled seed from self-abuse in the shower that if you listened carefully you could hear millions of little voices down in the drain crying, Daddy, Daddy. I never did hear them.

Id work out in the morning, come in to take a shower down the hall from my cell before lunch, and get grossed out by all the hair, melted soap, and gunk clogging the drains, the mold on the tiles, the musky odors, the scary streak running down the walls, the thoughts of what had gone on in there the previous evening to leave all that refuse behind. Housemen are those assigned to clean up every day, but the operative term has always been sorry housemen, who shirked their duties, slept instead, and left the shower to mold, fester, and seethe.

I couldnt stand it anymore, so I asked the sergeant if hed issue me the cleaning supplies and let me take care of that one shower. Incentive is virtually extinct in prison. His brow furrowed and his eyes darted around for thirty seconds or so, but he couldnt fathom any ulterior angle on my part, so he said okay.

It was hot. Id lift some weights, jump some rope, get sweaty, check out a quart spray bottle of bleach, disinfectant, a scrub broom, cleaning rags, and a mop from supply, and head to the shower, a cell-sized room with three shower heads and a plastic curtain. Id run the hot water for a few minutes, steaming things up, then spray bleach from the ceiling to the floor, hitting the walls, drains, and curtain. Id be in my workout shorts, walk away for ten minutes, let the bleach work and sterilize all the little organisms. I didnt dwell on any pro-life issues, not wanting to open that can of worms.

Id come back and scrub every surface with the broom and disinfectant, run the hot water, clean all the hair and gunk out of the drains with rubber gloves on, wipe down and polish the walls and fixtures, then get my soap, shampoo, and towel, and take a cold shower with peace of mind, a rare commodity in prison. My shower was so clean that men from other wings and floors would line up to use it. Sometimes you become a victim of your own success. More usage meant more crud to clean up. It was a worthy investment nonetheless.

The sergeant was making his rounds one morning with his personal flunky, a notorious snitch and sycophant, a slightly-built white homosexual who personally screwed every sodomite who sought his favors. I was standing outside the shower spraying bleach, the chlorine fumes almost choking.

Damn, Norman, he said, That shits strong. Why you spraying so much in that shower?

His little buddy, Brian, wrinkled his face and sneered at me, picking up his boss cues that I might be chewed out momentarily.

Id been lying in wait for someone official to ask me that very question. I pounced.

Well, Sarge, its like this. Two fellas go in the shower and turn the water on real high. They soap each other up, and the big guy bends over the little guy, and shoves his thang way up in there, ripping and tearing loose the sewer lines. Theyll be in here screeching like alley cats for awhile. Maybe the big guy knows it, maybe he doesnt care, but in amongst all that blood and shit and jism running down that boys legs onto the floor are millions of little HIV viruses, several strains of hepatitis, maybe a couple shots of syphilis, gonorrhea, and herpes, and who knows what other contagious, and fatal diseases in a soupy stew.

Thats gross, Norman, Brian whines.

Shut up, I snap. Youre the one Im talking about.

The sarge is looking a little pale. Several synapses are crackling as he processes the images Im painting in his head. I continue.

Clots of all that stuff that spurted out of his diseased backside are simmering on the floor in pools. They dry off and leave. I come in, track through their remains, turn on the water, the stuff splashes over my feet and legs, and who knows, maybe Ive got a fresh cut on my toe, and millions of little disease organisms leap and dive into that virgin bloodstream.

I take a breath. Thats one scenario. Or I can come in here with pure bleach, one of the few substances besides Lysol and nuclear radiation that will kill all that stuff, spray the place down real good, scrub every surface, rinse it off, and have a safe, sanitary shower for all of us.

You're doing a good job, he says. Keep it up. He hurries down the hall, his lapdog racing to catch up. We don't have to worry about the sergeant using our showers, I don't think.

Brian got sick and went into the infirmary for a couple of days. He came back out. He wasn't looking very healthy. He went back inside again. John, the orderly, confided that Brian was bleeding from the rectum, that the doctor had to pack his rear end with industrial-strength tampons, that his intestines had been ripped and torn so much it appeared someone had stuck a baseball bat in there. Days later they brought in a meat wagon. That's what they call an ambulance in prison. Usually when one of those comes for you, you're just a hunk of meat, not a person. It looked like one of those nature films, a crowd of prisoners watching the action in front of the clinic like a tightly-compressed herd of antelope staring at the lions devouring one of their less-swift relatives, each one thinking, better him than me.

The paramedics went inside wearing biohazard suits with the visors, like the ones in those Robin Cook disaster movies, pushing a stretcher with a plastic hood over it. They came back out with Brian strapped down and stretched out inside like the bubble boy, shoved him into the back of the meat wagon, and drove off. We didn't see him again. All quiet on the prison front. Something was seriously wrong with Brian, and it wasn't kidney stones, which is what the nurse told people.

In prison, they call HIV and AIDS, the ninja, the black-clothed assassin that creeps inside and cuts your throat in the night, then slips away unseen, leaving you there to bleed out, alone.

Read the rest of the story here:

<http://www.pen.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/2503/prmID/1622>

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