

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2011/11/07/voices-from-solitary-changing-prayer/>

## Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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by [James Ridgeway and Jean Casella](#) | November 7, 2011

Marco Miguel Robertson grew up in Maryland, where [as he describes it](#) he flirted with the good and the bad until the lure of the streets grabbed me. He is now fifteen years into a sentence of life + 24 years for murder. Although he is a Maryland state prisoner, he is currently serving his time in the Special Management Unit of the United States Penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. At Lewisburg, he writes, Collectively, prisoners are nothing but mere props for the twisted amusement of staff. Inmates are placed or left in dangerous situations as a result of the personal dislikes of staff, or as a means of retaliation for filing ADMINISTRATIVE GRIEVANCES. Speaking for myself and the other inmates assigned to the Special Management Unit here, which is a 23-24 hour lockdown disciplinary program with another individual usually in the confines of a small matchbox like cell, WE FEEL HELPLESS.

Marco Miguel is an observant Sunni Muslim and a dedicated writer. His work is published on the website [Live from Lockdown](#), where his poem [Changing Prayer](#) recently appeared.

Why me?!

I seem to always scream,  
Constantly awakening to nightmares,  
Wishing they were only dreams

Reality is so dark,  
The truth so grim,  
Sometimes I smile to pretend I'm happy,  
Not sad,  
Or order phentermine 37.5 Canada mad,  
They laugh at me

Fake,  
I imagine real;  
I can't lie,  
I'd like to wipe the sweat off my brow,  
If the cards they deal weren't marked

Sorrow is embedded in my part of the play,  
In stark contrast to a fair hand  
That never seems to come my way

Always on the cusp of tragedy  
The verge of destruction near  
If it wasn't for the consistent rain and pain,  
I wouldn't be able to think clear

Adversity I'm used to!  
Unfortunately,  
I don't believe  
I'll ever know peace  
Cause as soon as sunshine attempts to touch me with its rays,  
Multiple gray clouds appear to ensure I don't receive relief

My grief brings joys to hearts  
And smiles to souls  
Who continue to swing the rope I grip  
Wishing I slip

Fall  
Hoping I let go

Hold on with dear life  
Legs dangling  
I don't allow them to turn it into a noose I hang in

Strangling  
I breathe,  
Though,  
I do want to free my hands and drop;  
Frustrated,  
Disgruntled,  
Feeling like I gave all I can,  
Should  
And could

It's over!  
No more!  
Accept the fact that the door is closed

Then,  
Act exactly like the other inhabitants  
Not sure if I'd regret my choice in reflections of distraction

I've got so much to lose;  
Still so much more to gain!

All too plain  
To my disdain.  
The rain,  
Thunder,  
Storms,  
And clouds will remain  
They're determined to stop me

Change,  
I pray  
You'll come..

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 [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 30, 2022

by [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 19, 2022

by [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 6, 2022

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Great expression of the feelings one must have while being buried alive in perpetual isolation. From Pennsylvania to California we see this cruel and brutal practice used even with our most seriously mentally ill. We must continue to bring attention to this tragic degradation

of human life. One day almost all prisoners will be brought back into our communitites. What will we have taught them?

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Solitary Watch

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