

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/05/12/mothers-with-sons-in-solitary-tell-their-stories/>

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | May 12, 2012



In the run-up to Mothers Day, the ACLU has unrolled a new feature on its website, called [Justice Mamas](#). In it, a series of motherstalk honestly and movingly about what it is like to have a beloved son behind bars and in solitary confinement.

The sons themselves represent a cross-section of the kinds of prisoners who are in solitary confinement in American prisons and jails today: One is a juvenile who is in and out of solitary for minor offenses. Another suffers from mental illness and is routinely placed in isolation instead of receiving the treatment he needs. Another has been validated as a gang member, and is in his twelfth year of solitary confinement at Pelican Bay.

Together, they offer a sense of how solitary confinement even more than other forms of incarceration tears families apart and keeps prisoners separated from what is often one of the only positive forces in their lives: their mothers.

Check out the Justice Mamas page [here](#), and the ACLUs Stop Solitary project [here](#).

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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Moms on the wrong side of the fence and the pain of separation for them and their children.

[http://photoblog.msnbc.msn.com/\\_news/2012/05/13/11681209-mothers-day-event-provides-children-opportunity-to-see-moms-behind-bars?lite](http://photoblog.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2012/05/13/11681209-mothers-day-event-provides-children-opportunity-to-see-moms-behind-bars?lite)

I have to thank all the mothers out there with a child in prison, especially in solitary. Never underestimate the power of a mother's prayer and devotion. My mom prayed so hard for me while I was locked up, that I became a writer. Now out of prison, I have 7 books on Amazon and am able to write many prisoners with hope. Please keep sending me your sons' addresses, as it is a joy to write them. I remember what my 10 plus years was like in prison, lonely.

<http://bit.ly/KcwIqD>

Finally a link that should work.

The image is number 13 of 65. A picture is worth a thousand words.

Prisoners see their mothers as their only hope of survival in a hostile environment.

Mothers are called The Rock by prisoners because their support is immovable just like the rocks in this ship wreck scene below along with a mother and her child.

<http://vintageprintable.com/wordpress/vintage-printable-environment-landscape/force-majeure-material-adverse-conditions-acts-of-god/>

My own mother walked into Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's office and begged to have my Brother Victor's case reviewed. He had been repeatedly brutalized in solitary for over a decade before he died in solitary at Salinas Valley prison. His body was cremated without our knowledge and tossed into the ocean. Thankfully although our mother warned it would happen she died without ever learning the truth. I like to think Victor came to her on her death bed and the two will be forever together.

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