

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2016/03/16/breaking-news-activist-and-author-five-mualimm-ak-arrested-by-nypd-following-book-launch-event/>

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | March 16, 2016

UPDATE: Five Mualimm-ak and Jazz Hayden were both released on their own recognizance late Wednesday afternoon. [Click here](#) for video of their statements following release. Also see coverage and video of the arrests on [Democracy Now!](#) and [Gothamist](#). Please follow us on Twitter and Facebook for more details as they emerge.

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Five Mualimm-ak, an activist, survivor of solitary, and contributor to our book *Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement*, was arrested Tuesday night moments after leaving a book launch event where he was a speaker, held at the Open Society Foundations in Midtown Manhattan.

Mualimm-ak had read from his essay in *Hell Is a Very Small Place* to a packed house at OSF, and spoken about his five years in solitary confinement in New York State prisons. Released from prison in 2012, he has gone on to become an activist against solitary and mass incarceration and founder of the Incarcerated Nation Corporation, which aids and organizes formerly incarcerated individuals.

Eyewitnesses say that Mualimm-ak and veteran activist Joseph Jazz Hayden, who had attended the event, were leaving the OSF building on West 57th Street when they saw police officers confronting a homeless man. Hayden began filming the encounter and was arrested. Mualimm-ak protested Hayden's arrest, and was arrested as well.

The two men were taken to the nearby Midtown North Precinct and placed in the cells. Five individuals who had attended the launch event walked to the precinct to inquire after their welfare. Shortly after arriving, they were arrested as well, handcuffed, detained, and finally released after being charged with refusal to disperse.

In the early hours of the morning, Mualimm-ak and Hayden were sent from the precinct to Central Booking in Lower Manhattan. They have been charged with Obstruction of Government Administration and are expected to be arraigned today at approximately 2 pm, in New York County Criminal Court at 100 Centre Street. They have legal representation from the National Lawyers Guild.

More details will be provided as they emerge, here and on Solitary Watch's social media feeds.

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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People do what they feel right whether it is good or bad but authorities have made some rules for every person and a line has been drawn but the book must be released and the authorities must help him releasing the book and learn something from the book as well.

From reading Mr. Mualimm-ak and Mr. Hayden's descriptions of what happened in interviews they gave for another article, there seems to have been a strong element of racism in their treatment by police. However, it is very impressive that the police who initially responded to the man who was homeless and having a hard time responded calmly, compassionately, and using de-escalating approaches.

I hope that Mr. Mualimm-ak and Mr. Hayden, as well as other activists who came to inquire about what they were being charged with, will be cleared of all charges. I also hope that as a community we can work to address the systemic racism in our culture that sometimes makes real change very challenging. It is sad that some police found Mr. Mualimm-ak and Mr. Hayden somehow threatening when they were simply trying to help.

We need to be able to trust that police will behave in calm, thoughtful, and balanced ways. Evidence of police responding to people based on racist attitudes is very problematic. We need to address this issue much more passionately as a community.

What can we do about this?

Five and Jazz have excellent attorneys from the National Lawyers Guild. You can support them and their work, however, by supporting Fives organization here: <https://www.razoo.com/us/story/Incarcerated-Nation>

Why should someone be jailed because they are filming an incident? We have seen dozens and dozens of films of police actions on TV and the people who filmed them are not in jail. Personally, I am thankful for police and grateful for their protection, but let's hear the whole story and not put people in jail for filming an incident. I doubt seriously that they were obstructing the role of justice.

Smh don't believe everything you read..

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