

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2010/11/02/sex-for-snitching-ring-reported-at-massachusetts-prison/>

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by [James Ridgeway](#) | November 2, 2010

A prisoner at the Massachusetts Correctional Institute at Norfolk has written to Solitary Watch to report the existence of a sex for information ring run by guards within the prison. He says the existence of this hitherto unknown operation is responsible for the [states high number of prison suicides](#). The inmate suicide rate in Massachusetts is four times the national average, with [eight suicides](#) this year alone including [one in June at MCI-Norfolk](#), the state's largest medium-security prison, which also had two high-profile suicides last year.

The prisoner, who says he has become the advocate for others too frightened of retaliation to talk, himself fears retaliation from within the prison. He has reported the ring at MCI-Norfolk to the Massachusetts Department of Corrections and has, he says, already been interviewed by Assistant Deputy Commissioner Paul DiPaolo, the state official in charge of stopping rape in the prisons. In granting this interview, the corrections hierarchy is bypassing lower-down officials within the prison, according to the prisoner. Each prison has an official responsible for rape suppression.

In a letter to Solitary Watch, the prisoner, who chose to remain anonymous over concerns for his own safety, wrote:

Abusive and sadistic guards move weak and vulnerable prisoners into housing units they oversee and manipulate them into engaging in sexual activity with each other (many of these men are homosexuals, sex offenders and men with mental health histories) and then they [the guards] force them to become informants under the threat of revealing their secrets to the general population.

In another letter to a friend, the same prisoner wrote:

The officers that are involved in this ring are also behind abusive treatment that makes this environment hopeless (suicides), and issue a disproportional amount of disciplinary reports, as well as create so many abusive situations through manipulating informant information, creating false rumors about prisoners, and spreading CORI [Criminal Offender Record Information] protected information around the prison. They have gotten away with it for years here at Norfolk, and each time a prisoner attempted to bring it to light they were transferred, had weapons placed in their cells, were tortured with cell searches and strip searches on an almost daily basis, which eventually lead to the general feeling that you could not address these issues. As I am sure you know I DISAGREE! This all lead to this sex for information ring. They got so bold, so brazen, that they dared to do the unimaginable. Men have caught HIV because of it, may have been subjected to unspeakable abuse that could not be proven, and to complain could make your life so much worse.

The Massachusetts Department of Corrections would not comment on this report when we queried the department on behalf of *Mother Jones*. We cannot confirm this and do not comment on investigations, DOC spokesperson Cara Savelli wrote in an email. She turned down a request for an interview with Assistant Deputy Commissioner DiPaolo: Im sorry but your interview request has also been denied.



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 [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

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November 14, 2010 ****Whistleblower thrown in the Hole!****

Greetings. I am a subscriber. On November 2 I forwarded this message (Norfolk MA prisoner reports sex-for-snitching ring) to another listserv, along with a brief preface.

The prisoner who reported the snitching/blackmail program is a reliable, principled friend of eight years. He asked that I send him the Solitary Watch posting. I did. That mail reached the prison on Tuesday Nov 9 or Wed Nov 10. At that time IPS (Interior Perimeter Security) came to his cell and lugged him to the Hole. The next day, Nov 11, IPS told him that he was in solitary because of the Solitary Watch piece and my preface to it.

The prisoner has given express permission for me to reveal his identity. Feel free to contact me.

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