

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/03/09/the-gray-box-upcoming-new-york-event-on-solitary-confinement/>

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by [Jean Casella](#) | March 9, 2012

Last month [we wrote](#) about the release of Susan Greenes remarkable article and accompanying video called [The Gray Box](#) one of the most powerful and comprehensive pieces of investigative reporting that has ever been done about solitary confinement in America.

Next week, the publisher of The Gray Box, the Dart Society an organization of journalists who cover trauma, conflict, and human rights will sponsor an event in New York. In addition to Susan Greene, it features Solitary Watch's own James Ridgeway; Brian Nelson, who spent time inside Tamms supermax; Laura Rovner, who has filed groundbreaking lawsuits challenging solitary confinement; and Katherine Sanguinetti of the Colorado DOC.

The event is cosponsored by John Jay College's Center on Media, Crime and Justice, and will take place at the college on the afternoon of Thursday, March 15. It is free and open to the public but space is limited, so it is necessary to R.S.V.P. see details in the following flyer.

**THE DART SOCIETY  
&  
CENTER on MEDIA,  
CRIME and JUSTICE**  
Present

**"THE GRAY BOX"**  
A Discussion on Solitary Confinement  
and Documentary Screening  
March 15 • 3-5 pm  
Room 630T

Susan Greene, Dart Society Reports  
James Ridgeway, Mother Jones  
Brian Nelson, Former Solitary Inmate  
Laura Rovner, University of Denver/ Sturm College of Law  
Katherine Sanguinetti, Colorado Department of Corrections  
Moderated by Stephen Handelman, Center on Media, Crime and Justice

**JOHN JAY** COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
**CUNY**  
John Jay College  
899 Tenth Ave  
New York, NY  
**DART SOCIETY**  
JOURNALISTS WHO COVER VIOLENCE

R.S.V.P. to Ricardo Martinez  
[rmartinez@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:rmartinez@jjay.cuny.edu)

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

Solitary Watch encourages comments and welcomes a range of ideas, opinions, debates, and respectful disagreement. We do not allow name-calling, bullying, cursing, or personal attacks of any kind. Any embedded links should be to information relevant to the conversation. Comments that violate these guidelines will be removed, and repeat offenders will be blocked. Thank you for your cooperation.

Some of the feed must come from this high tech Visa site.

<http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/story/2012-03-25/visa-data-center/53774904/1>

This video of the actual site is proof of its existence.

[http://www.cnn.com/video/?hpt=hp\\_t3#/video/us/2012/04/07/nr-spy-center.cnn](http://www.cnn.com/video/?hpt=hp_t3#/video/us/2012/04/07/nr-spy-center.cnn)

Where this leads:

Everything a person does from traveling to buying groceries is to be displayed on a graph, allowing the NSA to paint a detailed picture of any given individual's life.

With this in mind, the agency now indeed looks to be the most covert and potentially most intrusive intelligence agency ever, as Wired.com puts it.

William Binney, NSA's former senior mathematician-gone-whistleblower, holds his thumb and forefinger close together and tells the on-line magazine:

We are that far from a turnkey totalitarian state.

<http://rt.com/news/utah-data-center-spy-789/>

Another way that this trend is already adversely affecting our lives can be found here:

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/business/jan-june12/highfrequency\\_03-15.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/business/jan-june12/highfrequency_03-15.html)

Harris' latest book, *The Fear Index*, stars a hedge fund driven by an algorithm run wild. And the more Harris researched its plot, the more plausible it seemed to become.

I went to see a hedge fund in London. They showed me a room full of computers. And in the course of the 20 minutes that I watched, this machine made \$1.5 million without any human intervention.

But the new game in town is high-frequency trading, with computers and their algorithms moving in and out of stocks as many as tens of thousands of times a day.

Bloomberg News feeds are digitalized and go straight into the machine, and buzzwords are picked out, panic, rumor, fear, slump.

And, you know, you just get a few milliseconds, maybe, advantage if the machine can work out what this news story is going to do to the markets in the next few minutes.

PAUL SOLMAN: And that's what your novel gets at, the ability of an algorithm to exploit that anxiety.

ROBERT HARRIS: we are the victims of some sort of gigantic H.G. Wells-like science fiction creation, which is the markets, so huge in the numbers of shares and the vast values of transactions every day, so fast with the speed, that it has somehow slipped the control of human beings, and almost is itself a kind of Frankenstein's monster run amok in the world.

PAUL SOLMAN: In the U.S., high-frequency firms represent only 2 percent of the 20,000 or so trading firms operating today. But they now account for nearly three-quarters of all trades.

And the average time a stock investment is held these days is 22 seconds. If time is money, microseconds are now millions. In a recent so-called TED talk on cutting-edge technology, tech whiz Kevin Slavin wowed the audience by describing buildings now being

hollowed out in Lower Manhattan. Why? So that high-frequency trading firms can move in and get as close as possible to New York's point of entry for the Internet at a so-called carrier hotel in Tribeca.

KEVIN SLAVIN, technology consultant: And this is really where the wires come right up into the city. And the further away you are from that, you're a few microseconds behind every time. These guys down on Wall Street, they're eight microseconds behind all these guys going into the empty buildings being hollowed out up around the carrier hotel.

Just to give you a sense of what microseconds are, it takes you 500,000 microseconds just to click a mouse. But if you're a Wall Street algorithm and you're five microseconds behind, you're a loser.

PAUL SOLMAN: Who are these people?

ROBERT HARRIS: They don't hire anyone to work who has less than a Ph.D. in the natural sciences or mathematics and that weren't peer-reviewed in the top 15 percent.

We're talking about the influence of physicists and mathematicians. And the speed and power of computers and of the Internet and the Web have utterly changed everything.

What is worrying, I think, about this high-frequency trading. We won't know it's disastrous until the disaster has occurred.

I have a lot of respect for this field and sorely wish that I could attend.

Well, this meeting is about solitary confinement; there are broader issues of authoritative control that are dangerously creeping into all of our lives globally. Only a few recognize the threat.

Here are two examples of recent articles in The Atlantic that caught my attention.

First:

Were Underestimating the Risk of Human Extinction

<http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/03/were-underestimating-the-risk-of-human-extinction/253821/>

One treat noted by this scientist:

the possibility of the development of technologies that could make it a lot easier for oppressive regimes to weed out dissidents or to perform surveillance on their populations, so that you could have a permanently stable tyranny, rather than the ones we have seen throughout history, which have eventually been overthrown.

I think artificial intelligence once it gains human and then superhuman capabilities will present us with a major risk area. There are also different kinds of population control that worry me, things like surveillance and psychological manipulation pharmaceuticals. (Like the ones currently used in Control Units)

If we are going to go extinct because of artificial intelligence, it's not going to be because there's this battle between humans and robots with laser eyes.

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* is interesting in that it created a scenario in which humans have been biologically and socially engineered to fit into a dystopian social structure, and it shows how that could be very bad.

If one day you have the ability to create a machine intelligence that is greater than human intelligence, how would you control it, how would you make sure it was human-friendly and safe?

An actual case for the first threat is found in this second article:

Surveillance Inc: How Western Tech Firms Are Helping Arab Dictators

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/surveillance-inc-how-western-tech-firms-are-helping-arab-dictators/254008/>

For all of the good this technology has done, activists are also beginning to understand the harm it can do. As Evgeny Morozov wrote in *The Net Delusion*, his book on the Internet's darker sides, Denying that greater information flows, combined with advanced technologies can result in the overall strengthening of authoritarian regimes is a dangerous path to take, if only because it numbs us to potential regulatory interventions and the need to rein in our own Western corporate excesses.

Recent investigations by the Wall Street Journal and Bloomberg News have revealed just how expansively these technologies are already being used. Intelligence agencies throughout the Middle East can today

scan, catalogue, and read virtually every email in their country. The technology even allows them to change emails while en route to their recipient, as Tunisian authorities sometimes did before the revolution.

These technologies turn activists phones against them, allowing governments to listen in on phone calls, read text messages, even scan cell networks and pinpoint callers with voice recognition. They allow intelligence agents to monitor movements of activists via a GPS locator updated every fifteen seconds. And by tricking users into installing malware on their devices as is currently happening in Syria government agents can remotely turn on a laptop webcam or a cell phone microphone without its user knowing.

These companies seem fully aware of what they're doing after all, the better they understand how to help secret police find and terrorize dissidents, the better their products will do on the market but far less concerned about the implications. As Dutch member of the E.U.

Parliament Marietje Schaake told us last week, The bulk of this digital arms trade happens under the radar; through spin-offs of well-known companies, but mostly by players without a reputation to lose with consumers.

Unfortunately, apart from the work of a few individuals, this problem has gone mostly ignored by Western governments, and the digital surveillance trade still seems to be flourishing.

In Solitary Watch's next article you quote Pennsylvania inmate Derrick Stanley.

Asked if there was anything he'd like people to know, Stanley replied, I want them to know this: In life there is a time for everyone to speak up.

Reblogged this on pastproduction.

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