

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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



Our Solitary 101 PowerPoint, developed for the recent Midwest Coalition for Human Rights conference on [Solitary Confinement and Human Rights](#), is now available online. The 60-slide PowerPoint includes sections on the history of solitary confinement, solitary as it is practiced in the United States today, and the growing movement against solitary confinement.

We encourage educators and advocates to use, share, and customize the presentation according to their needs (for non-commercial purposes only, with proper attribution to Solitary Watch). No advance permission is necessary, although we will appreciate hearing about how you are using the presentation, as well as any suggestions for improvement.

[Solitary Watch's Solitary 101 Powerpoint Presentation](#)

[Solitary Watch's Solitary 101 Powerpoint Printable Version](#)

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 [Jean Casella](#)

December 29, 2021

by [Jean Casella](#)

December 23, 2021

by [Events and Announcements](#)

December 3, 2021

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.

This is a fantastic PowerPoint. I am using this in an introduction to criminal justice college course and it is immensely helpful. I know of no other set of documents that is as comprehensive as this presentation. Thank you for preparing this.

http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18560_162-3357727.html

..inmates get letters only from people approved by the prison and they get one, monitored, phone call a month, for 15 minutes.

As strict as that seems, 60 Minutes has been told there is an even higher level of confinement, sort of an ultramax inside Supermax. Its a group of cells where theres virtually no human contact, not even with guards and there are only two prisoners are considered so dangerous that theyre locked in this place thats known as Range 13.

One of them is Tommy Silverstein, who killed a prison guard; the other is World Trade Center bomber Ramzi Yousef.

Warden Hood says Yousef is on Range 13 for just one reason. He has that Charlie Manson look, Hood says. He just has the eyes. He has some charisma about him. Hes in uniform. But you know that theres a powerful person that youre looking at.

You didnt want him in a place where he could give anybody any orders? Pelley asks.

True, Hood agrees.

Supermax remains the least known prison in America.

Ive heard it described as a clean version of hell, Pelley remarks.

Says former ADX inmate Garrett Linderman, The perfection of isolation, painted pretty.

The perfection of isolation. Is that the way it felt to you? Pelley asks.

Yeah, they perfected it there, Linderman says.

****Both Tommy Silverstein and Ramzi Yousef have been moved to new cells, which leaves Range 13 empty, at least for now.**

It seems you were at least aware of Silverstein during this interview.

I guess Yousef had the look and Silverstein had the reputation.

For the record from the above article the Warden when Principe arrived was Michael Pugh, and in Silversteins appeal for relief they sight Ronnie Wiley as the Warden then.

Silverstein was transferred to ADX on July 12, 2005 the year Wood left. What month?

They sure have a high turnover of wardens at ADX.

@Warden Wood:

Upon further reviewing these articles I dont expect you could reply honestly about Silverstein.

@Warden Wood:

The guard was Joe Principe.

He went from guarding some of the most dangerous gang members in the country to being indicted with them, in a sprawling conspiracy case against the Aryan Brotherhood.

<http://www.westword.com/2005-05-05/news/bringing-down-the-brotherhood/>

Hood was the warden at the U.S. Penitentiary Administrative Maximum, or ADX, from 2002 until 2005 the year of this article is 2005.

@Warden Wood:

There is even one on you by the author:

http://blogs.westword.com/latestword/2011/12/robert_hood_a_former_supermax.php

Hoods first order of business is to recommend some changes for the new BOP director, Charles Samuels, to improve the federal system. The first step? Provide greater public/media access to institutions to enhance offender reentry initiatives.

@Warden Wood:

From what I just posted, if you were to find it is all true (it is), then what is your opinion?

For the record I also do not know Silverstein nor any member of a prison gang.

But obviously neither Silverstein nor Ralph Seever, the so called legendary lieutenant, thought that Silverstein was treated appropriately.

Let me say this I know what he did was extreme but under the circumstances I think logical in the state of mind he was in. He made the challenge for someone to look into the victims themselves so I did.

And his continued suffering appears to be just plain vengeance to this outsider.

Didn't you have a guard convicted under your watch?

Westword had an article on him. So it follows not every guard is a saint.

I'll find the article.

@Warden Wood: as an ex-supermax warden what do you think about Mr. Silverstein's case?

In particular this quote I found in Pete Earley's book *The Hot House*

Page 393: Referring to Clutts and Silverstein, Ralph Seever, a legendary lieutenant explained, you never want, the relationship to get personal. He warned.

Whenever an inmate believes for some reason that the natural conflict between convicts and officers is personal, his ego is at stake, and in a penitentiary, image is a thousand times more important than reality.

The facts of the case I've discovered while researching it are troubling.

Between January 1980 and October 1983, there were more serious disturbances at Marion than at any other prison, including fourteen escape attempts, ten group uprisings, fifty-eight serious inmate-on-inmate assaults, thirty-three attacks on staff, and nine murders.

Line 46 of Silverstein's declaration: There was significant conflict between staff and prisoners at Marion.

Line 48: I feared attacks on my life at all times from both prisoners and staff.

Then on lines 49-59 Silverstein gives his own account for the three murders he has been convicted of. (Recall he admits to just two of the three.)

The following information was extracted from the court record:

On November 22, 1981, at 7:15 p.m. guards discovered the body of Robert Marvin Chappelle a member of the D.C. Blacks prison gang.

Silverstein was brought to trial for the murder and pleaded not guilty.

During the trial, inmate Norman Matthews's testimony seemed to confirm Silverstein's innocence.

When called to the stand to testify Norman Matthews was asked whether he could remember November 22, 1981, he replied, It was the day I killed Chappelle.

Without this confession Silverstein was found guilty.

The third murder is not denied by Silverstein but was only committed after Raymond Cadillac Smith the national leader of the D.C. Blacks prison gang had failed in two documented attempts to kill Silverstein.

Smith had been convicted for armed kidnapping, armed robbery, extortion, and assault with a dangerous weapon. Smith was found guilty on all counts, and sentenced to an effective term of 6-18 years.

Fellow prisoner, ex-Black Panther Eddie G. Griffin was in Marion for bank robbery, kidnapping, and commandeering a police squad car at age 26 at the time.

Griffin said of Cadillac we both trained for combat in the same prison cage.

Keep in mind while reading the following story, written by Griffin, that Robert Marvin Chappelle was also a convicted killer and the best friend of Smith.

Whether or not there is any direct connection between Chappelle and the character Casper found in this story, is irrelevant, because the story illustrates the threat that this particular group of inmates had posed on Silverstein's life.

Excerpts:

They called him Casper, because he had killed 10 men in Atlanta Federal Prison.

Nobody ever saw him. He left no evidence, other than the slit throat of his victims. Over a period of years, during the 1970s, the FBI never caught him. That is how he got the nickname Casper, the Unfriendly Ghost.

Strange that we would become friends and he would become one of my trainers a man with a claw for a hand, a convicted murderer.

He had a killers instinct and the thirst for it.

My counter-part was Raymond Smith-el, a Moorish Science of America gladiator, known as the Sword of Justice, street named Cadillac.

Cadillac laughed. He always laughed in the face of his enemies. And, there were times when his psychotic laughter caused even me to quiver. To hear him laugh was not good, not good at all for somebody.

And, on a good day, his signature battle cry would rattle the walls and shake all the prison cages. No wonder, men in prison feared him, both inmate and guard.

It was said of the Moors in prison that they could kill a man, stash the weapons where no one on earth could find them, wash their clothes and dry them, before prison officials could ever discover the body.

(Drew Ali, founded the Moorish Science Temple in Newark, N.J. in 1931 a forerunner of the Nation of Islam.

Today three fourths of the Temples congregations are inside prisons.

Ali claimed that all blacks are the original inhabitants of the earth and the progenitors of all nonwhite nationsthe worlds superior racein contrast whites, he claimed, were a race of inferior devils.)

The Hot House page 105:

The black inmates were from Washington D.C., and were known simply as D.C. Blacks. They were one of the most difficult groups at Leavenworth for guards to control. D.C. Blacks were especially notorious as locker-knockerspetty thieves who ransacked the personal lockers of other inmatesand for pressuring new inmates for sex.

Excerpts from Pete Earlys, book Hot House.

I tried to tell Cadillac that I didnt kill Chappelle, but he didnt believe me and bragged that he was going to kill me, Silverstein recalled. Everyone knew what was going on and no one did anything to keep us apart. The guards wanted one of us to kill the other.

Enter Officer Merle Clutts the third victim.

Page 233 The Hot House:

To this day, Silverstein claims that Clutts set out to break him by harassing him in a dozen petty ways that most guards learn early in their careers.

Officer Clutts also knew there were possible consequences of this harassment for he had learned this lesson the hard way early into his career in an event that foretold his own demise.

On January 26, 1969, Officer Merle E. Clutts found the body of his superior, Senior Officer Vern M. Jarvis, in a utility closet. Jarvis had been stabbed 26 times.

The murder of Jarvis was committed by James K. Marshall also a convicted bank robber with a 25 year sentence. The motive, Officer Jarvis had confiscated Marshalls candy, fruit and magazines when he placed him in segregation.

In an audio recording of an interview conducted by Earley, Silverstein explains his own motives:

16:25 Silverstein: I think he was just selling me wolf tickets. But he didnt know I was taking him serious.

AS MANY KILLINGS THAT I HAVE SEEN WHEN SOMEONE SAYS HE IS GOING TO KILL YOU, YOU CANT SIT BACK AND SAY AWE IT AINT NOTHING AND DO NOTHING.

When somebody has gone that far especially when youre telling him you dont want no trouble why dont you get off my case.

You know, I PLEADED WITH THAT GUY

On Line 58 of his declaration Silverstein wrote After I killed Smith, I lived in constant fear of reprisals. It was in this frame of mind, and believing I was in a life-threatening situation, that on October 22, 1983, I killed Officer Clutts.

Silverstein later testified that he had killed Clutts because the guard was planning to let other inmates out of their cells to kill him.

(Unbelievable you say? Then why was Smith, a known close associate of Chappelles, moved from another institution and placed near Silversteins cell, then allowed to remain there even after making two documented attempts on Silversteins life?)

Indeed the lapse in security that allowed all these murders to take place, in what was the most secure facility in the bureau conjures up conspiracy theories.

Prison can be described as a cruel gauntlet lined with rouge guards on one side and predatory inmates on the other with inmates forced to do their time in the restricted space in the middle.

These two opposing forces, sometimes knowingly and at other times unknowingly, collude together to mete out societys punishment.

This is the stark reality of prison life

Like Marshall before him, Silverstein received a life sentence.

This is where the similarities between the two cases end.

On March 29, 1972 Marshall was transferred to Oregon Department of Corrections and was later paroled from his federal sentence in 1982.

However Silversteins life sentence came with a no human contact order attached to it and with no achievable release date therefore he will die in prison.

In his recent apology to the world Silverstein wrote:

Line 59 of his declaration Silverstein proclaims:

Even writing this declaration, I feel my words of regret are inadequate to explain the remorse I feel. There is no justification for my actions. (Last part from Line 11)

But there is logic in Silversteins actions, even if only understandable by others that have been trapped like tethered animals in a slaughterhouse!

Considering all the above circumstances I believe this man deserves a chance to be closer to his family possibly in a seniors prison he is after all over 60 now?

I have never worked around Silverstein to comment. In general, many inmates feel true remorse for their actions, but their sentence and conditions of confinement may never change. Correctional professionals can only maintain high standards and treat all offenders in an appropriate manner.

Excellent PowerPoint presentation. Solitary 101 provided a nice overview on the history of solitary confinement and current practices.

Bob Hood
Warden (Ret.)
United States Supermax Penitentiary Colorado

This is an excellent presentation! Thank-you to all who contributed to putting it together. It is a great educational tool to use with the general public, most of whom have no idea we do this in the USA.

I posted this on DeafInPrison. You did a fabulous job, and I'm sure our readers will appreciate your hard work.

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