

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2011/02/03/maine-prison-whistleblower-exiled-and-isolated/>

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | February 3, 2011



For more than four years, Maine prisoner Deane Brown has faced isolation and exile for his role as a prison journalist and whistleblower. Brown was serving a lengthy sentence for burglary and robbery in the lockdown unit of Maine State Prison when he began filing reports, [by letter](#), which were aired on WRFR community radio in 2005. The following year he began broadcasting himself, by telephone, in a series of weekly reports on WRFR called [Live from the Hole](#). Brown also supplied material to journalist Lance Tapley for his [stories in the Portland Phoenix](#) on abuses in the supermax unit.

In late 2006, after receiving letters from the warden warning him to cease disclosing confidential information through the media, Brown was suddenly transferred from Maine State Prison to a series of maximum security prisons in Maryland. As [Tapley reported at the time](#), the Maine corrections commissioner called Brown a very serious threat to the facility, despite his lack of any violent offenses inside prison.

Now Brown has been moved once again, to a particularly brutal solitary confinement unit in New Jersey, according to a [new report by Tapley](#):

Deane Brown, a Maine inmate shipped out of state because of his criticism of the Maine State Prison, is now being held in New Jersey in one of the most repressive prison units in the country, often reserved for political or activist prisoners like black radicals, says Bonnie Kerness of the American Friends Service Committees national Prison Watch. Inmates are not put there because of what they've done but because of who they are, she says, adding that the unit specializes in psychological no-touch torture techniques such as sleep deprivation, noise, and unsanitary conditions.

In Brown's case, toilet water sometimes floods his solitary-confinement cell floor, and he has sores on his feet from his severe diabetes. Day and night he hears a mentally ill prisoner in the next cell banging on his metal door. Two inmates in his unit have recently set themselves on fire. His cell is cold, and he's allowed only a thin cotton blanket and no pillow.

This picture is put together from reports from Brown's friend, Beth Berry, of Rockland, who has received phone calls from him, and Jean Ross, a pro-bono attorney who recently visited him at the New Jersey State Prison in Trenton, where he's in the harsh Management Control Unit.

Maine authorities transferred Brown to Maryland in 2006 after he blew the whistle to the *Phoenix* on inmate abuse at the state prisons supermax isolation facility. In October Maine prison guards took him from Maryland to New Jersey. In a recent phone call, Brown, 47, told Berry that he had lost 40 pounds since then.

He told Ross he was feeling desperate because the prison wasn't responding to his medical needs and was violating its rules for the placement of inmates in maximum security. She is relaying his concerns to prison officials.

Sentenced in Maine to 59 years for burglary and robbery, Brown also told Ross he believes he was put in the unit because Maines Department of Corrections told its New Jersey counterpart that hes an escape risk due to his locksmith abilities. He has never tried to escape from prison, he says, or been violent.



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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How can he get moved around like that? Is he a state inmate or federal?

The Penal system in America is Monstrous and Horrid. Once in its a revolving door. Just like all Capitalist Ventures the Prison system is made for Profit not the care of convicts to re-enter the Free World/Capitalist Swine pit in reality
Why is he handcuffed are they affraid hell pick his nose? its all about denigrating the prisoner every which way they can.
Mean while other Robbers and Burglars like Bernanke, Paulsen, Summers, Cox, Greenspan get off scott free + bonuses.
The justice system is designed to crush the Working Class.

Jean,
has the Govenor of New Jersey, Chris Christie, been informed of this?
Do you think this sort of thing could happen to my son because I am complaining about his treatment?

A prison inmate should NOT be tortured for exercising his civil rights. He has the right of free speech, and should not be persecuted for using those rights.

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