

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2015/12/31/please-support-lifelines-to-solitary-this-year/>

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | December 31, 2015

Dear Readers:

We reach out to you just once a year to ask for your support. And even now, we seek your help *not* for our regular research and reporting work, which catalyzes change by documenting the hidden world of prison isolation. Instead, we ask you to donate to a special program that brings small ray of light into the lives of thousands of people languishing in the darkness of solitary confinement. It's a program we call [Lifelines to Solitary](#).

What began, several years ago, as an occasional newsletter for anyone in solitary confinement with whom we were lucky enough to connect, rapidly became a treasured stream of news from the free world a reliable and, for far too many, the only lifeline available to remind them that they had not been forgotten by the world they once belonged to. We soon added holiday cards, and all the individual letters and cards we ourselves could find time to write.

As our list of people in solitary grew, we realized that quarterly newsletters and holiday cards were not enough. Knowing that a single letter can make a staggering difference in the life of someone suffering in solitary, we last year made a pledge to expand our Lifelines project to include the first pen pal program designed specifically for people living in isolation.

In the past year, we've helped connect groups like Princeton's student-led Project Solidarity and New York's Village Zendo with our readers in solitary, offering both sides an opportunity to forge a correspondence built on their common humanity. This coming year, we will be partnering with the National Religious Campaign Against Torture to nurture Lifelines chapters in faith communities across the country, while continuing to work with student groups and community organizations as well.

Every day, now, we receive requests for newsletters and pen pals from men, women, and children living in solitary around the country. Because we know what an ounce of human contact can mean for these isolated souls, we struggle to keep up with the demand. But our funding for Lifelines comes almost entirely from individual donors like you.

Some of you have already given generously to Lifelines to Solitary, and for this we are deeply grateful. We are asking the rest of our readers to make a donation to Lifelines to Solitary today. Please take a look at our appeal by clicking on the link below, and consider lending your support. All donations to Solitary Watch are fully tax-deductible through our fiscal sponsor, Community Futures Collective.

With sincere thanks for your caring and generosity, and with best wishes for the new year,

Jean Casella and Jim Ridgeway, Co-Directors

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

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