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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | May 21, 2010

CHILDREN IN LOCKDOWN

Earlier this month, Pete Brooks [Prison Photography blog](#) featured the work of Richard Ross, whose latest project is [Suitable Placement: Juvenile Justice in America](#). This large and devastatingly powerful collection of photographs includes many of children held in some form of solitary confinement, from traditional cells to rubber rooms.

On his web site, Ross describes the project:

Suitable Placement is the expression used when trying to place a minor who is either in distress or in trouble with the authorities. I am doing research on the placement and treatment of juveniles in America and the facilities that house, treat, and assist them.

I have visited these troubled-teen facilities across the United States and have taken photographs of the spaces that the children live in, work in, and study in. I have made sure to keep the childrens identities unknown, by either photographing them from behind or obscuring their faces.

I am not working with an agenda, but am simply recording what exists.

To date, I have photographed Angels Flight (L.A.), group homes, foster homes, ICE juvenile holding, Los Prietos Boys Camp, LAPD, SFPD, EL Paso PD, Ventura Youth Correctional Facility, Santa Barbara Juvenile Correctional facility, Sexual Assault Response Team Examination Rooms, interview and exam rooms for sexually abused children, juvenile courtrooms, high schools, Children of the Night (Van Nuys), JHS, Montessori classrooms, Maryvale (a former orphanage), CPS interview rooms, El Paso Juvenile Courtrooms, half-way houses, reform schools, maximum security Giddings, TX, lock-down and nonlock-down shelters, SW Keys, ORR, ICE, DHS, and CBP to name a few. I have primarily focused on kids that are not the Kids R Us type of juvenile, but rather minors that become part of a system because they have failed, or their families have failed them, or their society has failed them. Earl Dunlap, the Director of Cooke County Detention Center, welcomed me to his facility with the words: Welcome to the gates of hell.

This body of work will culminate in a book, website, lecture and collection of essays to be published in 2011. The work was done with partial support from the Guggenheim Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

In [several videos on the Aperture Foundations web site](#), Ross talks about his previous project, The Architecture of Authority, which the site describes as unsettling pictures of architectural spaces that each exert a kind of power over the individual. From a Montessori preschool to churches and mosques, to an interrogation room at Guantanamo and segregation cells at Abu Ghraib, Rosss photographs reflect the state of our post 9/11 world in which he believes the public has become accustomed to the abuse of power, erosion of individual liberty, illegitimate authority, and constant surveillance. Rosss new project shows just how adept this world has become in inventing ways to lock down its children.

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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My son was sent to Giddling, TX. He accidentally shot his sister and the D.A. didn't care that my son had been mentally abused by his dad and that the psychologist that the court first employed didn't lean toward the D.A. so they got a referral from the JDC chairman where my son was being held at and the person the JDC chairman referred ALWAYS leaned in favor of the D.A.

The first psychologist said my son has a list of 12 or more mental disorders and the other psychologist played patty cakes with her eyes with the D.A. Everyone saw it. It was not a hearing it was a farce. No one was concerned about my son not even the public defender my son had, it seemed.

Basically, if you don't have money for a lawyer YOU ARE GOING TO PRISON. Not getting help. My son's dad who caused all this is still walking free. They even let him see my son in JDC and my son said his dad tried to convince him, my son, that he didn't see what he thought he saw.

I am trying to contact Susannah, the person who said they are a juvenile defense attorney. I was incarcerated at Ventura Girls school and I can help you with a story. I need help.

Thank you for sharing your very powerful photos. You may not have an agenda, but I do. I am a juvenile defense attorney working within the confines of a broken system. The statutory aim of these facilities is in part to rehabilitate. Clearly, that has failed miserably. Please email me. I am working with local and state officials on the issue of juvenile (in)justice and would like to use some of your photos.

Well Marie, your right about the hatred and contempt about being a child prisoner produces. I was 15 years old when I got thrown into a jail cell in Paducah, Kentucky for being a runaway. A cell filled with human waste 2 inches deep and fed food a pig wouldn't even touch. Here it is 38 years later and I'm still seething. And that hatred and contempt for the government grows and grows.

It's unbelievable to think children are being incarcerated and abused this way in 2010. The American government should be ashamed of itself. The British government, ditto. No wonder there is so much violence, resentment, hatred and chaos when children are neglected and abused. It is inevitable that they grow into damaged adults who can't find their place in the world. Stability, love, kindness, all this is absent in these jails for children. There is another way, but it is up to the government to make these changes and offer hope. It is too easy to simply lock them up and punish them.

Here is another series. First shot of boy in solitary with a caption on solitude and the second is a girl with a Life Without Parole Sentence with her words as she realizes just what that means. Sad, sad sad! There are some 22 more pics in this series that you can flip through.

<http://www.araoshagan.com/Pages/Juvies/Juvies17.html>

<http://www.araoshagan.com/Pages/Juvies/Juvies19.html>

Looking at these pictures really makes me sad. Just knowing how unfortunately other kids have been through worse things in life, makes me appreciate life more. To all of those people who have been sent to these horrible facilities I give them all of my respect because whether they were placed there for their behavior, or just any difficult differences. All of those places for example PROVO CANYON SCHOOL IN UTAH should be shut down !!!!! I really want to encourage kids that are placed in these facilities to speak out and not stay quiet when they are being abused, disrespected, tortured, discriminated, or all the other fucked up shit they do. BE A SURVIVOR

Have you photographed any places in Utah?

My boyfriends at Provo Canyon School, and I'm really worried.

I don't trust lockdown facilities whatsoever.

Or the teen help system in general.

Is this for foster children who have misbehaved

Powerful photos. Can't wait to see the end result of this research and project concerning suitable placements for juveniles.

Not a day goes by I can't really look at the USA flag and say I am proud of it. Glad to be able to live here yes I am but proud of what it has done to it. I can't say I'm honored to be part of it at all I have to say for the person doing this great job of going in to the places and at least showing it doesn't happen in them might I offer you a place to try your next trip to not a place you live but it is a school I went to

may not have ben as extreem as the cells you have phontes of but it had the same effets on me you may wish to read my story on a NY school called oakhill that places is all lovely on the out side and as for how they hadel problems hell on the inside i did a voise on this site on it lol i love for you to shed light on the dark of solitary they try to hide and call suclushion dam well same thing still game out with left overs of shu sindrum and dam they still doing the same thing to more kids after i told them the effets of what they are doing you say you go just to show the light to whats going on not take sides well at least sine your light on this privent school know as oakhill or has i think more so oakhell bring you light to sine in the void even if it not as bad as where you ben it still using a form of solitary as wel speek bleesed are those who bring light to the dark of justice

P.O. Box 11374
Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

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