

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/06/11/senate-committee-invites-written-testimony-on-solitary-confinement/>

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | June 11, 2012

As we [noted last week](#), on June 19, the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights, chaired by Illinois Democrat Dick Durbin, will hold the first-ever Congressional hearing on solitary confinement in U.S. prisons and jails. The subcommittee is inviting interested advocates and experts to submit written testimony to be included in the hearing record. This is a rare opportunity for those with an interest in this issue including people with firsthand experience of solitary confinement, and their loved ones to make their voices heard at the highest levels of government.

All those who wish to submit testimony need to do so by June 15 at 5 p.m. Statements should be emailed to Nicholas Deml at [Nicholas\\_Deml@judiciary-dem.senate.gov](mailto:Nicholas_Deml@judiciary-dem.senate.gov). Statements should be less than ten pages. They are customarily addressed to the committees chair and ranking minority member in this case, Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Graham. It is also advisable to begin by identifying yourself, your affiliation, and your connection to the issue of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons and jails.

Solitary Watch will be creating an archive of written testimony, accessible to all on the website. If you wish to be included, please send a copy of your statement to [solitarywatchnews@gmail.com](mailto:solitarywatchnews@gmail.com).

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

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.

Solitary Confinement is torture no other word will suffice. For a prison system to use solitary confinement in a country that claims that it condemns the use of torture in any form is to prove that that claim is a lie. This form of torture should be prohibited completely in our prisons and condemned internationally. We believe this deeply. Mr. & Mrs. Saul Levinson.

<http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/2012/05/joseph-stiglitz-the-price-on-inequality>

Joseph E. Stiglitz recently wrote in Vanity Fair: In America, the chances of someones making it to the top, or even to the middle, from a place near the bottom are lower than in the countries of old Europe or in any other advanced industrial country.

And we can imagine what the odds were in old Europe after we read this view written by Antoine Fregier in 1840,

The poor and the vicious classes have been and will always be the most productive breeding ground of evildoers of all sorts; it is they whom we shall designate as the dangerous classes. For even when vice is not accompanied by perversity, by the very fact that it allies itself with poverty in the same person, he is an object of fear to society, he is dangerous.

I am sure that Fregiers view has been held by many, if not most, elites long before his time and hence. After all this commonly shared view has helped justify the many forms of inhuman treatment inflicted on this dangerous class by a series of fearful oligarchies for over a millennium now.

The SHU is just the latest and most diabolical technique of abuse. The system justifies the SHU by labeling those it holds in it as the worst of the worst. .So how did we ever do without it before? .

The mere fact that this hearing needs to be held is a perfect example of the growing gap between the classes. Because if you were to ask anyone in an underclass neighborhood if they know someone that is, or has been, in prison I bet the answer is Hell yeah I do! and then they would go on to tell you all their own horror stories.

I can only hope that the members of this Senate committee have finally realized that there can be no top of the pyramid if there isnt a solid base. The base has been shaken in this economic crisis and grown distrustful of all the countrys institutions. People now fear with good reason that the game has been rigged against them. No where is this distrust greater than in our prisons and nowhere in prison than in the SHU. But I fear many members of the Senate have still failed to catch on.

However Justice Stevens recently warned that a democracy cannot function effectively when its constituent members believe laws are being bought and sold.

If not only legislators but judges serve at the pleasure of lobbyists, the people will have ceased to be their own rulers. Law will be commerce. And money will be king.

Read more [http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2012/06/18/120618crat\\_atlarge\\_lepore#ixzz1xUAKNkWB](http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2012/06/18/120618crat_atlarge_lepore#ixzz1xUAKNkWB)

Not enough time was given for a poor writer like myself to share his experience. Probably for the best however since such frowned upon information now lives forever in the digital cloud.

Reblogged this on <http://www.HumansinShadow.wordpress.com/>.

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