

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/01/31/new-fact-sheet-the-high-cost-of-solitary-confinement/>

Policy Issue Resources

close

Search

close

close

by [James Ridgeway and Jean Casella](#) | January 31, 2012

This new fact sheet collects data from a number of states to show that prisons using solitary confinement on a large scale pay a high price in dollars, as well as in safety and humanity.

[FACT SHEET The High Cost of Solitary Confinement](#)

We hoped to also include data from the federal system, but apparently the federal government does not know how much it is spending to incarcerate prisoners in extreme solitary confinement at its own supermax prison, the U.S. Penitentiary Administrative Maximum (ADX) in Florence, Colorado. A Freedom of Information Act request for the annual cost of keeping a prisoner in ADX yielded the following response from the federal Bureau of Prisons:

The BOP does not collect separate or specific data held in Administrative custody or at USP Admin Max Florence. These costs are included in the general per capita costs for the applicable facility. Since the prisons at Florence make up a Federal Correctional Complex [which also has maximum, medium, and minimum security inmates], the operating costs are based on all complex operations, shared services and facility expenses at this site.

Thanks to our brilliant intern Sal Rodriguez for this latest entry in our Fact Sheet series.

Share

- [Share to Facebook](#)
- [Share to Twitter](#)
- [Share to LinkedIn](#)
- [Share this post via Email](#)
- [Visit our page](#)

Categories

[Announcements](#)

Tags

[California](#), [Colorado](#), [cost](#), [Cost/Budget Issues](#), [Illinois](#), [Ohio](#), [Solitary Confinement](#), [supermax](#), [Supermax Prisons](#), [Texas](#)

James Ridgeway and Jean Casella

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.

Help Expose the Hidden World of Solitary Confinement

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.

[Donate](#)

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.

Democracy in cages.

This is the title of Up with Chris Hayes on MSNBC it worth viewing.

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/46264122#46264117>

@Angel ~the treatment, the lack of dignity and the too much power to the guards are legitimate issues but not applicable universally as many keep their span of control effective enough to make sure the practice matches the policy. It is where the growth of solitary confinement has expanded exponentially without the addition of trained staff where the abuse, the neglect and the mistreatment exists as they have grown beyond their own ability to control the environment and have implemented harsh and unreasonable tactics to maintain control over such a prison population that is kept in the darkness literally speaking. These reforms you speak of apply to large systems such as the California, Texas, Arizona, Florida, and many more agencies where they have grown beyond control thus managing crisis daily resulting in repetitive use of force, denial of basic services and violations of conditions of living already outlined by court cases establishing such requirements and mandates. Ignorance is no excuse and many of these systems have adopted a take care of business attitude that allows staff to do what they want to do without proper supervision. I can add more but you get the picture.~~

I dont believe that it is costing them as much as tgey are tryig to say it is. The men and women in Solitary confinewnt are treated like animals and are fed medioca at best food you qwould not even feed your dog. animals are treated better and if they werent then the people treating them like this would be put in jail. The guards of tese facilities should be mentors to these men and women and the majority for the most part do nothing to support that. To the contrary they belittle the people in the prison and even go as far as to make accusations against them just to show they can. The guards are given to much power in our prisons and I find it appalling. There needs to be a massive prison reform where the prisoners are treated like human beings and have rights.

@Betty -spot on with this comment ~ the fact that prisons arent being run the way they say they are being run is how they have been able to avoid the eye of the Supreme Court in cases of solitary confinement as policies differ from practice

that I believe is because they are hiding more than facts, They wont allow the numbers out because it would be an embarrassment to how wasteful it is and possibly expose some people who have been MIA.

I do see the need for such prisons, but I believe that these SHUs are over-used. If someone is to be released someday, that is someone who needs to be released from SHU some time before his release & put back in population where he can regain some semblance of mental/emotionAL normality from the seg he has had to endure. Releasing someone directly from SHU is wrong.

As for the costs, no surprise there. I can easily believe how outrageously expensive SHUs are. But does the state/federal government care about that? Not hardly.

It is highly probable that the actual costs of solitary confinement will never accurately reflect the true costs when you measure it with not just the prison costs but those other associated costs that are absorbed through indirect medical and mental health costs, the ruination of human lives and their impact on family, friends and loss of earned income because of their inability to return back to society in a functional and practical manner to get a job and take care of their families that will have to depend on public assistance to make it through ~ think of the wasted resources because the system didnt or wouldnt prepare these prisoners for release after doing their time and sitting inside a concrete box for so many years. Another reason to abolish long term solitary confinement for the purposes of punishment and destroying human morale and hope of change.

ya that sounds like something the FBOP would say big time lol in other words we do not care how much it cost you thats none your business after all it is are prison and are money now and you dont need to know that info or do we want you to lol that the dummed down way of what they saying lol man are we sure the f in fbop is for federal sometimes share the bop and on days where they trying to hide stuff from us and are willing to flip us all off like this response they gave you and us all they really are the FBOP i let you fill in the first letter for your self but i will say it is days like this it does not stand for federal bop lol may there be light in the darkness of justice

P.O. Box 11374
Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

Solitary Watch

Copyright 2022, Solitary Watch

Read about [rights and permissions](#).



Solitary Watch News