

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2015/04/02/voices-from-adx-living-inside-americas-toughest-prison/>

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | April 2, 2015

The *New York Times Magazine* feature story on the United States Penitentiary Administrative Maximum, or ADX, in Florence, Colorado, appeared under the headline [Inside Americas Toughest Prison](#). In fact, no journalist has been inside ADX for at least 15 years, but 400 men live there, some for years or decades.

The story has suddenly spurred interest in the federal supermax prison, which its own former warden described as a clean version of hell. A number of journalists have been writing about this torture chamber for years, including Susan Greene in *The Colorado Independent* and the [Dart Society Report](#), Alan Prendergast in *Westword*, and Andrew Cohen in *The Atlantic*. We've written about it ourselves, here on [Solitary Watch](#), and have also published many pieces of writing by men currently or formerly held in ADX.

In light of the heightened interest in the prison, we provide below links to the voices of people who know what it is like to live inside the walls of ADX.

[Freedom Shares My Cell](#)

[Head Cases](#)

[Analyzing Isolation](#)

[Life in H Unit, ADX](#)

[A Prison Where the Building Becomes the Shackles](#)

[Finally Out and Among the Living](#)

[Just Half Crazy and Trying to Hold Onto the Other Half](#)

[A Bloody Nightmare](#)

[Loneliness Is a Destroyer of Humanity](#)

[No Longer a Part of This World](#)

[10,220 Days in Extreme Solitary Confinement](#)

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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Some human beings are so mentally aberrant they will happily torture, (physically, and/or, mentally) others, and terrorize, brutalize, rape, threaten, assault, or kill, any persons they come into contact with or are allowed to associate with, be these other inmates in the facility where they are housed, or correction officers, or administrative staff.

I can see only four ways to deal with or control a person this mentally damaged, and to keep other people safe from them; either execute them, drug them into the Twilight Zone for the rest of their lives, lobotomize them, or super-max them (and the only humane way to super-max someone is to permit them the option of {Self Euthanasia}, otherwise they themselves are being tortured. Since there is no known cure for their illness, if anyone can think of any other way to keep others safe from their depredations please let me know.

The NY Times wrote:

Tommy Silverstein, is now at the ADX. He has been in solitary confinement for the past 22 years.

This is an understatement as evidenced by Solitary Watch's own article titled

America's Most Isolated Federal Prisoner Describes 10,220 Days in Extreme Solitary Confinement

on May 5, 2011 in which you wrote:

Thomas Silverstein, who has been described as America's most isolated man, has been held in an extreme form of solitary confinement under a no human contact order for 28 years.

That makes it just a few weeks shy of 32 years of isolation by my count, most of which, 28 years, you described as an extreme form of isolation.

However neither article has counted Silverstein's time served in Marion's Control Unit which has also been described as extreme isolation unit on Solitary Watch in an article titled:

Supermax Psych: Behavior Modification at Marion Federal Prison

on January 22, 2011.

Indeed one could go even further by counting Silverstein's time served in various other isolation units such as San Quentin's Control Unit when he was still a 19 year old teenager. Or going even further Silverstein has spent time in juvenile institutions' isolation units such as the CYA facility at Chino.

My point is that Silverstein is a case study on the ineffectiveness of these units in preventing future violence of, or rehabilitation of, those placed in them.

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