

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2013/01/13/photography-exhibition-highlights-children-in-solitary/>

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | January 13, 2013

We've [written before](#) about Richard Ross's powerful photographs of children in the American criminal justice system. Ross's Juvenile-in-Justice project now includes a [book](#) and a [website](#), and his photos are currently being exhibited at the [Ronald Feldman Gallery](#) in New York City through February 16. While the project does not focus solely on solitary confinement, a shocking number of photographs show children in isolation in facilities across the country. To see the full gallery of photos, click [here](#).





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.

<http://198.170.117.218/jjic/intro.php>

Here you'll find a brief history of juvenile justice in the US with a special emphasis on CA.

<http://alcalde.texasexes.org/2012/10/kids-in-cages-2/>

Kids in Cages

Read UT alum Jorge Antonio Renauds firsthand account of his time in the Texas prison system, *In Prisons, Youth Are Prey*.

For more on Michelle Deitch and Jorge Antonio Renauds work in juvenile justice, watch the video.:

<http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/sites/default/files/file/news/juvenilestexasfinal.pdf>

Juveniles in the Adult Criminal Justice System in Texas by Michele Deitch.

Also please look up the important work of Michele Deitch, J.D. from LBJ School of Public Affairs. For example her paper titled From Timeout to Hard Time.

The aforementioned photo is on its cover.

<http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/archive/news/images/file/From%20Time%20Out%20to%20Hard%20Time-revised%20final.pdf>

A few years back my daughter gave me a photo book titled No Place for Children, Voices from Juvenile Detention by Steve Liss who is an award-winning photographer for Time Magazine. When I got to the section titled The Youngest and saw the photo of a little boy in his cell dressed in oversized cloths it was like looking into the past and everything that I had felt as a nine year old in juvenile hall came back in a flash. I read Their pants are too big. Nothing about the juvenile detention center not the cinder-block cells, not the orange jumpsuits or the brown plastic slippers seems made for children. And indeed they are not. If I remember right I received two such books and when I read a teenage fathers words I havent found the passage yet but it went something like this I have learned how to hotwire a car, etc but I have never been shown how to be a father. I broke down and sobbed at that moment for I knew exactly what he meant. By the time I was a teenager I was hardened by years of fighting but in my core I wanted to be a good son, brother and when the time came a good father. The trouble is few of these children have experienced good parenting certainly not me.

When accompanied my older brother Mike when he ran away from home I ended up in juvenile hall in Sacramento hundreds of miles away. Somehow, although I was continually threatened with rape I was released to my mother about a week later before I was ever actually attacked. I had not realized it at the time (since I had more pressing problems to deal with) but I had had my tenth birthday while I was waiting for my mother to arrive.

I left for home that day with a new found awareness of the perils of male rape and I was determined to not let it happen to me. Mike I learned from my mother had been taken to Los Angeles Central Juvenile Hall to determine his fate. Our mother had driven up state alone and as I was released to her I could see her mixed emotions on her face. She was at first glad to see me but then her expression turned to anger as we entered the family car to return.

Before Dr. Spocks nurturing approach to parenting gained wide spread support, and long before the use of behavior modifying prescription drugs gained their popularity, the conventional wisdom had always been that parenting should focus on building discipline. The parenting axiom of the day was spare the rod, spoil the child and with five sons to supervise our mother, a fiery Irish Catholic red head, wholeheartedly endorsed this doctrine. As a youth, a good old fashion whipping or the threat of one occurred with the regularity and severity of a summer afternoon thunder storm in Florida. The then common use of corporal punishment at school only reinforced this practice and like the thunder storms of Florida for its residents it all became a normal way of life for Mike and I. Of course an unwitting byproduct of these practices, especially when used excessively and/or unjustly, is that children begin to view the use of violence as an acceptable means of getting someone else to do what you want. This was a lesson Mike had learned very well at an early age for Mike has often used it to coerce and subjugate me in my youth. Unbelievable to me now this abuse at home may have forced me to first run away at the age of 18 months. I only recently discovered this fact while reviewing my baby album, I read; April 2, 1953 Alan ran away today with a broken suit case and was in the middle of Stark (the main east west street in Boring, Oregon) when the milkman spotted him and brought him back in his truck.

However Mike often sought my companionship as well, as an example he recently told me of how he would climb into my bed in my infancy because of my apparent serenity in order to calm himself. This pattern of abuse and need of my companionship was to continue throughout our youth.

As the one continuous thread woven into the fabric of my youth I loved and admired Mike more than I feared him. He was my hero, role-model, mentor, best friend, arch nemesis, and tormentor all rolled into one. He was definitely the most influential person of my youth and I judged myself by his measure.

But Mike has also always had an unexplained anger deep inside of him especially towards our mother. This could only have been reinforced by our mothers constant proclamation as we grew up If it wasnt for you kids I could enjoy my life.

Embittered now our mother became the real disciplinarian in the family and she wasnt at all happy with having to drive over 350 miles to pick me up. Thus the trip back home seemed especially long as she vented her anger at me.

In between my mothers blistering verbal attacks on me on the way home I daydreamed about Mike and our adventure together.

There were many more releases to come because the system offered nothing and our home life was unstable and violent. But it was this tempering of my steel that allowed me to survive the cruelty of incarceration.

Stevess book can be found at the University of Texas Press, O.O. Box 7819 Austin Texas 78713-7819

<http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0510/liss01.html>

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