

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [James Ridgeway](#) | January 5, 2010

Over the past year, I've been writing about the Angola 3 in a series of stories for *Mother Jones*. Earlier stories have highlighted the [federal lawsuit](#), which claims violations of their constitutional rights, and on [Albert Woodfox's criminal appeal](#). The latest story, by Jean Casella and myself, focuses on [Herman Wallace](#), and was published last week.

For the better part of four decades, Victory Wallace, 70, has made a monthly trip from New Orleans to the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola to visit her brother Herman, who just turned 68. The 140-mile journey has shades of *Heart of Darkness*, following the course of the Mississippi River to a remote prison colony from which most inmates never return. At the dark heart of this former slave plantation, Herman Wallace has lived most of the past 37 years in solitary confinement, imprisoned alone for 23 hours a day in a 6-by-9-foot cell.

When Herman was moved in the spring of 2009 from Angola to Hunt Correctional Center near Baton Rouge, Vickie's trip got a bit shorter. But what she found when she arrived on her most recent visit was even worse than usual. Because of a disciplinary infraction, Herman had been placed in extended administrative lockdown. That meant Vickie was denied a contact visit, and was permitted to see her brother only through a glass partition as they spoke over a telephone. His hands were shackled to the table. (Other recent visitors reported that the shackles made it hard for him to hold the phone to his ear, while his hearing loss made communication over the telephone difficult.) Herman complained to Vickie that he was cold, and she thought that he had lost weight. His spirits, she said, were not the best.

For years, Herman Wallace's hopes have ridden on two cases that are inching their way through the courts, one challenging his conviction, the other challenging his long-term solitary confinement. Now, after a decade of starts and stops, obstacles and delays, both cases are advancing toward conclusions that will determine how he spends what's left of his life.

Full the story at [Mother Jones.com](#).

James Ridgeway (1936-2021) was 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*.

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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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.

My heart goes out to Mr. Wallace . I will keep him in my prayers.

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