

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2013/04/25/judge-refuses-to-dismiss-federal-supermax-lawsuits/>

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | April 25, 2013



Andrew Cohen [continues his coverage for the Atlantic](#) of two potentially groundbreaking lawsuits directed at the treatment of those incarcerated in the notorious ADX Florence, where about 400 men live in extreme isolation and sensory deprivation for years or decades. Today he reports on a federal judges decision to allow the lawsuits to proceed, rejecting the federal governments efforts to have them dismissed.

In a rebuke to the Obama Administration, a [noted federal judge](#) in Denver Tuesday refused to dismiss two pending civil rights lawsuits filed last year against Bureau of Prisons officials accused of the widespread abuse and neglect of mentally ill federal inmates at the sprawling ADX-Florence prison facility in Colorado. If the allegations of the detailed complaint are true, said U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch, you dont need to be a psychiatrist to know something is wrong inside Supermax, Americas most famous prison.

The judges order keeps alive for now [Vega v. Davis](#), a wrongful death action brought in May 2012 by the family of Jose Martin Vega, an inmate in Colorado who hanged himself in his cell in 2010 following what plaintiffs lawyers say was [an extend](#) order ambien with mastercard period of mental illness left untreated by prison staff. Judge Matsch also permitted to proceed further toward trial a case styled [Cunningham v. Bureau of Prisons](#), a [broader civil rights](#) challenge alleging longtime patterns of abuse and neglect of the mentally ill at Americas most famous federal prison.

The essence of both cases is that federal prison officials at ADX-Florence are violating the rights of mentally ill inmates to be free from cruel and unusual punishment under the Eighth Amendment. The inmates allege that they have been tortured and abused by their jailors and deprived of basic medical and mental health needs by prison doctors. Many of the inmates have taken to self-mutilation in their cells, while mental health counseling remains sporadic and ineffective. Why shouldnt we be addressing that? Judge Matsch asked early in the hearing.

[Read the rest here on the Atlantics website](#)

The lawsuits detailed revelations of abuse and suffering often rising to the level of torture at ADX Florence are especially disturbing in light of the federal governments [recent decision to open a second supermax prison](#), to be called ADX USP Thomson, at a recently purchased property in Illinois.

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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This exceeds all the excesses I have heard about. I want to congratulate Jim and Jean for bringing it to the public attention.

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