

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [James Ridgeway and Jean Casella](#) | April 17, 2012

Today marks 40 years in solitary confinement for Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox. Our article on the Angola 3 appears today on [MotherJones.com](#).

On the world stage, Guantanamo may well stand as the epitome of American human rights abuses. But when it comes to torture on US soil, that grim distinction is held by two aging African-American men. As of today, Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox have spent 40 years in near-continuous solitary confinement in the bowels of the Louisiana prison system. Most of those years were spent at the notorious Angola Prison, which is why the pair are still known as members of the Angola 3. The third man, Robert King, was released in 2001 his conviction was overturned after he spent 29 years in solitary.

Wallace and Woodfox were first thrown into the hole on April 17, 1972, following the killing of Brent Miller, a young prison guard. The men contend that they were targeted by prison authorities and convicted of murder not based on the actual evidence which was dubious at best but because they were members of the Black Panther Party's prison chapter, which was organizing against horrendous conditions at Angola. This political affiliation, they say, also accounted for their seemingly permanent stay in solitary.

For four decades, the men have spent at least 23 hours a day in cells measuring 6 x 9 feet. These days, they are allowed out one hour a day to take a shower or a stroll along the cell block. Three days a week, they may use that hour to exercise alone in a fenced yard. Wallace is now 70; Woodfox is 65. Their lawyers argue that both have endured physical injury and severe mental anguish and other psychological damage from living most of their adult lives in lockdown. According to medical reports submitted to the court, the men suffer from arthritis, hypertension, and kidney failure, as well as memory impairment, insomnia, claustrophobia, anxiety, and depression. Even the psychologist brought in by the state confirmed these findings.

Read [the rest of the article](#) for updates on the Angola 3's legal challenges to solitary confinement, as well as to their convictions. We also cover the latest from the two men who are determined to keep Wallace and Woodfox in prison and in solitary: Angola Warden Burl Cain, who says the two men are too militant to be in the general population, and Louisiana Attorney General Buddy Caldwell, who has said he opposes releasing them with every fiber of his being.

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.

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All i have to say this is sad ,and for the warden god eyes are on u free these mens forty years thats to long for anyone.Ive heard u talk a couple of times and i here d hate and prejudice n your voice FREE D MENS now

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