

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2011/06/08/upcoming-forum-in-new-york-on-solitary-confinement-in-state-prisons/>

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | June 8, 2011

The Metro New York Religious Campaign Against Torture will be hosting a public event on the use of solitary confinement and other forms of torture and abuse within the New York State Prison System.

With close to 8 percent of its prison population in some form of segregation, New York far exceeds the national average for solitary confinement of prisoners. These inmates are even more invisible than they are in some other state systems, because New York has no high-profile supermax; rather, it isolates prisoners in Special Housing Units (SHUs) inside many of its 67 prisons.

The event called [Torture in New York State Prisons?](#) will take place on Tuesday, June 21st at 7 PM at Riverside Church, 91 Claremont Avenue (above 120th Street) on the Upper West Side.

Two of the featured speakers have been leading voices in exposing the use and abuse of solitary confinement in New York.

Mary Beth Pfeiffer is a reporter for the *Poughkeepsie Journal*, whose work has documented, among other things, the fate of [prisoners with mental illness](#) in solitary confinement, and the [high rate of suicides](#) within New York's SHUs.

Jack Beck directs the Visiting Project for the [Correctional Association of New York](#), which has statutory authority to inspect prisons in New York State and to report its findings to the legislature and public; the CA's report [Lockdown New York](#) is the best single source of information on solitary confinement in the state's prisons.

A third speaker, from Riverside Church's Prison Ministry, will talk about the ministry's work inside New York State's prisons.

The Metro New York Religious Campaign Against Torture is a chapter of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, which recently [initiated a campaign](#) to address the use of torture in U.S. prisons, with particular emphasis on the widespread use of long-term isolation.

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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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