

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2018/12/05/grants-available-to-journalists-for-reporting-on-solitary-confinement/>

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Renowned Prison Journalist Wilbert Rideau and Solitary Watch Founder James Ridgeway Will Select Funded Projects

by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | December 5, 2018

Through the generosity of the Vital Projects Fund, [Solitary Watch](#) is accepting proposals for small grants to journalists working in all media, with the goal of expanding public awareness and understanding of solitary confinement in U.S. federal and state prisons, local and tribal jails, immigration detention centers, and juvenile justice facilities. Grants amounts will range from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

Proposals must be received no later than midnight on **February 7, 2019**, for projects that will be completed by the end of 2019.

While it contains more than two million people a population larger than all but four U.S. cities the American carceral system has been kept largely off-limits to the public and the press. Solitary confinement, which functions as a prison within a prison, has been even more difficult to access. Despite an increase in media attention to solitary confinement over the past decade, recent polling shows that most Americans still lack the knowledge needed to make informed choices about this widespread and controversial practice.

Solitary Watch is looking for stories that have yet to be told about all aspects of solitary confinement, with a national, state, local, or thematic focus, in all media. Topics and approaches can include, but are not in any way limited to:

Data-based stories and data visualizations that provide new insights on the use or impact of solitary.

Work that draws on the lived experience of people in solitary confinement, solitary survivors, and their families and communities, as well as of staff working in solitary confinement units.

Stories that look at alternatives to solitary or at alternate solutions to the problems solitary purports to solve.

Analyses of the political context or political fallout of the use of solitary, for example as an issue in local elections.

Investigations of rural and suburban jails and detention centers that are run with even less oversight than prisons.

In addition to written work, we welcome short video and audio pieces, photography, and graphic narratives. Proposals may be submitted by individual reporters and teams, and also by small newsrooms (especially nonprofit newsrooms) who may need additional support to undertake this subject. We encourage proposals from journalists working in local areas where solitary has received little coverage. We also encourage incarcerated and formerly incarcerated journalists to apply.

Projects to receive grants will be chosen by two veteran journalists:

**Wilbert Rideau** won renown as a prison journalist and editor of the magazine *The Angolite* during 25 of his 44 years in custody at the Louisiana State Penitentiary. He received a George Polk Award, a Sidney Hillman Prize, and a Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award. He is the author of the autobiography *In the Place of Justice*, and has collaborated on radio and film documentaries.

**James Ridgeway**, Solitary Watch's founder and co-director, is an investigative reporter with more than 50 years of experience at the *Village Voice*, *New Republic*, and *Mother Jones*. He is the author or co-author of 20 books and co-director of two documentary films, and he received a Soros Justice Media Fellowship and an Alicia Patterson Fellowship for his recent reporting on prisons.

Please download the complete [Grant Guidelines and Application Instructions](#), and contact [journalism@solitarywatch.org](mailto:journalism@solitarywatch.org) for more information.

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 [Solitary Confinement Reporting Project](#)

February 24, 2022

by [Solitary Confinement Reporting Project](#)

February 8, 2021

by [Solitary Confinement Reporting Project](#)

January 28, 2021

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.

January 2010 was the first time I had ever been arrested. I was parked at a gas station texting when an officer knocked on my window. He asked if I was stuck in the snow. I told him no he then asked if I had anything to drink I told him I had a couple drinks a couple hours ago. I had just rinsed my mouth out with listerine in the gas station and purchased a coffee. My bac was 0.1 I was given a dui. I was arrested and put into solitary on suicide watch in Rock Island County jail Rock Island Illinois. I was stripped down completely naked even my socks and given a small piece of rug to cover up with. It was January so extremely cold ???? there was No Matt or bed just a brick slab to sleep on also No pillow. I felt like this is so inhuman. There was a small register near the floor so I took my rug a crunched into a ball in front of it with my head under it breathing heavy as to make heat n trying to get what little heat I could from the register I was shaking the whole time until my mother came and bailed me out the next morning.

My son was falsely accused and arrested January 1st 2018 he refused a shot was beat up by guards and put into solitary 30 days he took the shot and ended up only being in solitary for 15 days. When I spoke to him he was freezing. There is No books, no pencil or paper, No music, No TV nothing in solitary nothing but you and your thoughts in a small brick freezing cold room 24 hrs a day seven days a week. Go strip down your bedroom leaving absolutely nothing no bed, no pictures hanging I mean strip that room naked nothing of color, nothing to write on no phone, no music, no tv NOTHING put a bucket for toilet have someone bring u 3 meals a day. Breakfast 1 hand full of Cheerios n a milk. Lunch slice of bread and some nasty beans n probably same for supper do not speak. Try it for just 24 to 48 hours also you get one blanket no pillow and turn off the heat. You now have an idea how people are treated in jail and prison solitary confinement.

my son is in a Mo State prison in Licking MO .He has been in solidarity confinement since October 2017.I have written to the governor ,I have written and emailed everyone I can think of .the mental anguish he is going though is unbearable.he is cold ,they turn the thermostat very low ,he has been trying to get an order for thermal long johns ,and the casemanager keeps making excuses ,I dont understand how things system can warehouse humane being s,for profit and slush fund and lobbyist and privileged politicians.thank you for bringing me issue out to the public , Barbara Lesley Dexter Mo

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