

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Aviva Stahl](#) | February 23, 2014



The following roundup features noteworthy news, reports and opinions on solitary confinement from the past week that have not been covered in other Solitary Watch posts.

A high-profile [hearing on solitary confinement](#) will be held on Tuesday, February 25, by the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights, chaired by Illinois Democrat Dick Durbin. Moved to a larger room due to expected high turnout, the hearing will take place at 2:30 in Room 216 of the Hart Senate Office Building. Those testifying include survivors of solitary, advocates, and corrections officials. Check back later in the week for a report on the hearing and an archive of written testimony.

After more than 22 consecutive years in solitary confinement, Russell Maroon Shoatz, widely considered a political prisoner, was [released into general population](#) at State Correctional Institution (SCI) Graterford in Pennsylvania.

In [The New York Times](#), Rick Raemisch, the executive director of the Colorado Department of Corrections, describes what it was like to spend a night in solitary confinement: I felt as if I'd been there for days. I sat with my mind. How long would it take before Ad Seg chipped that away? I don't know, but I'm confident that it would be a battle I would lose.

The U.S. Department of Justice and Department of Education have [filed statements in support of an on-going class action](#) lawsuit filed against county authorities in Contra Costa, California. Last August, Berkeley-based Disability Rights Advocates sued the county's Probation Department and Office of Education in an effort to hold them responsible for placing young people with disabilities and mental illness in solitary confinement at Martinez Juvenile Hall.

In the [Chicago Tribune](#), columnist and editorial board member Steve Chapman writes about the high toll of solitary confinement. The libertarian Chapman writes: Politicians may be disinclined to worry about the use of extreme isolation, much less to take action to improve the treatment of criminals. But there are at least two good reasons for the law-abiding citizenry to care. The first is cost. The second reason is that most of these inmates won't be incarcerated forever. The vast majority will be released back into society. Extreme isolation is about the worst possible training for living and working peaceably among others.

Last Saturday the state of [Maine marked the opening of the Intensive Mental Health Unit at Maine State Prison](#). A psychologist at the unit explained that individuals incarcerated in Maine would now be given better treatment. This is a recovery place. The expectation is you will get better. The unit was constructed in the part of the prison that had been formerly used as a special management unit.

The New York Times [released an editorial](#) in support of the recently announced reforms to solitary confinement in New York State spurred by an NYCLU lawsuit. The changes received widespread coverage, including in [WYNC](#) and elsewhere.

A [Center for Investigative Reporting story was featured on PBS](#) on the Newshour, covering the placement of youth in solitary. The story focused on the large number of adolescents in solitary confinement on New York's Rikers Island.

[CNN covered](#) last week's annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, where solitary confinement survivor Robert King and several experts testified about the psychological and physical effects of long-term isolation.

Aviva Stahl is a Brooklyn-based reporter who writes about science/health at the intersection of mass incarceration, national security, and trans rights. Shes written for the New York Times, Wired, BuzzFeed News, Solitary Watch, and other outlets. Find her @stahlidarity and at stahlidarity.com.

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 [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 26, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

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No, I dont know of any such book.

do you know the name of the book that was written about the abuse in 1961? it is much different now

I was 16 years old when I was first sent to the hole for insubordination at the Sheridan Industrial School for Boys in Sheridan, Illinois. I was given 20 days. It would not be the last time, I also once served 59 consecutive days in the dungeon at Sheridan on one meal a day. Child abuse was in vogue in 1961 on no one seemed to mind. Wasnt even an issue.

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