

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Jean Casella](#) | April 20, 2013



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.

According to a piece by Susan Greene in the [Colorado Independent](#), the Colorado ACLU reports young people are being forced to spend lengthy stints in cement isolation rooms referred to as reflection cottages at the El Pueblo treatment facility. People need to know what's going on in there. They need to know that they're torturing kids, said the father of a 14-year-old who spent a month in solitary at one of the cottages.

The [Associated Press](#) reports that a man serving a 10-year sentence in a North Carolina prison died after swallowing multiple objects. The prisoner had been cited by prison staff at least 25 times for infractions related to attempts to harm himself. He was in solitary confinement when he died.

According to a radio piece by [WKUT in Austin](#), An estimated 25 percent of Texas inmates in solitary confinement suffer from mental health issues. A bill in the Legislature would create a task force to find out more about these prisoners and provide them with safer alternatives.

In a powerful commentary, [CNN's John Sutter](#) argues that No kid should be in solitary confinement. The piece links to an [online petition](#) drive launched by the ACLU, urging U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder to ban the solitary confinement of youth held in federal custody.

[The Guardian](#) reports on the European Court of Human Rights decision to block the extradition of a UK-based terrorism suspect who suffers from paranoid schizophrenia. It did so on the grounds that removing him to an American supermax prison would constitute inhuman or degrading treatment under international law. (Other British suspects, including Aspergers sufferer [Talha Ahsan](#), were extradited and are now in extended pre-trial solitary confinement.)

The Pennsylvania-based [Human Rights Coalition](#) launched a month-long campaign to have Russell Maroon Shoats released from isolation. Shoats has spent a total of 30 years in solitary, including the last 22 consecutive years.

The [Other Death Penalty Project](#), an organization led by life-sentenced prisoners, launched a campaign to print and distribute a collection of writing by lifers, aimed at raising awareness nationwide that life without parole sentences are the death penalty and must be abolished.

California's [Stop the Torture Campaign](#), described as in support of the prisoner-initiated human rights movement to end long term solitary confinement in California, ramped up its activism with a series of events in the Los Angeles area featuring a model of a cell from the Pelican Bay SHU.

As the week began, hunger-striking detainees at Guantanamo Bay were violently forced from their communal cellblocks into solitary confinement cells. According to Carol Rosenberg in the [Miami Herald](#), The pre-dawn operation took place hours after delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross left the remote island prison and during a blackout of news media access to the crisis in the

prison camps. And the resultant scenario described by the military individual men locked one to a cell, maximum-security style, in a facility designed for communal medium-security confinement returned the prison camps to an austere detention approach dating back to the Bush administration.

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 [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 26, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

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