

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Aviva Stahl](#) | April 5, 2015

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.

[Slate](#) published an article about a program instituted in Washington state, which is premised on the idea that every prisoner, even the so-called worst of the worst, deserves a chance to improve himself, instead of being left to waste away in a tiny, windowless cell with no human contact for months or even years. The project, which has resulted in an almost 50% drop in the number of people held in isolation, divide[s] people with different problems into different programs, all of which operate out of separate prisons.

A woman incarcerated in Mercer County Correctional Center [is suing high-ranking staff at the jail](#) for \$10 million for allegedly turn[ing] a blind eye to sexual abuse she suffered on the inside. Two women maintain that they were forced to perform oral sex on a corrections officer while being held in solitary confinement.

[ScienceDaily](#) featured recently published criminologist research, which challenged the effectiveness of solitary confinement. You're not getting a reward one way or the other for exposing inmates to solitary, so you have question its utility, said the publishing author. Its costing money, its costing time and there are potentially harmful side effects.

California prison officials [filed a new mental health policy](#) in a Sacramento federal court. Incarcerated people with mental illness who act out will now receive counseling instead of being sent into isolation automatically.

A bill that would prohibit placing pregnant women in solitary confinement [has passed through New York's state Assembly](#). The legislation now moves to the Senate.

[According to a two-year study](#) conducted on Rikers Island, and set to come out in June, jail health workers should play no role in determining when or if an individual is placed in solitary. Whatever the security reasoning for placement in such units, the participation of health staff in this process is cumbersome, time intensive, of questionable value and does not reflect a patient-health provider interaction that is in the patients best interest, wrote city health officials.

A group of 78 mothers have gone on hunger strike at Karnes Detention Center in Texas to protest the continued detention of their families as they pursue asylum claims. At least three mothers along with their children [have allegedly been placed in isolation](#) in retaliation for their actions.

Lawyers for Albert Woodfox, the last incarcerated member of the Angola 3, [argued in court](#) that he should be released from prison and the state barred from prosecuting him for murder for the third time. Woodfox has spent several decades in solitary confinement.

As the New York State Corrections Officers and Police Benevolent Association [initiates anad campaign](#) demanding additional staffing and technological resources, allied Republican state lawmakers have asserted that humane isolation is necessary to keep staff safe. Meanwhile, former Police and Correction Commissioner Bernard Kerik [said that solitary confinement](#) can amount to cruel and unusual punishment.

[Al Jazeera America](#) published an op-ed calling for the US to abolish solitary confinement. Another opinion piece, this one printed in [The Baltimore Sun](#), called for the city to stop placing kids in adult jails, where they often end up in isolation.

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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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by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

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by [Caitlin Konya](#)

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by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

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