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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | April 24, 2016

A coalition working to end solitary for children held a [series of kick-off events](#) in Washington DC. Supporters include Venida Brower, whose son Kalief committed suicide after spending time in isolation on Rikers Island as a teenager.

New Yorks Mayor Bill De Blasio announced that the number of people held in solitary has [dropped by since 2/3](#) since Department of Corrections Commissioner Joseph Ponte took office from 563 in April 2014 to 167 on April 1, 2016. For far too long, punitive segregation was used as a convenient discipline rather than a last resort, said De Blasio.

The [Santa Fe New Mexican](#) published in an-depth investigation into Corizon, the nations largest for-profit provider of health services for people in prison, which has been frequently sued for providing negligent and delayed care. Danny Tavasci, 54, committed suicide in solitary confinement in a Corizon-run facility in 2014; guards found a virtual drugstore in his cell, despite his disciplinary history of abusing them.

Nebraska Corrections Director Scott Frakes [was asked by lawmakers](#) about progress in reducing the use of solitary and ensuring that people are not released directly from isolation. State Senator Ernie Chambers told Frakes he was not doing enough to ensure that a high-profile and mentally ill prisoner, Nikko Jenkins, was not being passed sharp objects by corrections officers.

Jahmal Lightfoot, who was incarcerated at Rikers Island, [testified in court](#) that jail staff savagely beat him and placed him in solitary for 110 days after falsely accusing him of charging at them with a razor. The alleged attack, which occurred in July 2012, took place while Lightfoot was awaiting sentencing for stealing a womans pocketbook.

A [federal lawsuit](#) alleges that Virginia prison and jail officials violated the constitutional rights of Reginald Latson, who was placed in solitary confinement for long stretches of time despite being diagnosed with autism and developmental disabilities. Latson was given a conditional pardon in 2015, but the complaint states that his mental and emotional development has been utterly derailed as a result of what he endured.

A Colorado bill to limit the use of solitary confinement in juvenile facilities [moved one step closer to realization](#), after passing in the House Judiciary Committee by a vote of 6-5. We absolutely share the belief that the use of seclusion should be limited and controlled, said deputy executive director of operations at the Department of Human Services Nikki Hatch, however, this bill would actually hurt kids and staff.

A state appeals court has ruled that Jorge Gomez, a California prisoner who took part in the 2013 hunger strikes protesting long-term solitary confinement, should not have been punished for doing so. The appeals court said prison officials failed to show that Gomez had engaged in disorderly or disruptive conduct, the regulation he was punished for violating, [according to SFGate](#).

Illinois lawmakers are considering a bill that would limit the use of solitary confinement to no more than five consecutive days, and five days total, during a 150-day period. If a bill like this passed, it would be a real milestone in solitary reform, Solitary Watches Jean Casella in an article published by [ABC News](#).

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.

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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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