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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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close

Search

close

close

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | August 9, 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.

Four United States senators [introduced a bill](#) that would prohibit the solitary confinement of children tried in the federal system and held in pretrial facilities and juvenile detention facilities. The legislation is called the Maintaining Dignity and Eliminating Unnecessary Restrictive Confinement of Youths, or MERCY Act.

The family of Kalief Browder [filed a lawsuit](#) against New York City for \$20 million. Browder committed suicide last June after spending about three years on Rikers Island as a teenager, much of it in solitary confinement.

Federal Bureau of Prisons Director Charles Samuels [testified](#) at a Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, telling New Jersey Senator Cory Booker, We do not practice solitary confinement Our practice has always been to ensure that when individuals are placed in restrictive housing, we place them in a cell with another individual, to also include that our staff make periodic rounds to check on the individuals.

A man held in an Arizona jail [pulled out his own eyeball](#) after being placed in solitary confinement. Collin Corkhill, 26, had been arrested the previous evening and placed in isolation under a medical health watch after he was seen punching himself in the face.

Two legal advocacy groups [have filed a lawsuit](#) against Delawares Department of Corrections commissioner, alleging the state is placing people with mental illness in solitary confinement in violation of constitutional protections. In a press release, the executive director of the Community Legal Aid Society stated, At the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center in Smyrna, people with mental illnesses have been warehoused in solitary confinement for years on end, living in eight-foot by 11-foot cells for 23 to 24 hours a day They are isolated from almost all contact with other human beings and receive virtually no meaningful mental health treatment.

Forty-two people are [on hunger strike](#) at a maximum-security unit in a Utah prison. According to letters the men wrote to the ACLU, they are spending 47 out of every 48 hours in their double-bunked cells, and receive only three hours each week in a celled recreation pen.

Writing for the [New York Times health section](#), Erica Goode explores the lifelong impact that solitary confinement can have on human beings. Much of the article focuses on the work of Dr. Craig Haney, a social psychologist who has spent decades interviewing survivors of long term-solitary.

The [Center for Constitutional Rights](#) posted the testimony of Dr. Craig Haney, along with that of nine other experts on solitary confinement and prison management, on their website. The statements were submitted last spring in the ongoing class action lawsuit brought on behalf of prisoners held in the SHU at Californias Pelican Bay State Prison.

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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