

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Valerie Kiebala](#) | December 10, 2017

Disability Rights Oregon [released](#) a report this week documenting the psychological harm children face at Northern Oregon Regional Correctional Facility (NORCOR) in The Dalles, east of Portland. Young people at the juvenile detention facility are held in solitary confinement for prolonged periods of time without human contact and without the ability to read, write, draw, or ask what time it is. The report calls for NORCOR to implement the 2016 recommendation by the Oregon State Court Juvenile Mental Health Task Force, which advised, all child-serving systems commit to employing evidence-based, trauma-informed practices. The report additionally called for all juvenile facilities, which currently face no government oversight, to be regulated in order to prevent the use of solitary confinement and ensure proper healthcare.

*The New Yorker* [published](#) the story of Jermaine Gotham, a boy who suffered several mental health concerns and learning disabilities, and was first placed in solitary confinement at Cayuga County Jail in Auburn, New York, when he was 16 years old. Gotham was later sent to Cossackie Correctional Facility, where he spent another 300 days in solitary confinement, did not receive proper medication for his mental illnesses, and had to attend his G.E.D. classes in shackles. Gotham, still held in solitary at Cossackie currently, recalled, Im not gonna lie, it never becomes easier. It messes with my mind. You become depressed, angry, aggressive. You think of killing yourself, though I would never tell anyone here that. While New York States Commission on Correction issued new regulations for solitary confinement, including a mandate to notify the state when placing a juvenile in solitary, these standards will not go into effect for county jails until January, if approved.

*Politically Georgia* [reported](#) that fourteen individuals have committed suicide in Georgia prisons this year, surpassing the national average by nearly two times. Some point to staff shortages and a lack of mental health care in the states prison system as contributing factors to the rise in suicides. According to Sarah Geraghty of the Southern Center for Human Rights, The increase in suicides may be related to the GDCs [Georgia Department of Corrections] increased use of solitary confinement as individuals kept in isolation are often delusional and have lost touch with reality, conditions that are likely exacerbated by prolonged solitary confinement.

[According](#) to *Injustice Watch*, 26-year-old transgender woman Strawberry Hampton, currently housed in the maximum security Menard Correctional Center for men in Illinois, has filed a motion seeking immediate transfer to a womens facility, claiming that she has faced repeated sexual harassment, sexual assault, and physical abuse by Illinois Department of Corrections officers. Hampton was placed in solitary confinement in August, after she filed the complaint, and is set to remain in solitary until April 2018. Hampton recalls the guards words when she was transferred to Menard, This is what happens when you f- with our staff.

*The Marshall Project* [published](#) the story of a young man from Washington, D.C., who was convicted of carjacking at age 16 and sentenced as an adult to 12 years. Since D.C. does not have prisons of its own (only jails), the boy was sent to a Bureau of Prisons-contracted juvenile facility in Montana, where [he] was the only black person, period. There were no black inmates, no black COs. He ended up in solitary confinement after another person held there accused him of making threatening comments. There was no questioning; I was immediately sent to the hole. I had no say in my defense, no chance to explain what truly went down. At 18 he was transferred to adult prisons, where things only got worse. I saw grown men commit suicide because they couldnt handle it. If prison does that to an adult, what does it do to a child?

*VICE News* [reported](#) that Pastor Lester Roloffs Rebekah Home for Girls in Corpus Christi, Texas, allegedly used a legal loophole, which allowed religiously affiliated boarding schools to operate without registration or oversight, to enact abuses against the youth held in their facilities. One student recalled the Get Right Room, where children were held in solitary confinement and brain-washed into thinking the abuse was good because the staff and the Lord loved your soul. A recent law imposes new regulations on residential facilities, including those with religiously affiliations, though advocacy organizations continue to keep track of alleged abuses.

A man formerly held at Houstons Harris County jail filed a \$1 million lawsuit, claiming that guards beat him up and dislocated his shoulder and then threw him in solitary confinement in an attempt to cover up the assault. Mark Tennysons lawyer [described](#) to the *Houston Chronicle* how the incident began, when a staff member came and rounded up a group of about six or eight African-American inmates. Mr. Tennyson was one of those inmates and he let her know it was discriminatory, at which point the beating began. Tennysons

lawsuit was filed days after 5 jailers were indicted for a separate 2016 beating of an individual held at Harris County.

Valerie Kiebala was a contributing writer and editorial and project manager for Solitary Watch, and is now the media director of Straight Ahead, which is building a decarceration movement throughout Pennsylvania. Her work has also appeared in The Root, Truthout, the Chicago Reporter, and Shadowproof.

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

Solitary Watch encourages comments and welcomes a range of ideas, opinions, debates, and respectful disagreement. We do not allow name-calling, bullying, cursing, or personal attacks of any kind. Any embedded links should be to information relevant to the conversation. Comments that violate these guidelines will be removed, and repeat offenders will be blocked. Thank you for your cooperation.

Im the mother of Jermaine I want people to know advocating for your loved one is important they failed say he helped the lady was injured by another. Her son a c.o. an my son was a target also they all are friends they put my son life an safety on line.he has been tortured behind the guard.wasnt to be held in solitary either which he was we had we first time his court papers also said at 17 also they couldnt put him in solitary.making my son pay for another crime an bein c.o. is white an my son is bi-racial white& black they dont care his skin tone has a shade.i dont have money for a lawyer Im his only support this is my fight. System is broken he has been beaten an tortured they lied about him being in solitary nobody listened. who an why allowed this torture to go on his rights were already violated. Or are they defending they fellow worker feeling sorry about his mother he knew my son helped her. The investigators dont follow thru with grievances for nobody enough is enough

GDC is the abbreviation for the Georgia Department of Corrections, Georgia Diagnostic and Classification prison is only one of their many facilities, they have implemented the Tier Program which is basically a long term solitary program which many think is a significant contributing factor to the increased suicides. The Tier Program exists at several facilities and Valdosta SP seems to be one of those yielding more suicides.

Thank you for the correction! Wed be happy to receive any additional information you have about solitary in Georgia prisons at [inf@solitarywatch.com](mailto:inf@solitarywatch.com).

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**Solitary Watch News**