

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | December 25, 2016

The American Civil Liberties Union is [suing Allegheny County](#) in Pennsylvania for placing pregnant women in solitary confinement, a practice that is said to put both the mother and her child at risk. According to the lawsuit, some women have been placed in isolation in the Pittsburgh jail for relatively minor rule violations, like having three pairs of shoes instead of the two pairs permitted.

The Vera Institute of Justice has [announced the next five states](#) it will work in under the auspices of its Safe Alternatives to Segregation Initiative, a project that aims to enable states to reduce their use of solitary confinement. The five states, which were chosen through a competitive process, are Nevada, Minnesota, Utah, Louisiana and Virginia.

[The Honolulu Civil Beat](#) explored whether Hawaii prisons overuse solitary confinement. Most of the islands maximum-custody inmates live in special holding cells for up to 23 hours per day, wrote journalist Rui Kaneya. The policy bucks a national trend.

In [the Village Voice](#), Victoria Law considered what Christmas is like for the thousands of people in solitary confinement in New York's prisons. Instead of opening presents with his family, [Nicholas Zimmerman] will wake to a breakfast tray slid through a slot in his door. Hell spend most, if not all, of the day inside his cell. Maybe hell be allowed out for one hour where he can exercise alone in a caged yard. If hes really lucky, hell also be allowed to shower.

[The Christian Science Monitor](#) penned an editorial about finding alternatives to solitary confinement. States may find that solitary confinement serves a useful purpose in very limited cases. But the ongoing efforts to reduce its use will make facilities more humane while increasing the likelihood that upon release prisoners are better able to function normally in society.

Onondaga County in New York is [continuing to place children in solitary confinement](#) despite an ongoing lawsuit seeking to stop the practice. There's really a consensus throughout the country that putting anyone, let alone a 16 or 17-year-old kid, in solitary confinement is wrong, said Josh Cotter of Legal Services of Central New York, the group that filed the lawsuit three months ago. I hoped that our community would recognize that and want to change. It's been very disappointing that at this point, they really haven't.

Aviva Stahl is a Brooklyn-based reporter who writes about science/health at the intersection of mass incarceration, national security, and trans rights. She's 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 [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 5, 2022

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