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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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close

Search

close

close

Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | January 15, 2017

At the Souza-Baranowski Correctional Facility in Shirley, MA, dozens of people [allegedly refused to be locked in their cells](#) after fights broke out on a unit. According to the Department of Corrections, sprinkler heads were broken off, camera systems and the computer system were destroyed, and inmates used fire extinguishers and other makeshift weapons to destroy furniture and windows, said CBS News. Correctional officers have since regained control of the facility.

Rachel Aviv published an in-depth profile in [the New Yorker](#) about How Albert Woodfox Survived Solitary. She writes, as one of the Angola 3, he was in isolation longer than any other American. Then he came home to face his future.

A newly filed lawsuit alleges that Louisiana prisons officials retaliated against an incarcerated individual, William Kissinger, by placing him in solitary confinement after he spoke to a reporter. According to [one outlet](#), The suit describes Kissinger as a whistleblower and asks the court to rule that prison officials violated his constitutional rights to free speech and due process.

Journalist James Burns ended his 30-day stint in solitary confinement, which was live-streamed on VICE. I saw James Burns in that cell pacing back and forth, back and forth. There's nothing else to do when you're trapped in a box all day, [wrote](#) ACLU attorney Amy Fetting. Sometimes it must have felt like the walls were closing in on him. Sometimes he must have been so desperate just to see and talk to another human being that he wanted to cry or scream.

The ACLU released a [new report](#) entitled, Cage In: Solitary Confinements Devastating Harm on Prisoners With Physical Disabilities. The report aims to spotlight the dangers for blind people, Deaf people, people who are unable to walk without assistance, and people with other physical disabilities who are being held in small cells for 22 hours a day or longer, for days, months, and even years.

A new class action lawsuit alleges that teenagers locked up in New Jersey prisons are [denied access](#) to special education and sometimes left in solitary confinement. Youth with disabilities do not check their civil rights at the door of adult prison facilities, said Mary-Lee Smith, director of litigation at Disability Rights Advocates, the organization that filed the lawsuit along with the ACLU of New Jersey.

Instead of being locked in solitary confinement for 23 or 24 hours each day, young people locked up at Rikers Island in New York City are chained to a desk for seven hours at a time, according to a report by [NY1](#). The young adults, at this point, would prefer to be in solitary confinement than in this protracted restraint, which is harmful, harsh, and humiliating, said NYC Board of Corrections member Bryanne Hamill.

According to an article published by [Alaska Public Media](#), an outdoor rec area at Goose Creek Correctional Center in Wasilla may violate prisoners constitutional rights. People held in protective custody in the facility can only access outdoor recreation in a large, enclosed concrete room, which has an opening at the top to let in fresh air. The ACLU of Alaska has contended that people locked up in the unit have the right to regular access to the outdoors.

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.

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P.O. Box 11374
Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

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