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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 [Valerie Kiebala](#) | December 2, 2018

[According](#) to Jeffrey Kaye writing on *Medium*, the ACLU obtained recently declassified documents revealing collaboration since the early 2000s between the CIA's Office of Medical Service (OMS) and the Federal Bureau of Prison (BOP) in sharing interrogation and torture techniques used at the CIA's Salt Pit black site in Afghanistan and the BOP's supermax ADX Florence prison in Colorado. These techniques included short-shackling, force-feeding, and sleep deprivation, along with solitary confinement, which was listed as a standard interrogation technique. Amy Fetting, the Deputy Director of the ACLU National Prison Project, said, The fact that the CIA took lessons from our own prisons to learn how to torture people really tells you all you need to know about the use of solitary confinement in America.

The Marshall Project and *The Atlantic* published an [article](#) by Tom Robbins investigating the 2015 death of Karl Taylor, a man held at the maximum-security Sullivan Correctional Facility in New York, during an incident in which correctional officers used physical force after one ordered Taylor to clean his cell. Though initially deemed competent for trial, Taylor was diagnosed with psychiatric disabilities that worsened during the five years he spent in solitary confinement. At the time of his death, Taylor was being held on keep lock, a form of solitary in New York, despite the crisis treatment psychologist recommending he be transferred to receive mental health treatment. Taylor's sister has filed a lawsuit citing a medical examiner that found evidence of choking and listed the primary cause of death as physical injuries sustained during an altercation(s) with correctional officers.

Mother Jones [reported](#) that CoreCivic, the private prison company that operates the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facility Stewart Detention Center in Georgia, reached out to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) in an attempt to prevent information about the suicide of Efrain Romero de la Rosa from being released. De la Rosa, a 40-year-old man from Mexico with psychiatric disabilities, was held in solitary confinement for three weeks before he died. In the email to GBI, CoreCivic's lawyer referenced the information GBI released about the 2017 death of Jeancarlo Alfonso Jimenez Joseph, an immigrant from Panama who struggled with schizophrenia and committed suicide after spending nineteen days in solitary. CoreCivic claims a federal regulation allows them to intervene in the release of the information, and GBI has expressed willingness to withhold its records.

Crosscut published an opinion [piece](#) calling for an end to the use of solitary confinement on adults in King County jails in Seattle, Washington. While King County reached a settlement earlier this year banning the use of solitary for youth, the author wrote, When people turn eighteen, they aren't suddenly immune to the negative impacts of isolation. The particularly damaging effects of solitary on adolescent brain development have been highlighted as a reason to eliminate the use of solitary on youth, but the development of the prefrontal cortex has been found to last until age 25, not end at the age of eighteen. A 2017 Disability Rights Washington report also found that the King County has a mental health unit that holds people with psychiatric disabilities in solitary for 23 hours a day, a practice highly condemned for its exacerbation of mental illness.

Inside Nova [reported](#) that Virginia Delegate Patrick Hope introduced a bill that would mandate the Virginia Department of Corrections to collect data on their use of solitary confinement. While Hope expects push back from the Department of Corrections, he said, Other states collect this data, and I want Virginia to do it too.

A [commentary](#) in the *Scientific American* written by a PhD student at the Center for Neural Science at New York University compared the oversight of animal research labs with the lack of oversight of the use of solitary in U.S. prisons and jails. Unlike lab animals, she wrote, which are protected by law when it comes to their health and well-being, the treatment of people in solitary confinement requires no reporting to, let alone consulting with, any oversight committee. The heavily enforced guidelines from the Animal Welfare Act prohibit the isolation of animals, except for extenuating circumstances, but even then, virtual companions are to be provided. The author calls for society to be *at least* as thoughtful about ensuring healthy housing conditions for humans in prison as we are for animals in the lab.

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.

Solitary confinement would be okay if there is enough heat to stay warm. Some type of mattress and pillow, and something to read or draw on. Maybe some background k-love Christian type of music to listen to and maybe a deck of cards something to shuffle or fiddle with. Some people act out or request solitary for safety not realizing they are exchanging it for the loss of their sanity

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