

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Search

close

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | February 21, 2016

[The Week](#) published a piece on surviving solitary confinement. Sitting across from Perez, you wonder how he feels in this space, a tiny, harshly lit conference room at the Urban Justice Center on Wall Street in Manhattan. Whether it brings back traumatic memories, or feels like home, or both.

[The Marshall Project](#) posted a video from Mariposa and the Saint, a new play about solitary confinement based on years of letters between activist and performance artist Julia Steele Allen her incarcerated pen pal, Sara Fonseca.

Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders told the [Huffington Post](#) whether they support a ban on solitary confinement, and how the practice should be reformed.

A 36-year-old Cuban-born trans woman, Barbra Perez, [described the time](#) she spent in protective solitary confinement while in the custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Her story is excerpted from *Hell is a Very Small Place*, a recently-published book compiled and edited by Solitary Watch's Jean Casella, Jim Ridgeway and Sarah Shourd. The three also discussed the new book on PBS [The Take Away](#).

In an editorial, [The Washington Post](#) board expressed support for ongoing solitary reforms in Virginia, including step-down programs, improved conditions on death row, and a modest proposed bill to cut back on the amount of time children spend in solitary. The bill is eminently reasonable, they write.

[First to Know](#) posted a video featuring Stephen R. Slevin, who was forgotten in solitary confinement in a New Mexico country jail between August 2005 and June 2007, after being arrested on a drunk driving charge. By the time he got out, he was unrecognizable.

Candie Hailey spent over two years in solitary confinement on Rikers Island during her three years on the inside. I would say I've been through hell and back, [she said](#) of her time in isolation. My soul died but my body is alive.

According to [Courthouse News Service](#), Former Black Panther Russell Shoatz can ask a jury to decide whether his 22 consecutive years in solitary confinement constitute cruel and unusual punishment, a federal judge ruled. U.S. Magistrate Judge Cynthia Reed Eddy commented, It is obvious that being housed in isolation in a tiny cell for 23 hours a day for over two decades results in serious deprivations of basic human needs.

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

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.

I've looked through this website and couldn't find contact information, I was in solitary confinement for 92 days without prisoner rights, when they released me after they sabotaged my civil case I took pictures of my body condition, my legs swelled up and was bruised in color on the tops of my feet my skin color was pale, in short I have some evidence who do I contact for help

Reading the Russell Shoatz case I would guess he has as much chance as Thomas Silverstein had to win his case and he lost!

<http://denver.cbslocal.com/2014/05/22/court-30-years-solitary-ok-for-convicted-killer-at-supermax/>

Court: 30 Years Solitary OK For Convicted Killer At Supermax

In 2011, in a legal challenge to end his isolation, Silverstein was examined by Dr. Craig Haney, a psychology professor at the University of California and one of the country's leading experts on the psychological impact of solitary confinement. Haney's assessment noted extreme anxiety, sleeplessness, despair and hopelessness, depression, among other mental ailments.

This was the most isolated form of long-term confinement I have ever encountered, Haney said in his report. As a result, Mr. Silverstein has not had a remotely normal social interaction or touched another human being with affection for more than a quarter century.

<http://www.vice.com/read/mentally-ill-prisoners-are-destroyed-by-solitary-confinement>

I wonder if they'll sight Silverstein's case at some point down the road.

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