

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](#) | January 22, 2017

Just before leaving office, President Obama commuted the sentences of two survivors of solitary confinement. [Puerto Rican Nationalist Oscar Lopez Rivera](#) spent 12 of his 35 years in prison in isolation. [Whistleblower Chelsea Manning](#) spent about a year in the box after her arrest, and was also placed in solitary after trying to commit suicide.

[AJ+](#) published a short interview with Heather Chapman, whose son, Nikko, was sentenced to ten years in prison for a robbery he committed when he was 19. Nikko, who has been diagnosed as bipolar, has spent a great deal of time in solitary confinement in his Florida prison and his mother is worried he will die before he is released. Imagine watching a child that you gave birth to die a slow painful death, and there is nothing you can do but watch.

Several men who've been locked up at Auburn state prison in New York allege that a guard, Matthew Cornell, planted weapons on them. Three of them were sentenced to solitary confinement one for 10 months, according to a [news report](#). After Cornell found weapons on them, some prisoners were also charged criminally with promoting prison contraband.

The Supreme Court [heard oral arguments](#) about whether legal claims should be allowed to proceed against former US Attorney General John Ashcroft and others by non-US citizens, by Muslims who were arrested and detained following the attacks of September 11th. The plaintiffs, who were only charged with civil immigration violations, were held in solitary confinement at Brooklyn's Metropolitan Detention Center, and also endured strip searches, sleep deprivations and beatings. Ahmer Abbasi [wrote about his experiences](#) for the New York Daily News.

Filmmaker James Burns, who recently spent 30 days in isolation all while being filmed to increase public awareness of the issue, wrote about what will happen to the movement against solitary confinement under President Trump. I am not hopeful that the new Trump administration will continue the progress that we as a society have made on this issue or the criminal justice system in general. While it's unclear if the new administration will roll back reforms on solitary, he wrote in the [ACLU blog](#), it's hard to imagine that there will be any commitment to continued reform on this issue.

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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