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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2010/10/15/angola-prison-may-close-lockdown-unit-but-vows-to-keep-inmates-in-isolation/>

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by [James Ridgeway and Jean Casella](#) | October 15, 2010

The [Baton Rouge Advocate](#) reports that the Louisiana Department of Corrections is contemplating the sale of prisons and the closure of an inmate isolation unit in order to cut costs during difficult budget times. Corrections Secretary Jimmy LeBlanc told the *Advocate*, Everything has to be put on the table to deal with massive state budget deficits. The Jindal administration has instructed state agencies to submit plans to their budgets by a whopping 35 percent.

Louisiana has already sold some tracts of land belonging to the Department of Corrections, and is considering selling two state prisons outright to the private prison corporations that now operate them. This would provide a short-term cash fix of \$70 million but could cost the state just as much, or more, to house its prisoners over the long run.

One possible plan is to close the solitary confinement unit at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, which is called Closed Cell Restricted, or CCR. *The Advocate* reports:

At the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, some inmates are housed in a unit known as CCR near the prison's front gates. CCR is an isolation unit that has been home to inmates such as convicted serial rapist Jon Barry Simonis and, more famously, the Angola 3, a group of prisoners who sued the state for keeping them in solitary confinement.

LeBlanc said CCR is reserved for inmates who cannot live with the rest of the prison population because they have protection issues or because they committed especially heinous crimes.

He said the unit holds 101 cells, not including 40 trustee beds, and is expensive to operate. He said the state could save roughly \$1.8 million for the remaining nine months of the fiscal year by closing CCR and moving the inmates to unoccupied cells on death row and possibly putting them in double bunks at Camp D.

Were going to keep them isolated, LeBlanc said.

Moving inmates to death row or placing them in 23-hour-a-day lockdown with one other person doesn't sound like a big money saver, much less any improvement in conditions over the current CCR. If the Louisiana DOC really wanted to save money, it could look to its neighbor Mississippi.

The Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman, like Angola, a sprawling prison plantation used to have a notorious, 1000-bed solitary confinement unit called Unit 32. But over several years, under pressure from an ACLU lawsuit, the state has been in the process of [shutting down Unit 32](#), transferring many of its residents to the general population or to a dedicated mental health unit, rather than simply to other isolation cells. In fact, Mississippi has been re-examining and reforming its entire inmate classification system. The outcomes of this process, [according to a 2009 study](#), include large reductions in the rates of misconduct, violence, and use of force.

CCR's most famous inmates, the Angola 3s Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace (who was recently moved to a lockdown unit at nearby Hunt Prison), were convicted of murdering a prison guard almost forty years ago, and have been in solitary confinement ever since. They are now in their sixties and have clean disciplinary records, but are still deemed too dangerous to rejoin the general population largely, according to Warden Burl Cain, because of their historical association with the Black Panthers.

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James Ridgeway (1936-2021) was the founder and co-director of Solitary Watch. An investigative journalist for over 60 years, he served as Washington Correspondent for the Village Voice and Mother Jones, reporting domestically on subjects ranging from electoral politics to corporate malfeasance to the rise of the racist far-right, and abroad from Central America, Northern Ireland, Eastern Europe, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. Earlier, he wrote for The New Republic and Ramparts, and his work appeared in dozens of other publications. He was the co-director of two films and author of 20 books, including a forthcoming posthumous edition of his groundbreaking 1991 work on the far right, *Blood in the Face*. Jean Casella is the director of Solitary Watch. She has also published work in The Guardian, The Nation, and Mother Jones, and is co-editor of the book *Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement*. She has received

a Soros Justice Media Fellowship and an Alicia Patterson Fellowship. She tweets @solitarywatch.

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by [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

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I knew Barry while he was doing his god forsaken things to women in the Houston, Texas area. We worked together and he always seemed so sweet and dear. After the news broke and he had been arrested, we were all so shocked. He had been to lots of our houses and none of us thought anything was amiss. Margaret Fletcher, I'm so sorry he hurt you.

Amanda I am a victim of Simonis. I'm sure he will die in Angola.

what happened to jon barry simonis?

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I am a former resident of CCR at LSP. I would like to respond to Mr. LeBlanc's comments regarding moving inmates off of CCR unit. First, CCR and Death Row were co-mingled when I was there. The man in the cell next to mine was under the Death Penalty. Maybe things have changed since 1987-1997.

I know the type of prisoners being held at CCR. It would be a very bad administrative move to double bunk these inmates at Camp-D (Hawk?). I could think of many ways and many areas on how LSP (and the state of Louisiana) can save money; Top of the list would be to get rid of the death penalty. The cost of sentencing a person to death is astronomical. But knowing the mindset of the state I seriously doubt anything will change regarding the death penalty. Maybe the DOC should focus more on Camp-J than CCR?

How about allowing the inmates to start making money for the prison (and themselves) by taking them out of the slave fields and putting them into a work force that actually generates income for the state, and which offers a service to the public. Teach the prisoners a trade and open that trade for business. Many of American companies are using over seas workers to perform certain tasks in an effort to save money, i.e. Dell uses workers from India and the Philippines to answer phones and answers questions which is simple all the answers to the questions are on a computer program. I would bet that the prison is still making license plates. How much income can that generate? Long story short is that hoeing rows of dirt all day and paying dozens of guards thousands of dollars each (monthly) to sit on the back of a horse with a gun to watch the inmates doing absolutely pointless work is plain stupid. Slavery is over folks. This is why the prison is still in the stone age. LeBlanc needs to think outside the box, not keep so many in the box. Also, try reducing LSP operation cost even further by allowing some of the old timers to transfer out to the many different satellite prisons throughout the state. Give more humanitarian furloughs to the inmates who are dying (which would save further!) and start charging the guards and families who live on prison grounds! This prison hasn't changed with the times LSP is still just one step advanced from getting rid of inmate guards. The finger needs to be pointed at the DOC leadership.

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