

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Aviva Stahl](#) | September 20, 2015

The following roundup features noteworthy news, reports and opinions on solitary confinement from the past week that have not been covered in other Solitary Watch posts.

The New York Times outlined [a possible case](#) the Supreme Court may take to determine the constitutionality of solitary confinement. The legal challenge, brought by Virginia prisoner Alfredo Prieto, challenges the automatic placement of individuals on death row in solitary confinement.

A Maryland man has [sued Wicomico County](#) after being placed in solitary for six weeks. Abdul Malik Muhammad, who was originally arrested on allegations of stealing from a supermarket, says he was placed in isolation because he is blind.

Colorado has vastly decreased its use of isolation, which has left empty a state prison designed exclusively to house people in solitary confinement, according to [Colorado Public Radio](#). According to the article, the state Department of Corrections is considering how to re-purpose the facility.

New York City's Board of Corrections is considering [relaxing the rules](#) that govern how long people at Rikers Island can be held in solitary confinement. Meanwhile, Mary Buser, a former mental health worker at the jail, [has released a book](#) describing her work with people who had been driven to mental illness from their time in isolation.

A local Iowa outlet has [published an editorial](#) calling for the decreased use of solitary confinement. Iowa's policy and limited use of segregation are reassuring, but prison officials in this state along with every state should continue to limit solitary confinement and look for alternatives. As Justice Kennedy put it, quoting Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering the prisons.

Connecticut's Office of the Child Advocate has released eight videos that show youths being forcibly restrained and dragged into solitary confinement, where some then attempt to injure themselves, [according to a local outlet](#).

The Brian Lehrer Show [produced an episode](#) about two immigration detention centers in New Jersey, which allegedly place detainees who yell or talk back in solitary confinement. The show features Khail Cumberbatch, a former detainee who saw how the box was used to intimidate detainees, discuss the confinement tactics being used today.

[The New Republic](#) published an investigation into The Literal Costs of Solitary Confinement, which addresses the fines that many people are forced to pay when they are placed into the box. According to the article, prison officials in at least six state systems have the authority to impose fines in addition to solitary for a single rule violation.

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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