

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Aviva Stahl](#) | September 28, 2014



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.

Michael Anthony Kerr, a North Carolina man who had been held in solitary confinement, [died of thirst, according to a recently released autopsy](#). The pathologist wrote that the Department of Corrections released too little information for her to determine whether Mr. Kerr's death constituted a homicide; however, she did note that at the time he was not receiving any treatment for his schizoaffective disorder.

At a Colorado gubernatorial debate, [the two candidates addressed a variety of issues](#), including solitary confinement. Governor John Hickenlooper mentioned his friend, Boulder attorney Jack Ebel, whose son Evan allegedly killed then-prisons chief Tom Clements in 2013 after being released from solitary confinement. He commented, my friend would painstakingly describe how he saw his son withering away in front of his eyes.

[The Village Voice](#) published a profile of Masai Stewart, a 23-year-old with a long history of mental illness currently incarcerated in the New York State Correctional System. Stewart was sentenced to many months of punitive segregation in the Special Housing Unit (SHU), despite a SHU exclusion law designed to keep those with mental illness out of isolation.

Associate Professor Tamar R. Birckhead [published an op-ed](#) about a young man who spent more than 300 days in solitary confinement at Rikers. She writes, Ismael Nazarios experience is representative of the many thousands of young people who are held in isolation on any given day across the globe. I've conducted new research that reveals that approximately 30 percent of the world's countries either employ the practice or legally condone its use.

Federal prosecutors [rebutted arguments that a death row inmate](#), Gary Lee Sampson, faces cruel and unusual punishment because of the many years he will likely wait before execution. Sampson's lawyers have also argued that the conditions of death row confinement are equivalent to solitary confinement, but for years on end. This exacts a toll on those so incarcerated that cannot be understated.

The ACLU filed a motion [seeking class action status](#) for an ongoing federal lawsuit against Mississippi's Department of Corrections, with the aim of protecting all prisoners at the for-profit East Mississippi Correctional Facility (EMCF) from allegedly inhumane conditions. In a report, solitary confinement expert Dr. Terry A. Kupers wrote, taken as a whole, the conditions in solitary confinement at EMCF are the worst I have witnessed in my 40 years as a forensic psychiatrist investigating jail and prison conditions.

Writing for [Pacific Standard](#), Jessica Pishko describes a growing movement to keep architects and designers from working on spaces designed for solitary confinement and execution.

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 [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 26, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

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Why are these greedy men so indifferent to the stated role of such institutions, namely REHABILITATION?

Because they are participants in the federal governments monetary reward system:

http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/11/the-only-man-who-can-fix-mass-incarceration-is-barack-obama/382314/?single_page=true#disqus_thread

STEPHEN LURIE wrote these lines on NOV 12 2014 in The Atlantic:

The most pressing task is to address the enabler of incarceration: money.

Money determines outcomes; change that and you can change the whole system.

The federal government enacted several laws that basically gave states more money if they would increase their prison population,

Truth-in-sentencing guidelines, for example, disbursed billions of dollars to ensure that people would spend 85 percent of their sentences in prison even though those sentences were already overly harsh.

That flow of cash, a product of the War on Drugs, also came with a series of designated metrics like arrests or drug seizures that incentivized states to gear performance towards what they saw to be lucrative outcomes.

If the Justice Department revised its interpretation of many of these laws, it could reshape the system.

One example of this phenomenon is the Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant program, which is both the biggest federal grant program for state and local criminal-justice authorities and emblematic of the way other programs function at the Departments of Justice, Defense, and Homeland Security.

The Brennan Center found that:

The program inadvertently creates incentives to increase arrests, prosecutions, and incarceration. For example, it evaluates [grant] recipients on the number of criminal cases opened, but not whether crime dropped. It asks them how many kilos of cocaine were seized, but not how many people were sent to drug treatment. It asks how many cases were prosecuted, but not how many petty offenders were diverted from prison

Measuring the wrong practices strengthens the wrong practices.

With such federal incentives we shouldn't be surprised to learn:

The Corrections Corporation of America, whose business model is increased incarceration, recently paid more than \$250,000 just to participate in the Republican Governors Association proceedings and has spent almost \$14 million on lobbying in the last eight years.

By contrast, Families Against Mandatory Minimums, a leading reform advocacy organization, only spent \$80,000 on federal lobbying in 2014.

Given such uneven funding for lobbying how likely are we to see meaningful change?

On the East Mississippi Correctional Facility (EMCF) article.

This is a good example of the corruption found in for profit prisons.

There's a report by TIMOTHY WILLIAMS on NOV. 6, 2014 in the New York Times titled:

Christopher Epps, Former Chief of Prisons in Mississippi, Is Arraigned

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/07/us/christopher-epps-former-chief-of-prisons-in-mississippi-is-arraigned.html?mabReward=RI%3A14&action=click&pgtype=Homepage®ion=CColumn&module=Recommendation&src=rechp&WT.nav=RecEngine&_r=0

And the timeline of the case is reported in the Clarion-Ledger:

2002 Chris Epps is appointed Mississippi Department of Corrections commissioner.

Nov. 2, 2007 Epps signs a no-bid MDOC contract with G.T. Enterprises, a company owned by co-defendant Cecil McCrory.

2007 Epps solicits money from McCrory in exchange for the contract with G.T. Enterprises.

2007 Epps receives from McCrory cash payments of \$3,000 to \$4,000 on some 15 occasions for the contract.

March 2008 Epps approves the assignment C held by McCrorys company, G.T. Enterprises, to Keefe Commissary LLC, resulting in a large profit for McCrory.

2008 Epps solicits McCrory to pay off Epps home mortgage.

July 25, 2008 McCrory purchases a cashiers check in the amount of \$100,000 from his personal bank account at Community Bank, payable to Countrywide Bank, which holds the mortgage on Epps Flowood home.

Oct. 2, 2008 McCrory purchases a second cashiers check in the amount of \$100,000 from his personal bank account of \$100,000 at Community Bank, payable to Countrywide Bank for Epps Flowood home mortgage.

Oct. 24, 2008 Epps signs a lease between MDOC and College Street Leasing, a company owned by McCrory.

Dec. 9, 2008 Epps signs a lease between MDOC and McCrorys company, College Street Leasing, for the use of land and facilities upon which to operate a new inmate transition facility for males in Walnut Grove.

Jan. 5, 2009 McCrory purchases a third cashiers check from his personal bank account in the amount of \$50,000 payable to Countrywide to apply to Epps Flowood home mortgage.

April 2, 2009 Epps and McCrory sign a lease between MDOC and College Street Leasing for the use of land and facilities to operate an inmate transition facility for females in Walnut Grove.

July 16, 2009 Epps and McCrory sign a contract awarded by MDOC to McCrorys company, American Transition Services, to operate and manage the mens facility at the Walnut Grove Transition Center.

July 28, 2009 McCrory purchases a fourth cashiers check in the amount of \$101,309.81 payable to Bank of America Home Loan Servicing, which has succeeded Countrywide Bank, to pay off Epps home loan.

July 2009 After Epps home has been completely paid off by McCrory, Epps tells McCrory he can get anything he wants in the future from MDOC through him.

July 2009 Epps deposits \$9,000 cash each in four different banking accounts.

Aug. 15, 2009 Epps and McCrory sign a contract awarded by MDOC to McCrorys company to operate the womens facility at Walnut Grove Transition Center.

July 29, 2010 Epps signs a contract awarded by MDOC to Adminpros LLC, a company that paid McCrory.

2010 Leake County Sheriff Greg Waggoner said he went to the FBI after receiving complaints.

Jan. 24, 2011 Epps signs MDOC contract awarded to Adminpros.

July 29, 2011 Epps signs MDOC contract awarded to Adminpros.

Fall 2011 State auditors office receives a complaint and launches an investigation, leading to collaborative investigation with federal and state authorities and the Leake County Sheriffs Department.

July 2012 Epps signs MDOC contract awarded to Adminpros.

August 2012 Epps signs a contract awarded by MDOC to Management and Training Corp., a company that Epps persuaded to hire McCrory as a consultant.

Aug. 21, 2012 McCrory wires \$34,000 from his business account at Merchant & Farmers Bank directly to Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, which holds the loan for Epps condominium in Biloxi.

Sept. 14, 2012 Epps signs a contract awarded by MDOC to Management & Training Corp.

Sept. 25, 2012 Epps wires \$14,000 from his business account at Merchant & Farmers Bank directly to Wells Fargo Home Mortgage to pay down Epps condominium loan in Biloxi.

Oct. 18, 2012 Epps signs a no-bid contract to Management & Training Corp.

Feb. 14, 2013 McCrory wires \$40,000 from his business account to Epps Edward Jones investment account, labeling it as a wire transaction for a consignment sale of farm equipment.

July 15, 2013 Epps signs a no-bid contract to Management & Training Corp.

July 17, 2013 Epps writes a letter to the State Personnel Board requesting sole source procurement for Adminpros, resulting in the company being awarded a no-bid contract.

Sept. 4, 2013 McCrory wires \$50,000 from his business account to Epps Edward Jones investment account.

Oct. 8, 2013 Epps writes a letter to the State Personnel Board stating Adminpros was the only vendor that performs Medicaid eligibility services for inmates, resulting in a no-bid contract.

Aug. 5, 2014 Sealed 49-count indictment is filed in U.S. District Court in Jackson against Epps and McCrory.

Nov. 5, 2014 Epps resigns as MDOC commissioner.

Nov. 6, 2014 Indictment against Epps and McCrory is unsealed. Epps and McCrory are arraigned in court. Both plead not guilty. Trial is set for

Jan. 5, 2015.

Lets see if money talks and bullshit walks in the end.

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