

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Valerie Kiebala](#) | February 24, 2020

The *Miami Herald* [reported](#) that a lawsuit has been filed on behalf of 51-year-old Cheryl Weimar, claiming two male officers attacked the psychiatrically disabled woman held at Lowell Correctional Institution in Florida last August, leaving her paralyzed from the neck down. One of the alleged attackers, Ryan Dionne, remains on staff at the prison. The other, Keith Turner, had a reputation on the compound for sexually abusing female inmates, according to the testimony of formerly incarcerated Brittany Flutie Davis. Davis testified that officers at Lowell threatened incarcerated women with months of solitary confinement if they told a visiting state lawmaker about the brutal attack they had witnessed Dionne and Turner carry out against Weimar. The lawsuit argues that the two men violated Weimar's 8th Amendment right by inflicting cruel and unusual punishment by using excessive force.

The City [examined](#) the state of New York City jails under presidential candidate Mike Bloomberg, during his twelve years as mayor of the city. Between 2001 and 2013, the overall population in NYC jails dropped below 12,000 from 14,490. But in the same time frame, jails saw an increase in use of force incidents from 1,772 to 3,285, as well as an increase in the use of solitary confinement from 322 people in 2002 to 918 in 2013. Board of Correction member Dr. Robert Cohen said, Many mayoral appointees agreed that we should reduce the use of solitary confinement, but they were held back by Bloomberg. They told me that the optics would be bad for the mayor. While the deaths of two people in solitary during Bloomberg's tenure publicized the inadequate medical care provided by Corizon Health, Bloomberg did not end the contract with the private health care company.

According to a lawsuit filed by his mother, Dante Taylor hanged himself in his cell at Wende Correctional Facility outside Buffalo, New York, after officers and sergeants brutally beat him, hogtied him, and threw him down the stairs in late 2017. Despite Taylor's documented history of suicide attempts, the *New York Daily News* [reported](#) that Taylor was sent to solitary confinement for months at a time, in a form of isolation called keeplock. Taylor's mother, Darlene McDay, said these periods of isolation, often as punishment for drug use, cut off the vital support network of herself and other family members. Attorney Katie Rosenfeld said, That's not a recognized treatment for somebody with substance abuse problems: lock them in a cell for three months. The #HALTSolitary campaign says about 4,000 people are currently held in solitary in state prisons, and at least seven incarcerated people have died by suicide at Wende since 2010.

The *News & Observer* [reported](#) that the autopsy has been released for 32-year-old Jordan Jedlica, who died in May after he was found unresponsive in solitary confinement at Warren Correctional Institution in North Carolina. Jedlica's family said he had a history of mental illness and drug abuse, and they believe that he was denied adequate medical care in solitary. According to the autopsy, the officer who found Jedlica noted a large amount of water on the floor of his cell, suggesting that he had been vomiting. The autopsy found Jedlica had suffered several seizures before his death and determined the cause of death to be lack of oxygen due to an excessive intake of water.

The *Free Press* published an [article](#) on the use of solitary confinement in Maine state prisons and the most recent state budget proposals effect on the system. The article highlighted the story of 37-year-old Michael James, a man with mental illness who has spent several years in solitary at the Maine State supermax prison and more recently at the Mountain View Correctional Facility, where he described headbutting the walls of his cell and cutting himself. While the article reports a reduction in the use of solitary in recent years across the state, the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition said that staffing shortages have resulted in an increase of prison-wide lockdowns. Representative Charlotte Warren, who chairs the House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, said that the governor thinks the criminal justice system is working just fine, so Warren says the budget provides no money for what we actually need.

[According](#) to *The Appeal*, Massachusetts prisons have been resistant to implementing criminal justice reforms mandated by a 2018 law, which include due process guarantees to people held in solitary confinement for 22 hours a day or more. Administrators allegedly used tactics such as changing the nominal classification of the unit or letting people out of their cells for one more hour to circumvent the due process requirements. In response to an incident at Souza-Baranowski Correctional Center in January, administrators locked down the whole prison following a clear pattern of collective and harsh punishment of all for the misconduct of a few, according to Prisoners Legal Services. Lawmakers who visited the prison in the following weeks found evidence of brutal abuse, including Taser burns, dog bites, and suicide attempts. A lawsuit has since been filed against the prison for denying access to legal representation during the lockdown.

The *Colorado Independent* [reported](#) that the Colorado county jails provided the states Division of Criminal Justice with data on their populations and conditions, in the first report filed in response to the 2019 legislation requiring quarterly updates. At least 9,802 people were held across the states 57 jails, as of the first of the year: 7,296 of those people still awaited a trial, 409 were held in solitary confinement, 1,214 were homeless, and 140 were awaiting an evaluation to determine their competency to stand trial. The report found that between October 1 and December 31, 2019, seven people died in the jail system. Thirteen counties with jails did not provide data to the state, and various counties provided incomplete data. The next deadline for counties to report data to the state is April 1.

Valerie Kiebal was a contributing writer and editorial and project manager for Solitary Watch, and is now the media director of Straight Ahead, which is building a decarceration movement throughout Pennsylvania. Her work has also appeared in The Root, Truthout, the Chicago Reporter, and Shadowproof.

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

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.

greetings from Daytona beach, Florida -My name is Ann Hansen,&my son-Kyle Gullo #v30108-we need help with connections in Florida re; the very long & HORRIFIC inhumane torture of solitude confinement , 4-5 point restraints (Volusia county branch jail - Numerous times))-i have the records ,kyles doctor got them for me. Now the police attack me with false charges-torture me to hospital . i know you help. -direction needed

Our stories need to be heard & some sort of Justice /accountability to follow . Kyle needs a new REAL trail Complete conflict of interest along with much untruths by our civil servants- police . im a Registered Nurse (disabled from work)-my money was taken -everything i ever worked for (i was a community leader-court appointed mental health Guardian .)- im post stroke & alone so thank you in advance for any leads ,direction, good old fashion HELP. Much Gratitude,
Ms Ann Hansen R.N.

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