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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Lizzie Kane](#) | April 6, 2021

[According to a February 19 article from the *Davis Vanguard*](#), incarcerated individuals in the California Medical Facility are suffering from mental health problems due to a lockdown that was imposed in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, but has resulted in the solitary confinement of people with physical and mental health issues.

[The Guardian commemorated](#) Angola 3 member Albert Woodfox's fifth anniversary of freedom from solitary confinement with a profile on him published on February 19.

ICE detention centers in Louisiana and Texas have been exposed for having solitary confinement cells without heat, [according to reporting from the *Intercept* on February 19](#). On top of the lack of heat, guards were reportedly turning fans on individuals who complained about the cold.

[According to an article from February 23 in the *Lens*](#), incarcerated individuals at Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola went on a hunger strike to protest the disciplinary segregation some people have been held in for longer than the prisons disciplinary protocols call for.

On February 25, [the *City* reported](#) that New York City's Board of Correction had ruled that a group of young adults should be kept in isolation, despite Mayor Bill de Blasio's promise to end solitary confinement in New York City's jails. [The *City* then reported](#) on March 8 that some criminal justice advocates are unhappy with de Blasio's plan, believing that the name solitary confinement is being changed instead of making genuine reforms. The proposed changes involve an increased amount of out-of-cell time in punitive segregation, but stays in segregation can be indefinite.

[In an op-ed for *Newsweek* on February 26](#), Tammie Gregg, the director of the ACLU's Stop Solitary Campaign, argued that then-nominee for U.S. attorney general Merrick Garland needs to finish former President Barack Obama's work reducing and reforming solitary confinement.

National Campaign Strategist for Unlock the Box Jessica Sandoval talked with producer Sue Goodwin on [WPFW's Monday Morning QB](#) on March 1 about ending solitary confinement and why the practice is not an effective method to contain the spread of COVID-19.

On March 2, [the *Connecticut Examiner* reported](#) that the nonprofit Disability Rights Connecticut filed a lawsuit on behalf of three incarcerated individuals, arguing that people with mental illness should not be put in prolonged segregation or in-cell restraints. Currently, there is a proposed bill in Connecticut called the PROTECT Act that would address this issue, among others. The advocacy group Stop Solitary CT [wrote an op-ed in the *Hartford Courant*](#) on February 22, asserting that the PROTECT Act should be passed. Direct testimony from incarcerated individuals in CT who have been in solitary can be found [here](#).

[In an opinion piece for *Jacobin* from March 2](#), freelance writer and cofounder of Cornell's Prison Reform and Education Project Garrison Lovely outlined why solitary confinement should be banned in its entirety. The article referenced [William Blake's recent piece published on *Solitary Watch*](#).

[According to a press release from the office of Texas State Representative Terry Meza on March 3](#), Meza filed two bills related to solitary confinement: one proposes limiting isolation to 10 consecutive days, while the other proposes a study be conducted on the use of segregation in the state and its effects on incarcerated individuals.

The nonprofits Freedom for Immigrants and the Immigrant Action Alliance filed lawsuits in March on behalf of Kevin Brown and Kemar Williams, two Jamaican nationals being held in the Glades County ICE Detention Center who have said they were being beaten, maced, and placed in solitary confinement, [as reported by the *Miami New Times* on March 9](#). The men were reportedly in solitary confinement at the time of publication due to having extra toilet paper rolls and an extra laundry bag. Williams, because of his time in solitary, is attempting to voluntarily go back to Jamaica.

[According to an article from the *Crime Report* on March 10](#), in a recent report, researchers at Florida State University found that individuals with mental illness were significantly more likely to be placed in long-term solitary confinement. More details about the

study were published on [Phys.org](#).

On March 12, [in an op-ed for the Baltimore Brew](#), Brian Levy, Assistant Public Defender in the Youthful Defender Unit of the Baltimore Public Defenders Office argued that children are being held in solitary confinement under abominable conditions at the Baltimore Youth Detention Center. The facility had a recent COVID-19 outbreak, which led to the widespread implementation of solitary confinement.

On March 29, [the Atlantic published the second article](#) in what will be a five-part series by *Solitary Watch's* Jean Casella, Katie Rose Quandt, and Sarah Shourd on the epidemic of deaths in U.S. jails. Written by Quandt, the article takes a look at the details behind the deaths of various individuals at Kentucky's Boyd County Detention Center and other local jails in rural communities and small towns and cities. She reports on the rapid growth of the jail populations in these areas, which vastly outpaces the number of beds and resources available, leading to overcrowding, abusive treatment, medical neglect, and preventable deaths. jails.

In the weeks leading up to the passage of the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, New York's groundbreaking bill to end prolonged solitary confinement, various news outlets had coverage dedicated to the topic. [Gothamist](#) and the [Times Union](#) both reported on the persistent and ubiquitous problems with solitary confinement in New York and across the U.S.

Also leading up to the passage of HALT, the [New York Times published an editorial](#) and former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture Juan Mendez [wrote an op-ed for the Journal News](#), both calling for New York Governor Andrew Cuomo to end long-term solitary confinement by signing HALT.

Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the HALT Solitary Confinement Act into law on March 31, setting in motion an end to prolonged solitary confinement in New York's state prisons and local jails. The [New York Times covered](#) passage of the historic legislation, and the governor, who had for years opposed the bill, [put out a press release](#) celebrating the new law.

[Writing for the New York Times opinion section](#), Ian Manuel discussed the 18 years he spent in solitary confinement starting when he was 15 years old, arguing that juvenile solitary confinement be outlawed in America.

The BBC [broadcast a segment](#) and [published an article](#) about the state of solitary confinement in the U.S. on March 24 and April 2, respectively.

Lizzie Kane was an intern for Solitary Watch in the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021. Her work has also appeared in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Dallas Morning News, and Charlotte Observer.

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.

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by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 26, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

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