

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | December 4, 2016

The Vera Institute released a new report about the use of solitary confinement in Oregon. Key findings from the [report](#) included: that disciplinary segregation is overused, overly long, and characterized by isolating conditions, that stays in administrative segregation can be long, isolating and unproductive, and that people of color and people with mental health needs are over-represented in segregation.

In November, the Charlotte Observer published a story about a man who had spent the last 13 years in solitary confinement in the states prisons. Shawn Minnich has since been released into a less restrictive environment: to mental health unit where inmates can spend more time out of their cells, [according to the Observer](#).

The Association of State Correctional Administrators, and the Arthur Liman Public Interest Program at Yale Law School, released the most recent national data on the use of solitary confinement in the United States. According to the [report](#), in the fall of 2015, 67,442 people were held in extended isolation; Louisiana and Utah were found to hold the highest percentage of their prison population in solitary. [ShadowProof](#) provided extensive analysis of the report.

The [New York Times](#) published an investigation into the scourge of racial bias in New York state prisons. According to their investigation, systemwide, black inmates were 30 percent more likely to get a disciplinary ticket than white inmates. And they were 65 percent more likely to be sent to solitary confinement.

The Star Tribune published a four-part investigation into the use of isolation in Minnesota prisons. Minnesota prisons pile on solitary confinement, often for minor offenses, causing lasting mental problems for inmates, [they concluded](#). Other states are scaling back.

[At least two people](#) have died while in solitary confinement at jails run by Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke Jr., who is being considered by President-elect Trump for the post of Secretary of Homeland Security. This summer, Shad Swayzer went into labor while in isolation; she has alleged she cried for help but received none, and her infant subsequently died. Another individual, Terrill Thomas, is said to have died of thirst after guards shut off the water to his cell.

A [local outlet in Maine](#) has revisited the case of Doug Burr, who spent 22 months in solitary confinement while at Maine State Prison. Burr has since been released from segregation and is pursuing an administrative appeal in Kennebec County Superior Court alleging that the Maine Department of Corrections has continuously violated its own discipline procedures along with his due process rights.

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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