

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](#) | August 14, 2016

California is [considering new legislation](#) that would sharply limit the use of solitary confinement for children. Under the law, which has passed the state Senate and is awaiting a vote in the Assembly, a child could only be placed in isolation if they posed a risk to themselves, others or the facility, and would have to be returned to general population after four hours.

A New Jersey appeals court has ruled that Rigoberto Mejia, who is incarcerated in the state, [spent an excessive time in isolation](#) after throwing a bucket of feces, urine and hot water at prison guards. Mejia spent more than a year in solitary confinement, and was not properly evaluated for mental health issues, according to the appeals court panel.

The [California State Assembly passed a bill](#), SB 759, which could allow people in Special Housing Units, or SHUs, to be eligible for early release based on good behavior. If passed by the State Senate and signed by the governor, the bill would repeal an earlier provision that prohibited people in the SHU to earn good credit, thus extending their time in prison.

The Department of Justice [released an investigation](#) into privately run federal prisons, which primarily incarcerate people convicted of immigration offenses. The investigation found that in two of the three contract prisons investigators routinely visited, new inmates were automatically placed in solitary confinement as a way of combating overcrowding, rather than for disciplinary issues.

A trans woman incarcerated in Delaware [is suing the state](#), on allegations they denied her access to hormone therapy, read her legal mail and placed her in solitary confinement in retaliation for her legal complaints. Kamilla Denise London is being held at the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center, a male facility.

A small pilot study has shown [promising results](#) for a new development in Oregon, where prison officials are showing nature videos to people in solitary confinement during their recreation time. A research team from the American Psychological Association found that negative emotions like aggression, distress, irritability, and nervousness were all reduced for several hours after the nature videos were viewed.

[The Marshall Project](#) outlined some of the Obama criminal justice reforms that could be undone if Trump is elected, including a set of executive actions when it comes to the use of solitary confinement in the federal prison system. Trump could rescind all of this right away. After the Bureau of Prisons adjusts to his administrations new rules, a [small number](#) of juveniles could find themselves back in solitary again.

Aviva Stahl is a Brooklyn-based reporter who writes about science/health at the intersection of mass incarceration, national security, and trans rights. Shes 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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