

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Direct Outreach for the Thousands of People in Solitary Confinement.

Project Coordinator: marlies@solitarywatch.org.

On any given day in the United States, some 80,000 men, women, and children live in solitary confinement in the nations prisons and jails. Individuals in solitary confinement spend 22 to 24 hours a day locked in small, often windowless cells, without human contact, and usually without work, education, or programming of any kind. This type of isolation and sensory deprivation has been shown to cause extreme anguish and, in many cases, lasting psychological damage to those who endure it.

As part of Solitary Watch's work, we have reached out to people in solitary with letters, cards, and a [special print newsletter](#), reminding them that they have not been forgotten by the world outside their cells.

We call this project **Lifelines to Solitary**.

In 2015, we expanded Lifelines to Solitary to include the first prison correspondence program specifically designed to reach people in solitary confinement, using our list of more than 4,500 people living in long-term isolation. We engaged with student groups, community organizations, and faith communities who want to work together to bring a spark of human contact into the darkness of solitary confinement. In 2016, we added a program for individuals, allowing everyone to correspond with someone living in otherwise total isolation.

For anyone joining the program, Solitary Watch provides names and addresses of individuals in solitary, guidelines for maintaining a healthy correspondence, and ongoing advice and support. For groups interested in getting involved, we can also arrange a launch event (in person or via Skype) that includes Solitary Watch staff, local activists (if applicable), and survivors of solitary confinement.

In an age of electronic communications, letters remain the one and only way to penetrate the dark world of solitary confinement, and to establish contact with a group of people who have been banished and buried not only by society but also by the prison system itself. We believe this communication has the potential to transform the lives not only of the individuals in solitary, but of those on the outside who bear witness to their suffering.

First, take a look at our [Lifelines to Solitary program overview](#) and make sure this volunteer opportunity is right for you.

1) Sign up for the Lifelines to Solitary letters program as an individual.

We will assign you someone in solitary to correspond with. We also provide a PO box where your correspondents can write to you, and we forward letters to your own address. Your address remains private (and your full name as well, if you prefer).

Contact Marlies at marlies@solitarywatch.org to get started right away!

2) Begin a Lifelines to Solitary chapter with your own group.

You'll need:

A group of anywhere from half a dozen to a hundred people who can make a commitment to writing at least a monthly letter to an individual in solitary confinement.

A centralized address that group members can use, rather than their home addresses. This can be a post office box, an office at a house of worship, or a campus mailbox.

One or more people willing to serve as chapter coordinators for the group. Coordinators work with Solitary Watch to offer guidance and advice, and distribute letters that arrive at the central address.

Contact Marlies at marlies@solitarywatch.org for more information on creating a chapter with your own group.

If you know someone currently in solitary confinement who might like to be assigned a correspondent:

Ask them to write with their request to Lifelines to Solitary, PO Box 11374, Washington, DC 20008. We will be glad to send them our guidelines and sign them up for the program.

Lifelines to Solitary is 100% supported by individuals like you.
Please consider [making a donation](#) today.

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.

P.O. Box 11374
Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

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