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close

Search

close

close

Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Valerie Kiebala](#) | August 26, 2019

According to the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC), nine people held at Scotland Correctional Institution in North Carolina, calling themselves the Scotland 9, have been hunger striking for nearly a month since July 31. The strikers are calling for recreation to be re-instated, increased allowance of phone calls, an end to sleep deprivation practices, and adequate medical care for people held in the Security Housing Unit (SHU) at the facility. The IWOC [reported](#) that prison staff have kept people in SHU isolated 24 hours a day, denying recreation time, and conduct seg checks in the middle of the night, preventing people from sleeping. The strike participants have been reportedly locked down and severely beaten, an IWOC member [told](#) *Dissident Voice*, but the administration has begun to negotiate with the strikers to address their demands.

Indiana advocacy group IDOC Watch reported to Solitary Watch that at least five people held at the Secure Housing Unit at Indianas Wabash Valley Correctional Facility engaged in a three-day hunger strike, from this past Wednesday to Friday, calling for improved conditions in the long-term solitary confinement unit. Specifically, the strikers called for access to commissary, which is currently limited to only basic hygiene items. According to one hunger striker Kwame Shakur, staff [shut off the water](#) in the cells of strike participants on the second day of the hunger strike and [maced](#) one of the strikers.

[According](#) to the *Gothamist*, the New York City Department of Correction (DOC) has implemented a new policy called separation status housing, in what attorneys say is an attempt to circumvent the city's ban on solitary confinement for youth between 18 and 21 years old. While the DOC distinguished the housing from solitary confinement, the spokesperson would not clarify the restrictions of its use, and a Legal Aid Society attorney said the practice is a clear end run around crucial protections designed to limit New Yorkers contact with solitary confinement. The separation housing came into effect last month at Rikers Island jail, after the DOC Commissioner called for the isolation of youth who test positive for contraband on the recently installed ionized body scanners. So far, fifteen people have been placed in the segregated housing, including one 21-year-old isolated for over 48 hours with no air conditioning, toothbrush, or phone access.

The *Columbia Journalism Review* published an [article](#) by Aviva Stahl, discussing the media coverage blackout surrounding the brutal conditions at the federal Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC), up until the high-profile death of Jeffrey Epstein shed light on the facility. Part of the reason, besides the dehumanization of people in federal jails, Stahl says, is the severe communication restrictions imposed on many of the people held at MCC. People in the 10 South Unit at the facility are subjected to Special Administrative Measures (SAMs) and some of the most extreme conditions of isolated confinement in the country, according to Stahl. Solitary Watch recently published an [account](#) from Uzair Paracha, recalling what it was like to be stripped of communication buy phentermine south africa with the outside world, while he awaited his trial in the 10 South Unit for accusations of ties with Al Qaeda.

The *New York Daily News* [reported](#) that Aracelis Polanco filed a federal wrongful death lawsuit, claiming that the New York Department of Correction and Correctional Health Services denied her daughter Layleen Polanco safe housing, adequate medical care, and proper accommodation for her disabilities, leading to her death. Polanco, a 27-year-old transgender woman, died in solitary confinement, though the suit claims that prison staff knew that Layleen lived with epilepsy and schizophrenia, and was at heightened risk of death or serious physical harm if placed in segregation. The lawsuit says that if Polanco had received proper accommodations and been detained in a monitored cell, she would be alive.

[According](#) to the *Miami Herald*, a man with autism named Dean Higgins filed a lawsuit against the Florida Department of Corrections (FDC) for use of excessive force during his epileptic seizure last year at Desoto Correctional Institution and subsequently placing him in long-term solitary confinement. The lawsuit claims the FDC violated the Americans with Disabilities Act and the 8th Amendment, placing Higgins in an isolated cell where raw sewage would seep in at times a number of inches deep. After Higgins involuntarily bit an officer during his seizure, three corrections officers are alleged to have brutally beat Higgins for over an hour. Higgins had a documented history of seizures and health code guidelines prohibit the restraint of someone experiencing a seizure. The lawsuit comes at a time when the FDC is already being sued for their mistreatment of people with disabilities and the use of solitary confinement.

Scalawag magazine [interviewed](#) Albert Woodfox of the Angola 3, who survived nearly 45 years in solitary confinement at the Louisiana

State Penitentiary in Angola. Woodfox discussed his involvement with the Black Panther Party, the incident that led to his placement in solitary confinement, and daily life during his four decades in isolation. Woodfox says his greatest accomplishment during his time in solitary confinement, besides merely surviving, was teaching another man in solitary to read and write. The man told Woodfox, Man you just opened up the world to me.

Civil rights lawyer Philip Fornaci and author and scholar Roger Lancaster wrote an [op-ed](#) in the *Washington Post* about the case of Galen Baughman, who now faces a possible lifetime of civil commitment based on a technical probation violation. Baughman served most of his six and a half years in prison isolated in solitary confinement, under sex offense charges, though both charges were nonviolent and occurred in his teenage years. The prosecution has pushed for Baughman to be labeled a Sexually Violent Predator (SVP), and while a previous jury ruled against it, Baughman faces a new trial that will determine whether he faces indefinite civil commitment in a high security facility. Incarcerated people convicted of sex offenses often face time in solitary confinement, solely because of the nature of their offense.

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 [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 5, 2022

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