

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Roxanne Barnes](#) | December 1, 2021

Jailhouse lawyer Mark Wilson has filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the Oregon State Correctional Institution, alleging that when he was put in solitary confinement for 120 days for having an illegal item of contraband, the punishment was really in retaliation for his legal work. The contraband in question was a toy phone for children that had been placed on his desk as a joke by the law library coordinator, who was also forced to resign as a result of Wilson's punishment. As a legal assistant, Wilson provided assistance with people's cases, and according to him, I was assisting people in suing the Department of Corrections, and somebody is mad about that. He is currently held in solitary confinement.

The mother of Ronny Pacheco, a man who fatally hanged himself while in solitary confinement in Bernalillo County Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) in New Mexico, is suing the county and the detention center's former healthcare provider for failing to provide adequate welfare checks. Pacheco was placed in solitary confinement despite a history of mental health issues, and according to the lawsuit, Pacheco's mental health deteriorated rapidly during three days in solitary confinement. Since April of 2020, 13 people incarcerated in MDC have died.

A coalition of groups in Florida are pushing for the Glades Detention Center to end its contract with ICE and close down operations, pointing to a history of abuse. In September, seven Black African immigrants filed a complaint describing how guards had subjected them to pepper spray, medical neglect, excessive use of force, and solitary confinement. This is one of 30 separate civil rights complaints filed in the last year related to Glades.

North Carolina Health News published an article about the challenges that transgender people face while incarcerated. Experts and incarcerated interviewees described how trans people are often targeted for bullying and sexual assault by corrections staff and other incarcerated people. Director of Communications at the Transgender, Gender-Variant and Intersex Justice Project (TGIJP), eli dru, said that solitary is a common problem for people with different genders in prisons and jails. Oftentimes they segregate trans people by putting them into the hole because they tell them that's for their safety, dru said. That's such a common thing.

Nessa Wright, the mother of DonTavis Mintz, who died while held in solitary confinement in Ware State Prison, is one of many accusing Georgia facilities of endangering those inside through inadequate staffing. The Department of Justice has begun an investigation into the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC), looking into a connection between understaffing issues and a high rate of suicides in Georgia prisons and jails. Wright said her son was physically unrecognizable when she finally was able to go and identify his body. He was deteriorating, Wright said. It was to the point that I couldn't have an open casket. Neither the Wake County coroner nor the GDC was willing to tell her how her son died.

Roxanne Barnes is an educator and writer based in Los Angeles and a contributing writer to Solitary Watch.

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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