

Voices from the Box

"Life in the box is about an austere sameness that makes it difficult to tell one day from a thousand others. Nothing much and nothing new ever happens...But there is always the misery. If you manage to escape it yourself for a time, there will ever be plenty around in others for you to sense; and though you'll be unable to look into their eyes and see it, you might hear it in the nighttime when tough guys cry not-so-tough tears that are forced out of them by the unrelenting stress and strain in the box is an exercise in."

—W, held in isolated confinement in a maximum security men's prison in New York

"In the box I am so tired...I feel like death... After a while I start talking to ants, crickets or any other living thing or imaginary thing I can think of so I do not totally lose what is left of my mind... I want to open people's eyes to the greater damage that happens to everyone by throwing the very young, mentally and emotionally ill into cages to rot under the pretense that more punishment, isolation, and deprivation will make people change for the better."

—S, held in isolated confinement in a medium security women's prison in New York

Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement

"The goal of the Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (CAIC) is sweeping reform of New York's use of solitary confinement and other forms of extreme isolation in state prisons and local jails.

Isolated confinement is ineffective, costly, counterproductive, unsafe, and inhumane. It causes people to deteriorate psychologically, physically, and socially. Despite these facts, New York utilizes isolated confinement at rates well above the national average.

CAIC brings together advocates, formerly incarcerated persons, family members of currently incarcerated people, concerned community members, lawyers, and people in the human rights, health, and faith communities throughout New York State. We invite individuals and organizations to join the campaign's ongoing efforts.

For more information on the Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement, visit our website at: www.nycaic.org.

For general inquiries or to join CAIC's mailing list, email: caicny@gmail.com.

For media inquiries, contact:

- Scott Paltrowitz, 212-254-5700, spaltrowitz@correctionalassociation.org
- Five Mualimm-ak, 646-294-8831, endthenewjimcrow@gmail.com

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IS TORTURE



NEW YORK CAMPAIGN
FOR ALTERNATIVES
TO ISOLATED
CONFINEMENT

www.nycaic.org

Solitary Confinement in New York

- People in isolated confinement spend 22 to 24 hours a day locked in a cell the size of an elevator, alone or with one other person. They may be permitted one hour to exercise alone in a cage. They do not receive any meaningful programs or therapy, and cannot make phone calls.
- The sensory deprivation, lack of normal human interaction, and extreme idleness can lead to intense suffering and severe psychological damage.
- Children or people with mental illness fare even worse in “the box”—yet they are disproportionately likely to end up there. People of color are also disproportionately sent to isolated confinement, even more so than in prisons generally.
- On any given day, as many as 4,200 men, women, and children are in solitary confinement and other forms of extreme isolation in New York State prisons.
- In New York City’s jails, around 1,000 more are in solitary confinement.
- Every year, the state prison system sentences 13,000 people to terms in the “Special Housing Unit,” or SHU.
- Most people sent to isolation spend months or years there. Some individuals have been in solitary confinement in New York’s prisons for more than two decades.

What Officials Need to Do

- The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture has denounced solitary confinement exceeding 15 days. New York places no limit on the time in isolated confinement.
- More than 13,000 sentences to isolated confinement are imposed every year by corrections staff. Five out of six of these sentences are for nonviolent misbehavior, rather than violent acts.
- States that have reduced their use of isolated confinement have seen decreases in prison violence.
- Every year, up to 2,000 people are released directly from isolated confinement back to the community, without transitional programming. Studies have shown that this practice increases recidivism.
- Stop placing people in solitary confinement. At a minimum, ensure no person is ever held in isolated confinement beyond 15 days.
- Never place particularly vulnerable groups in solitary for even one day, including those who are young, elderly, or pregnant, who have a disability or mental health needs, or who identify as LGBTQI.
- Fundamentally transform the response to people’s needs and problematic behaviors, from deprivation to additional support, programs, and therapy.

What You Can Do

LEARN the facts about solitary and other forms of isolated confinement in New York at:

www.nycaic.org
www.nycjac.org
www.boxedinny.org
www.correctionalassociation.org
www.solitarywatch.com

WRITE to your state legislators, and to the following officials:

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of the State of New York
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Mr. Thomas P. Abt
Deputy Secretary for Public Safety
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Mr. Anthony J. Annucci
Acting Commissioner
NYS DOCCS
1220 Washington Avenue, Building 2
Albany, New York 12226

JOIN the Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement at:

www.nycaic.org.