

Solitary Confinement Class-Action Lawsuit Brought Against Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office



Summary: *The use of solitary confinement in prisons has been heavily scrutinized over the last few years but this is the first lawsuit fighting its use in jails.*

A federal class-action lawsuit has been filed against the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office by the Prison Law Office on behalf of inmates. The two plaintiffs were granted "trustee" status for good behavior before being moved to solitary confinement without a reason.

Solitary Confinement Issues Are Being Brought to the Discussion

Brian Chavez was a model inmate that was given special privileges for his good behavior during the first three years of his sentence. Then, without warning or reason, Chavez was moved to the maximum security unit, locked up for up to 47 hours straight in a 6-by-7-foot cell.

Lawsuit Alleges Woman Gave Birth in Solitary Confinement without Medical Care

The other plaintiff, Brandon Bracamonte, had also received special privileges before being put into solitary confinement. Jail policy allows inmates to file a grievance if they feel their housing status is not appropriate every 30 days, grievance that Chavez and Bracamonte have filed several times but are always told they "properly housed."

Convict Transferred Without Due Process to Solitary Confinement in 110-degree Cell

The lawsuit claims the Santa Clara sheriff locks up hundreds of inmates, allowing them out of their cells for a few as three hours a week. These inmates are held in isolation with no reason, given limited visiting time and shackled whenever outside their cell. They are subjected to strip-searches up to six times a day and denied access to "physical exercise, fresh air, sunlight, normal human contact, meaningful activity, and environmental stimulation." The inmates in solitary confinement are not allowed to use anything to clean their cells except their own personal towel despite the fact that previous inmates in the cells are often mentally ill and have smothered feces and urine around.

The lawsuit follows the death of a mentally ill inmate that was beaten to death by three jail deputies. An investigation into the incident found that inmate complaints of excessive force are rarely investigated.

Source: <https://theintercept.com/2015/12/16/lawsuit-first-to-challenge-use-of-solitary-confinement-in-californias-county-jails/>

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