

VIEWERS GUIDE

Solitary Nation, PBS FRONTLINE

Solitary Nation, a PBS FRONTLINE documentary, premiered on April 22, 2014. The full **video** is free and available for viewing at: <http://to.pbs.org/1INv83j>

1. **The Reality** - Due to the graphic nature of the content, we encourage you to view it in a supportive environment.

2. **What is missing?** - A glaring omission is the dramatically disproportionate impact solitary confinement and incarceration have on people of color nationally. In California, where as a result of racialized 'gang validation' process, it is estimated that 90% of those subjected to long-term isolation are people of color. In New York, while African Americans represent about 14% of the state's population, they account for nearly 50% of the prison population, and 59% of the population in extreme isolation. To learn more about racial disparities in the incarceration in the U.S., visit the Sentencing Project [website](#).

Also there wasn't much mention of the length of time, up to years and decades, that some spend in solitary. The **UN Special Rapporteur on Torture**, Juan Mendez, stated in his [2011 report](#) that solitary confinement **beyond 15 days** should be subject to an absolute prohibition, based on scientific evidence of its psychological damage. In addition, he called for a ban on the solitary confinement of youth and individuals with mental illness.

Yet incarcerated people in the U.S. are held in isolation for months, years, even *decades*. In California, inmates are held in conditions of isolation lasting an average of **6.8 years**. Albert Woodfox has been in solitary confinement for more than **40 years** despite his conviction having been overturned three times in the state of Louisiana.

Women are held in solitary confinement. The ACLU has released a new report on the impact of solitary confinement on incarcerated women, [Worse Than Second-Class](#).

Youth are held in solitary confinement. To learn more, read the report, [Growing Up Locked Down: Youth in Solitary Confinement in Jails and Prisons Across the United States](#), by Human Rights Watch and the ACLU.

3. **Solutions** - Also missing was mention of the variety of campaigns throughout the U.S. to confront solitary confinement. To learn more about *how people of faith are taking action* to end the torture of solitary confinement, visit our updated [state campaign pages](#).

4. **Congressional Hearing** - NRCAT held an interfaith gathering in advance of the **second Congressional Hearing on Solitary Confinement** – [watch video of the gathering](#).

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5. Responses to viewing *Solitary Nation*

Robert Dellelo, a survivor of solitary who spent over two-thirds of his life in some form of confinement, said:

“It is of the utmost importance that people watch both FRONTLINE pieces. As hard as it is to watch, understand that what you are watching is ‘insanity.’ You cannot, and *should not* attempt to make logical, rational sense out of insanity - it simply cannot be done. You are observing a highly toxic environment that not only affects prisoners, it affects the guards, and the administration that has to lie and justify torturing human beings - in the name of ‘corrections.’ Understand that these people are going to be your next door neighbor, far crazier and more violent than when they first entered prison.”

Linda Gustitus, Board President of NRCAT, said,

“The more people watch this program, the more convinced this country will become that prolonged solitary confinement is indeed torture, that the U.S. is perpetrating it on a massive scale, and that it is long past time we stop it.”

David Leslie, Executive Director of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon and member of NRCAT’s board, said,

“I highly recommend viewing *Solitary Nation*. It portrays the impact of solitary in very humanistic, personal and intimate ways, raising a number of important issues including how solitary creates, as well as exacerbates, serious mental health issues.”

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