IN HISTORIC SETTLEMENT, CA DRAMATICALLY CHANGES ITS SOLITARY CONFINEMENT PRACTICES

CA has long had a practice of putting gang affiliates in solitary confinement, not for any behavioral purposes, but to coerce people to inform on their gang-mates. Back in 2012, a group of prisoners — Todd Ashker, Sitawa Nantambu Jamaa, Luis Esquivel, George Franco, Richard Johnson, Paul Redd, Gabriel Reyes, George Ruiz, Danny Troxell, spanning several affiliations — sued to end the practice. Along the way they've also engaged in hunger strikes to call attention to the practice.

The suit just settled. Within short order, almost all of the prisoners who've been in long term solitary will be released into the general population. Solitary will be behaviorally based going forward, rather than affiliation based. For those put in solitary for behavioral issues, there will be a designated step-down process, and they'll get significantly more out-of-cell time than currently. There will be new group housing alternative to solitary. And the prisoners will be a key part of ensuring compliance with this settlement.

The joint statement from the plaintiffs emphasizes the degree to which they won this settlement by working together.

> This settlement represents a monumental victory for prisoners and an important step toward our goal of ending solitary confinement in California, and across the country. California's agreement to abandon indeterminate SHU confinement based on gang affiliation demonstrates

> the power of unity and collective action. This victory was achieved by the efforts of people in prison, their families and loved ones, lawyers, and outside supporters. Our movement rests on a foundation of unity: our Agreement to End Hostilities. It is our hope that this groundbreaking agreement to end the violence between the various ethnic groups in California prisons will inspire not only state prisoners, but also jail detainees, county prisoners and our communities on the street, to oppose ethnic and racial violence. From this foundation, the prisoners' human rights movement is awakening the conscience of the nation to recognize that we are fellow human beings. As the recent statements of President Obama and of Justice Kennedy illustrate, the nation is turning against solitary confinement. We celebrate this victory while, at the same time, we recognize that achieving our goal of fundamentally transforming the criminal justice system and stopping the practice of warehousing people in prison will be a protracted struggle. We are fully committed to that effort, and invite you to join us.

Center for Constitutional Rights has more on the settlement here, including depositions from the plaintiffs dating to last year.

This is really great news. Let's hope it serves as a model for reform elsewhere.