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## 170 trans inmates are suing out Gov. Jared Polis for rape & assault in Colorado's prisons

*Often transgender women are placed in solitary confinement "for their own protection," something which is tantamount to psychological torture.*

By Daniel Villarreal (<https://www.lgbtqnation.com/author/dannyv/>) Monday, November 25, 2019 8 Comments  
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Roughly 170 transgender female inmates in Colorado have filed a class action lawsuit against out Gov. Jared Polis and the Colorado Department of Corrections (CDOC) for allegedly violating the state's Anti-Discrimination Act by subjecting them to abuse and discrimination in the state's prisons.

The Transgender Law Center, who filed the lawsuit on behalf of the women, says the women have been "subjected to unsafe situations, including severe sexual harassment, physical violence and rape," according to NBC News (<https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/transgender-women-inmates-sue-colorado-claiming-harassment-violence-n1090086>).

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Among the suit's 170 plaintiffs is one woman who says she has been brutally assaulted and raped while imprisoned. She has since attempted suicide twice and tried to castrate herself "to deal with her severe gender dysphoria." Another woman claims that she has survived "several rapes" and attacks by one guard in particular. Yet another was "stripped naked by a group of male guards, handcuffed, and placed in the hole for weeks."

Paula Greisen, a Denver civil rights attorney representing some of the women, said, "Sex is a commodity in male prison. These women are used as commodities." She adds that trans women who report rape by guards are often singled out for strip searches and solitary confinement.

Often trans women are placed in male prisons. They're also often placed in solitary confinement, ostensibly to help them avoid violence from other transphobic inmates.

However, a 2018 report (<https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/TransgenderPeopleBehindBars.pdf>) from the National Center for Transgender Equality said that "solitary confinement, with little or no activity or human contact... can cause serious psychological harm and trauma, and which, as medical and human rights experts have found, can amount to torture."

The [2014 Prisoner Survey](http://www.blackandpink.org/survey/) (<http://www.blackandpink.org/survey/>) of over 1,118 prisoners conducted by the LGBTQ prisoner organization [Black and Pink](http://www.blackandpink.org/) (<http://www.blackandpink.org/>) found that 85% of LGBTQ prisoners had been placed in solitary confinement, 100% had experienced forced strip searches (some experienced them every day) and 100% had experienced sexual violence by prison staff.

Colorado's trans female prisoners are asking for institutional changes that start with housing them with female inmates and increasing access to trans-related medical care.

CDOC spokeswoman Annie Skinner said, "Colorado has spent the last several years diligently working to develop and implement thoughtful and informed policies and procedures for the fair and respectful treatment of transgender offenders in our custody, and is considered a leader in this area nationally."

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