



10 Things You Need to Know About Brutality and Abuse at Clinton C.F.

The Correctional Association of NY conducted in depth interviews with 30 people currently incarcerated at Clinton on August 19 and 20, 2015, and corresponded with many more people held at the prison over the last few months. The information reported provides further confirmation of both extensive staff brutality in the aftermath of the June escape from Clinton, as [reported by the New York Times](#); and longstanding and pervasive staff violence and abuse at Clinton, as last documented by the CA's [October 2014 report](#). The brave people willing to come forward to report what is happening behind the walls shared tragic and harrowing accounts highlighting several things everyone should know about Clinton.

1) Officers are Suffocating People During Interrogations

The *New York Times* [reported](#) that a Correction Officer (CO) at Clinton placed a plastic bag over the head of an incarcerated person and threatened to waterboard him. Reminiscent of torture that has taken place at Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, and secret black sites across the globe, right here in New York multiple people at Clinton reported to the CA that COs suffocated them by placing plastic bags over their heads during staff physical assaults or interrogations. This suffocation technique was reported to have occurred both before the escape and in the aftermath of the escape.

2) There was Severe and Widespread Brutality in the Escape's Aftermath

Numerous people reported accounts whereby COs severely beat, interrogated, and transferred many people in the aftermath of the escape. Multiple individuals provided first-hand personal accounts of being severely beaten by COs during the lockdown of the facility, purportedly in connection with the investigations following the escape. For example there were reports of people, , being punched, kicked, thrown to the ground, hit in the face and head, kneed, thrown against the wall, and other similar abuses by several officers at a time. Officers also reportedly used intimidation, threats, and physical abuse to interrogate people about the escape, improperly searched people's cells, destroyed their property, and harassed them.

3) People were Targeted Post-Escape for Reasons Unrelated to the Escape

Some people reported that those who were targeted for the above kinds of brutality were sometimes those who were mistakenly identified or purposely targeted for reasons unrelated to the escape. For example, one person reported that after being severely beaten, staff determined he had been

improperly brought for interrogation and was sent back to his cell. Multiple other people reported that COs targeted them in the post-escape brutality for reasons independent of the escape, such as retaliation for past complaints.

4) There has been Longstanding and Ongoing Brutality at Clinton

Half of the people interviewed by the CA reported they had personally been assaulted by staff at Clinton in recent months either before the escape or more recently. Almost all people interviewed reported that staff beatings had long been, and continued to be, pervasive at Clinton. People reported being punched in the ribs, hit in the face, kicked and stomped on, hit with batons, thrown to the floor, choked, given black eyes, had limbs twisted, teeth cracked, bones broken, and other physical abuse, all in the last several months. Many of these assaults happened after the person was already cuffed with their hands behind their back. People with mental illness and developmental disabilities were also reportedly targeted for serious staff brutality and abuse. As one person with mental illness reported, “A CO choked me with his hands. I lost consciousness. They threw me to the floor. COs started punching me, kicking me, kneeling me in my stomach, punching me in the face. I just prayed I didn’t get killed.”

5) After being Assaulted, People are Sent to Solitary Confinement

Many people reported that after being beaten, they received disciplinary tickets – a penalty for an alleged rule infraction – and were sent to solitary confinement (SHU) on false allegations of assault on staff when they were, in fact, the ones who were assaulted. People recently reported that the majority of those in their part of the SHU were there for false allegations of assault on staff after being beaten.

6) There is a Lack of Proper Documentation and Accountability for Abuses

Numerous people reported a complete lack of accountability for staff abuses at Clinton. Many reported the frequent issuance of false tickets or planting of drugs or weapons, particularly in retaliation for people raising complaints. Moreover, people described how medical staff failed to fully and accurately document injuries received from assaults by staff, including concerns about delays in seeing medical providers after being assaulted. Additionally, there were reports that any investigations carried out by the DOCCS Inspector General’s office or others had not resulted in any follow-up or concrete action.

7) COs are Denying People the Most Basic Rights and Living Conditions

In addition to physical abuse, people incarcerated at Clinton repeatedly reported that COs were engaged in routine and widespread verbal harassment, destruction of people’s property (including legal documents and photographs), and intentional interference or denial of phone calls, mail, showers, and recreation. Serious concerns were raised that these denials have resulted in an inability to remain in contact with family members and other loved ones, and worsening of personal hygiene and general well-being.

8) Racism and Dehumanization are at the Core of All of the Abuses

Many people interviewed linked the systematic brutality at Clinton with an endemic culture of racism and staff violence. Targeting of Black people in particular for assaults and other abuses were reported, as well as the use of racial slurs during beatings. The [CA's 2014 Report on Clinton](#) documented the primary role racism plays in the brutality taking place, as well as the fact that at the time of the CA's visit there was not one Black CO at Clinton, while 53% of the people incarcerated at Clinton were Black.

9) People at Clinton have been Held in Solitary Confinement for Decades

The CA's investigations again encountered individuals incarcerated at Clinton who have spent months, years, and even decades in the torture of solitary confinement. As elsewhere, people in the Special Housing Unit (SHU) or keeplock at Clinton are held 23-24 hours a day without any meaningful human contact, programs, or even phone calls, and are at most provided one hour of recreation alone in another cage without any equipment. As one person described, "Solitary is a living death. It is a slow death one day at a time." Of particular concern is that people held in disciplinary confinement are often receiving additional tickets while in solitary, extending their time for months and years, and people held in administrative segregation have spent years in solitary while being held indefinitely.

10) Not Just Clinton: Beating, Maiming, and Torture Occurs across NY Prisons

The long and brutal history of Clinton staff abuse continues and remains pervasive. The June 2015 escape and its aftermath only exacerbated the abusive conditions and provided opportunities for staff to utilize longstanding tactics of dehumanization, racism, and brutality. As CA reports on [Clinton](#), [Attica](#), [Greene](#), [Fishkill](#), and other prisons have long documented, and as revealed by the brutal [beating of George Williams](#) at Attica and the recent [killing of Samuel Harrell at Fishkill](#), a deeply entrenched and severe environment of violence and abuse by prison security staff, as well as the routine infliction of the torture of solitary confinement, characterizes life not only at Clinton, but at prisons all across New York State. To address this system-wide failure, a comprehensive, systemic, and independent federal investigation by the Department of Justice should be a first step toward the complete overhaul of New York's prison system.