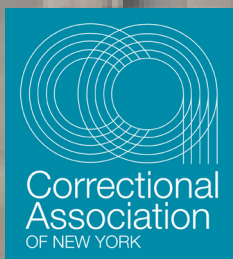


VOICES From CLINTON



**FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS
OF BRUTALITY, TORTURE, AND
COVER-UP FROM PEOPLE
INCARCERATED AT AN INFAMOUSLY
ABUSIVE NEW YORK STATE PRISON**

A close-up photograph of yellow-painted metal prison bars. The bars are vertical and run across the entire frame. The lighting is somewhat dim, with a yellowish tint, and the background is blurred, showing more bars and a glimpse of a hallway.

LARGEST PRISON IN THE STATE

OVER 2600

PEOPLE INCARCERATED AT CLINTON

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOICES FROM CLINTON:

**FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS OF BRUTALITY, TORTURE, AND COVER-UP
FROM PEOPLE INCARCERATED AT AN INFAMOUSLY ABUSIVE PRISON**

- 2 SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION
- 4 SECTION 2: SEVERE AND WIDESPREAD BRUTALITY IN THE ESCAPE'S AFTERMATH
 - Choked with Rag and Bag Over My Head
 - Wrongly Identified and Then Beaten
 - You Either Adapt or You Die
- 10 SECTION 3: ONGOING BRUTALITY TO THIS DAY
 - Seriously Beaten Three Times
 - The Best Solution is to Close Everything Down
 - Standing Up for What is Right, Though Nothing You Say Matters
- 17 SECTION 4: PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS TARGETED FOR ABUSE
 - Savagely Beaten
 - Beat-ups on a Mental Health Unit
 - All of the Abuse is Taking a Big Toll on Me
- 21 SECTION 5: WIDESPREAD USE OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT,
EVEN FOR YEARS AND DECADES
 - Solitary Instead of Drug Treatment
 - Solitary is a Living Death
- 25 SECTION 6: POOR CONDITIONS AND LACK OF TRANSPARENCY
AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ABUSES
 - No Hope or Faith
 - Horrendous Conditions
 - All In
 - Keyplock for Being Slow in the Yard
- 31 SECTION 7: RACISM AND DEHUMANIZATION AT THE CORE OF ALL ABUSES
 - Brutalized Because of Milk
 - Latino People Need Support, Not Abuse
 - Merle Cooper Graduate Stuck at Clinton
 - Most Don't Care; Someone Please Help!
- 35 8: CONCLUSION

1. INTRODUCTION

New York State prisons are plagued by a pervasive and entrenched culture of staff brutality, violence, abuse, racism, dehumanization, and intimidation, as well as the routine infliction of solitary confinement. As Correctional Association of NY (CA) reports on Clinton, Attica,

“What goes on behind these Clinton walls is graphic and bone chilling . . . The mentality of this facility is hostile and volatile. They breed violence here. When things are peaceful, staff here create discord. I have pretty much been to every maximum security prison in New York, and I have never experienced what I have experienced at Clinton. Nor have I witnessed such belligerent, bellicose, contentious, self-righteous disregard for another human’s well-being.”

Greene, Fishkill Correctional Facilities and other prisons have long documented,¹ and as exposed by the brutal beating of George Williams at Attica, systematic beatings at Clinton in the wake of the June 2015 escape from that prison, and the recent killings of Samuel Harrell at Fishkill² and Karl Taylor at Sullivan, these abuses and their cover-ups are regular and typical practices in Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) prisons. An underlying culture and environment of abuse – not the acts of a few individual bad actors – drive the dehumanization and brutalization taking place. This culture is undergirded and fueled by racism, staff impunity, a lack of meaningful programs, a history of violent repression (especially at Attica and Clinton), and a reliance on force, punishment, and disempowerment.

This staff violence is intrinsically linked with the systemic racial disparities in the targeting of Black and Latino people in the New York State prison system. Nearly 75% of the people incarcerated in New York prisons are Black (49%) and Latino (24%), vastly disproportionate to the percentage of Black (13%) and Latino (17%) people in New York State as a whole. Yet, the vast majority of Correction Officers (COs) are white, and at some prisons, there are no or almost no Black COs. At Clinton, for example, DOCCS has reported at times that there was not one Black CO at the prison. Moreover, disproportionately, staff harassment, brutality, and abuse are often most directed at Black and Latino people.

Clinton C.F. is one of the most notoriously abusive of New York’s prisons – both throughout its history and currently. Established in 1845 and sometimes referred to as “Little Siberia” because of the harsh weather conditions and intimidating environment, Clinton is the largest prison in New York State, incarcerating over 2,600 people, and the third oldest prison in the state. The prison has a massive foreboding stone and cement wall on its perimeter, immediately adjacent to the Main Street of Dannemora, and the Main facility is lined with long corridors of stacked tiers of cages. A maximum security facility, Clinton has had an infamous history of violence and abuse by correction officers. Incidents within this history have ranged from what has been classified

as one of the largest prison rebellions challenging abusive conditions in New York State history in 1929, to a series of successful brutality lawsuits in the 1990s, to more recent alleged staff assaults and facility-wide lockdowns, including after the June 2015 escape of two men from the prison.

In the mid-1990s, the New York Times reported that federal judges “have repeatedly found that excessive force by guards has violated [incarcerated persons’] civil rights,” that corrections experts found the settling of 10 brutality lawsuits at Clinton to be “extraordinary, since [incarcerated persons] rarely win such cases and officials rarely settle them,” that Clinton had an “internal culture that tolerates a higher level of violence than others, and where guards are more likely to test the



boundaries of what is considered acceptable force,” and that vast racial and cultural disparities between incarcerated persons and staff exacerbated conflicts.³ In 2015, again the Times reported on the racially driven abusive conditions at Clinton generally,⁴ the rampant brutality following the escape,⁵ and the 2010 death of Leonard Strickland following a savage beating by staff.⁶

As reported in the CA’s 2014 Clinton report, as well as in its August 2015 documented investigations,⁷ officers at Clinton have engaged in the most horrific violence against incarcerated people long before the June 2015 escape, in its immediate aftermath, and still today. People incarcerated at Clinton have given first-hand accounts of being suffocated by plastic bags, physically beaten so severely as to result in broken bones, and other forms of brutality, harassment, and abuse. People have also reported the cover-up of such abuses through false tickets, medical staff failures to properly document injuries, and a wholly ineffective grievance system and internal investigations by DOCCS Office of Special Investigation (OSI).

These allegations must be taken in the context of 31 deaths that occurred at Clinton from 2007 to 2013, at least two of which had official state reports indicating they occurred following physical assaults by staff. In addition, in reported Unusual Incident Reports (UIRs) of confrontations between staff and incarcerated people at Clinton, staff injury was reported in only 28% of the alleged assault-on-staff UIRs, while injuries to incarcerated people were reported in 87% of those same assault-on-staff UIRs, three times the rate for staff.⁸ In many of these incidents, COs are writing up a confrontation as “assault on *staff*” when in fact staff have beaten people up and/or staff responded to minor conduct with excessive force and then written the incident as an assault on staff. Clinton is also one of five facilities with the highest rates of suicide across the state – along with Attica, Great

Meadow, Auburn, and Elmira. From 2000 to May 2014, 25 reported suicides took place at Clinton, 11 of which occurred between 2007 and 2014 and six of those between 2012 and 2014. 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. The following narratives provide an in-depth look at the ongoing brutality, torture, and cover-up at Clinton C.F. Based on over 40 interviews, as well as correspondence with over 75 people, the narratives are a representative sample of the experiences, insights, and analyses of people incarcerated at Clinton in 2015. These narratives paint a picture of several recurring themes of staff violence and abuse at Clinton, including: 1) suffocation of people during interrogations; 2) severe and widespread brutality in the aftermath of the June 2015 escape; 3) longstanding and ongoing brutality at Clinton to this day; 4) people with special needs targeted for abuse by staff; 5) widespread use of solitary confinement, including for years and decades; 6) a lack of transparency and accountability for abuses; 7) the denial of the most basic rights and living conditions; and 8) racism and dehumanization at the core of all abuses. Something must be done to stop these human rights violations – at Clinton and across New York State prisons. Due to its infamous history and ongoing horrors, the state should close Clinton, along with Attica, to send a clear message that New York State will no longer tolerate staff brutality, torture, and abuse. The Correctional Association is deeply grateful to the incredibly courageous people incarcerated at Clinton who took substantial risks to share their experiences and insights, speak truth to power, expose the atrocities at Clinton, and help build a movement toward closing Clinton, ending violence and abuse behind the walls, and challenging the racist system of incarceration.

2. SEVERE AND WIDESPREAD BRUTALITY IN THE ESCAPE'S AFTERMATH

“While on the floor, multiple COs beat me up, punching me in the face and choking me. They placed me in handcuffs with my hands behind my back. Other COs brought me out of this unit and when in the hall, told me to face the wall. Multiple COs again assaulted me. They punched me in the face, kicked me in the ribs, and punched and kicked my body.”

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. Reminiscent of torture revealed at Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, and secret black sites across the globe, 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 (consistent with *New York Times* reports that COs at Clinton, including so-called Captain America,⁹ suffocated people using plastic bags and threatened waterboarding). This suffocation technique was reported to the CA to have occurred both before the escape and in the aftermath of the escape. Moreover, 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. Some people reported that those who were targeted for the above kinds of brutality were sometimes those who were mistakenly identified. 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.

Choked with Rag and Bag Over My Head

Approximately one month after the escape, I was assaulted by staff. Even though I had done nothing wrong and was just going to recreation. I was choked, had a rag tightened around my neck, had a bag placed over my head, and was severely beaten by staff at Clinton.

On that day, another incarcerated person asked me to let the officer know that his cell didn't open for recreation. When I told the officer, the CO told me to worry about myself and not others. Then the CO told me to lock back in my cell and when I asked him why, he ordered me to place my hands on the wall. The CO waited until everyone else left the tier, and he smacked me in the face and pulled his pin indicating an emergency. Other officers came, and I was thrown to the floor.

While on the floor, multiple COs beat me up, punching me in the face and choking me. They placed me in handcuffs with my hands behind my back. Other COs brought me out of this unit and when in the hall, told me to face the wall. Multiple COs again assaulted me. They punched me in the face, kicked me in the ribs, and punched and kicked my body.

A sergeant put a scarf or rag around my neck and tightened it, causing me to pass out. COs brought me further down the hall and they assaulted me again. They placed a plastic bag over my head, making it difficult to breathe, and I passed out again.

I woke up in the medical area in a separate room and was assaulted again. A sergeant, lieutenant, and COs were present at the time. Officers banged my head against the wall, kicked me, and smacked me. They claimed that I assaulted an officer, which I hadn't, and that I had come off the wall. They also claimed that another incarcerated person had passed me an unknown object, but no such object was ever found.

“Staff have been extra abusive since the June 2015 escape. The assaults by staff have gotten worse. A majority of the other people who have come to the box since I've been here are for assaults on staff when in fact they have been assaulted by staff.”

I eventually saw a doctor and some pictures were taken of my injuries, and some of my injuries were documented in my medical records, including a sprained wrist, a cut on my ear, and bruises on my ankle. The next day, I woke up with blood in my eye and bruises on my left side. I repeatedly asked to go to sick call for two weeks but I was never brought to the clinic to be seen, so these injuries were never documented. I also continue to have migraines and soreness in my arm.

I received a false ticket for assault on staff, violent conduct, interference with staff, and causing a disturbance. I received five months of Special Housing Unit (SHU) time in solitary confinement. I appealed the ticket and filed a grievance, which was denied. My wife also called the Inspector General (IG) and I was seen by an IG official.

Staff have been extra abusive since the June 2015 escape. The assaults by staff have gotten worse. A majority of the other people who have come to the box since I've been here are for assaults on staff when in fact they have been assaulted by staff. Also, COs are going around the prison, banging on walls and bars. They are searching cells every few days, and sometimes the resident is not present for the search even though there is no emergency to justify a search without the person being there. They are also setting up people with weapons. Plus, staff have been constantly harassing people incarcerated at Clinton, including making them stand for the count, running recreation a half hour to an hour late, and limiting people's phone time in the yard. Some people have not been able to get to the phone, particularly if their housing area is one of the last units being called for the yard.

In the SHU, the cells are unsanitary. They are not being cleaned before a person is put in them. There is also no circulation of air. Supplies are not being given out, and we cannot get soap as a medical item. There are no screens on the windows, so there is a significant bug infestation. Also, I didn't get clean clothes for a week when I first came to the box.

I have had some additional problems in the box because some of the COs who assaulted me work in the SHU. They have messed with my food – during the first two weeks, I got an empty tray about three times per week. I have also been denied showers.

All of the abuses taking place are to be blamed on the higher up officials. They tried to kill me, I nearly choked to death, and they all just tried to cover it up.

Wrongly Identified and then Beaten

In the few days after the June 2015 escape, security staff repeatedly came to interrogate a person incarcerated in a nearby cell to mine. They were targeting him because they believed he was familiar with one of the men who escaped since they were on the same court in the yard. After the COs had come to this neighbor's cell multiple times – intimidating him and pushing him around – one night, a number of COs came to my cell. They came after the count had already taken place, and I was already sleeping. All of a sudden, the cell opened up, and multiple security staff – consisting of both regular Clinton staff and the Corrections Emergency Response Team (CERT), and including both COs and sergeants – rushed into my cell.

One of the COs threw me into a headlock – choking me until I could not breathe – and kned me on my back while I was still in bed. I was just in my drawers with no shirt on. One CO grabbed my left arm, another my right, they pulled my leg, and they threw me on the floor. A CO put his knee on my back. When I asked what was going on, one officer said “shut the f*ck up. This is what happens when people escape.” Officers twisted my arms behind my back, and put handcuffs on me real tight to the point where it cut off circulation, and I ended up with bruises on my wrists.

Staff yanked me up by my handcuffs and a CERT officer punched me in the ribs, causing me to keel over. An officer then punched me in the back of my head and the side of my temple, causing me to drop back to the ground. A sergeant was bending my arm. Another twisted my leg, pulled me, and stretched my limbs. They dragged me on the ground to the back of the cell and pulled me up and turned me around. They took my head and bumped it hard on the wall in the back of the cell. I started yelling “what are you all doing? You're trying to kill me?” They dragged me out of my cell. I didn't have any clothes on: no shoes or socks; I was barefoot.

They dragged me all the way down the company with my handcuffs on, and an officer was squeezing the cuffs tighter as we went. When I got to the hallway, staff threw me into the wall. They then mused my faced into the wall. They brought me to the visiting room area. While I was down there, there were several other people who had been pulled out. Staff took me into a little room, did a strip frisk, and a CERT officer chopped me in my testicles.



They had me on the wall and threatened me that if I came off the wall, “the beating was gonna get worse.” Finally, they got me dressed and then fully shackled with cuffs on my hands, a waist chain, a black box over the cuffs, and ankle shackles — all extremely tight so that I could barely walk.

I was back in the waiting area with others who had been beaten and brought down. A captain then asked for the person who was in the cell number that was my neighbor’s cell. No one answered. Then he asked who is in the cell number of my cell. When I said it was me, they asked me my name. When I gave them my name, number, and cell location, the Captain told a sergeant that this was not the person he said to bring. The sergeant responded that it was the right person. The Captain then told the sergeant to look at his paper. The sergeant checked his paper and stated that it was supposed to be the person in the cell number that was my neighbor’s cell. The Captain told the sergeant to send me back and that I was not the person they were supposed to bring down. They had targeted the wrong person — they meant to bring down my neighbor who they had been interrogating, but instead, they brought me down and beat me up. They took off my full shackles, left me in regular handcuffs, and sent me back.

When I requested to see medical, security staff said I was not going to see medical. When I told him that my ribs and my testicles were hurting, his response was that he could get dozens of CERT officers who could make me have to see medical. I didn’t say anything more, and they brought me back to my cell.

I was in a lot of pain, couldn’t sleep, and ended up urinating blood. They finally took me to see a nurse, who did some documentation of my injuries. However, I never was able to see a doctor and they did not provide me with any treatment. I still have problems with my wrist and my back.

All of the other guys who were down in the area I was brought to were shipped out of Clinton that night. And they eventually shipped out my neighbor in the nearby cell. But me, I was sent back to my cell and kept here.

I wrote a grievance about the incident, and after it was denied, I appealed it. Following the supposed investigation, DOCCS’ response was that the COs inadvertently took me from my cell, interviewed me, and sent me back once they found out I was not the right person. They lied and said that they had interviewed me and three witnesses, but they hadn’t conducted any interviews with any of us. Someone from the Inspector General’s (IG) office interviewed me and the other witnesses, but I never heard anything as a follow-up to their investigation.

I don’t know if it was just a mistake that they beat me up. Or if it was an old grudge that was the reason they targeted me and “mistakenly” got me. When I came down, there were other people with high profile cases who had been brought down that day. They seemed to have been just using the escape as an excuse to beat up guys they didn’t like. Clinton is one of the facilities where if you ever get into an incident with any officer, then all the COs are always against you.

They never issued me a disciplinary ticket or otherwise indicated that I had done anything wrong; they just beat me up because supposedly they got the wrong guy. A few weeks later, though, after I filed a grievance, they did give me a false ticket claiming I had taken a t-shirt while working in the tailor shop. They gave me 20 days in keeplock. I think they did it as retaliation because I had filed the grievance. Once you put in a grievance, they all work in cahoots with each other to retaliate. And I had never had any problems before this in the tailor shop, and I have been without any disciplinary tickets for more than a year and a half. Now with this ticket, I may not make the transfer I requested. I want to get out of this prison.

Of course I was not the only one who was beat up and got false tickets. For years, they have been beating people up, and planting weapons on people if you file a grievance. Over 10 years ago, I was at Clinton and was beaten up, and sustained injuries to my ribs, face, and finger.

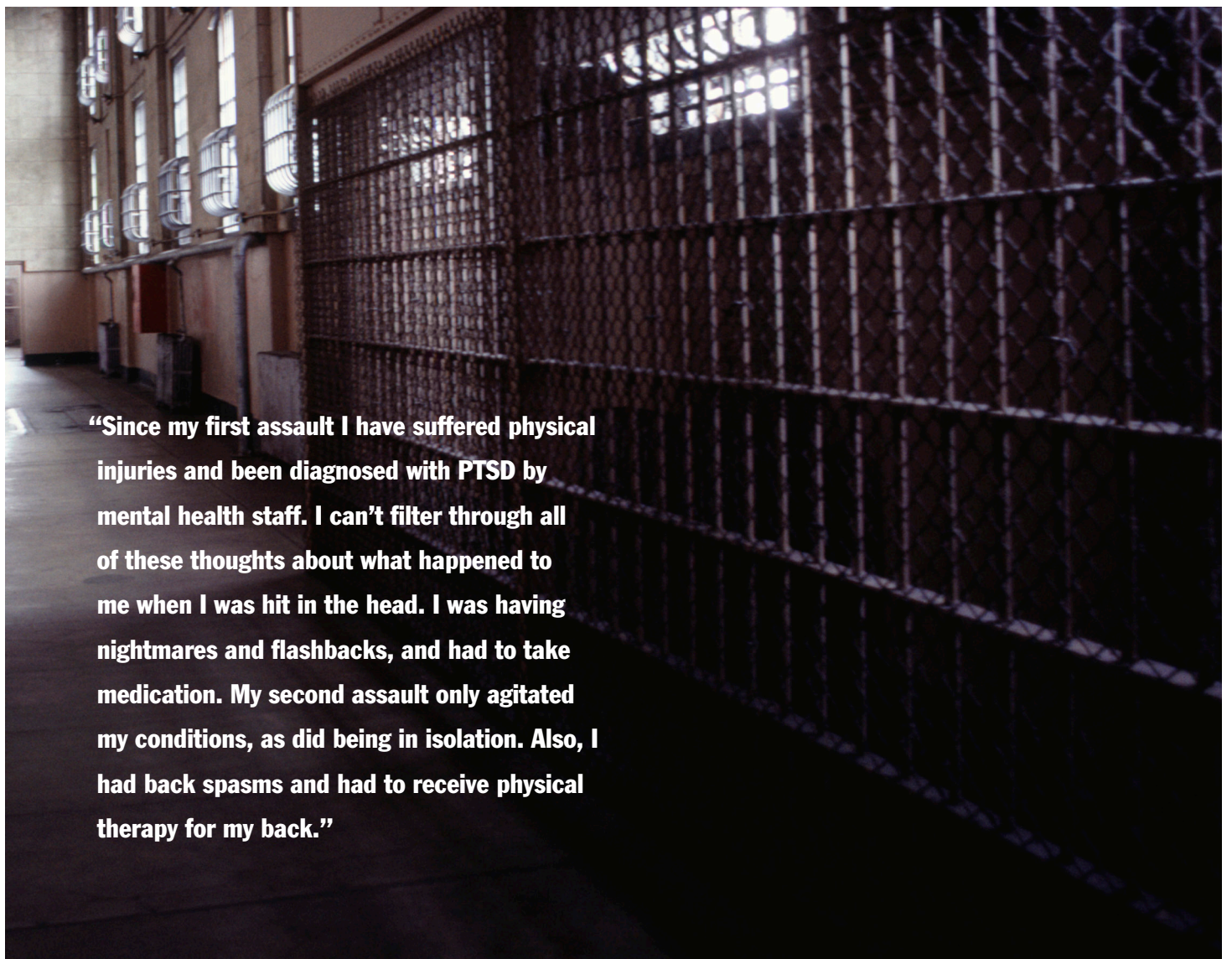
And racism here is extremely high — to the point that 99% of the officers are racist. There are no Black officers at Clinton. Maybe six months ago I may have seen one Black officer, but that was it. Staff use racial slurs a

lot. In the yard, you will often hear “you f*cking [n-word], f*cking spics” and so forth. And they will use tear gas in the yard for minor incidents. Plus, there are no cameras throughout the prison.

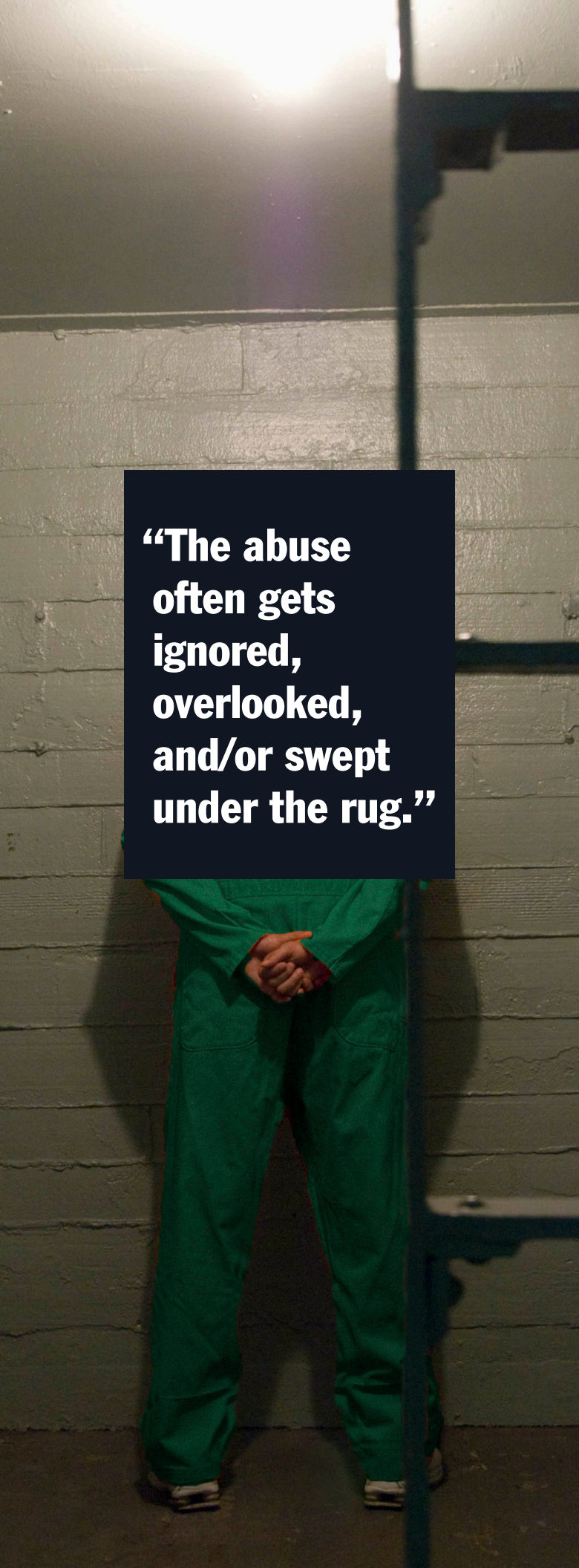
The tension at Clinton was already high in the prison before the escape, and it just got even worse after the escape. Beat ups have been happening a lot all around Clinton. Security staff are constantly doing cell searches and writing people up for almost anything, such as having an extra blanket. Staff used to not say anything for stuff like that but now they will send you to SHU or keeplock and make you pay the mandatory five dollar fine for a ticket. Just look at me – I had a Tier II non-violent ticket for allegedly taking a shirt, and they are still holding me in solitary in keeplock and making me walk around in shackles. At security posts throughout this facility, there is a microwave, TV, and refrigerator for the COs. Yet in the aftermath of the escape, even though staff were responsible, they have taken everything from us and nothing from staff; no one is investigating the abuses they are inflicting.

Cameras would stop a lot of the staff violence. They need both body cameras and regular facility cameras. There will still be many blind spots. But cameras at least make the COs think twice. Though even with body cameras, you still see police in the streets shooting people.

Ultimately, this place should be shut down and should have been shut down when Cuomo was closing prisons in recent years. As they closed more and more downstate prisons, more Black and Latino people end up stuck incarcerated way up here at abusive prisons with all white COs. New York should have closed places that are up here; they should have closed Clinton.



“Since my first assault I have suffered physical injuries and been diagnosed with PTSD by mental health staff. I can’t filter through all of these thoughts about what happened to me when I was hit in the head. I was having nightmares and flashbacks, and had to take medication. My second assault only agitated my conditions, as did being in isolation. Also, I had back spasms and had to receive physical therapy for my back.”



“The abuse often gets ignored, overlooked, and/or swept under the rug.”

You Either Adapt or You Die

I was assaulted during the lockdown following the June 2015 escape, with a lieutenant and a sergeant present. Some of the assaults that were done at that time were in retaliation for the escape, but some were targeted at specific people because of other matters. The lockdown just opened the door for retaliation about anything. My assault did not stem from the escape. I know it was retaliation for other matters. I was grieving the Superintendent and was targeted at this time because of that ongoing dispute, as well as because I am an influential person at the facility, and the COs don't like that.

“I first began being harassed by staff at Clinton because of my hair. I am a mature Black male of African American and Native America descent. I have been growing and grooming my hair for 16 years. There is something about “dreadlocks” that just drives the officers here crazy. I have been told on a number of occasions by officers that they’re going to hold me down and shave my head clean.”

I first began being harassed by staff at Clinton because of my hair. I am a mature Black male of African American and Native America descent. I have been growing and grooming my hair for 16 years. There is something about “dreadlocks” that just drives the officers here crazy. I have been told on a number of occasions by officers that they’re going to hold me down and shave my head clean.

But my real problems began when I tried to educate myself by making some requests for information. The officers fear intellectual people because they do not know how to control, deal, or handle such a person. So officers handle them the “Clinton way” through violence and intimidation, and they are very vindictive.

About a year before the escape, I requested some information and then started filing grievances when the information wasn't provided to me. I filed numerous grievances with the Superintendent, the Deputy Superintendent for programs, and other officials in Albany. As a result of all of this writing, a CO came to my cell and hit me in the ankle with his baton. The officer stated, “write whatever the f*ck you want; you see what writing just got you.” My family complained about this incident, and the Inspector General (IG) came to interview me. I also

filed a federal claim in reference to the excessive use of force. From that time until the escape, they were just waiting for an opportunity to pounce on me.

When the escape happened, officers used that as an excuse to get back at me for the complaints I had raised. The escape not only displayed the incompetency of the staff here in doing their job, but also displayed how the staff here deals with something complex like an escape or something as simple as gathering information about the escape. No matter how big or small, they resolve things with violence.

One morning, just after the escape, multiple COs came into my cell. They told me to turn around. As I was facing my cell, I saw that one CO was reading a federal claim I had regarding excessive force while another was looking through the book I have with a number of government contacts. They started whispering to each other. A lieutenant and a sergeant came to the cell and asked what was taking so long. The COs stated that I had too much stuff. After I responded that I had what I was allowed to have, the lieutenant told me I had to “throw some of this sh*t away or I’ll throw it away for you.” When I told him some of it was legal material, he replied that he didn’t care, and I had to get rid of it.

Then one of the COs said that I had been running my mouth all day and he came at me and punched me in the face. A bunch of officers cuffed me, grabbed me, and literally carried me down the company. When we got to the front of the company, I was thrown to the floor, where I was kicked and stomped on by a number of officers. A CO stomped on the bottom of my feet while I laid on my stomach screaming in pain. I was kicked in the head a number of times.

One CO lifted my head off the floor by clutching a fistful of my hair, and repeatedly punched me in the face with a gloved hand. I must have passed out at some point. Eventually, a sergeant told me that I had a choice: I could go back to my cell or I could receive a ticket that would result in five years of SHU time. I went back to my cell.

As a result of the assault, I had knots on my head, boot prints on various parts of my body, a glove print on my face from being punched, and my nose and ears were bleeding. My head was on fire and pounding. It felt like my brain was going back and forth in my head. And I was going in and out of consciousness. When I came back to my cell, my neighbor saw through a personal mirror the glove print on my face and my bloody nose and ears. He kept talking to me to wake me up and make sure I didn’t go to sleep, because we didn’t know if I had suffered something major to my head. I continue to suffer severe migraines that I never had before, and I have deep pain in my back.

Despite these injuries, they denied me any medical attention for several weeks, until the post-escape facility lockdown was over. I was just left in my cell. Nurses made rounds and could see that I was injured but refused to assist me. After the lockdown ended, I finally went to sick

PEOPLE INCARCERATED AT CLINTON



COs AT CLINTON



call. But when I got there, the COs stripped me and intimidated me. I heard one say it’s too late – he told the nurse already. They brought me to a room and stripped me down and questioned me about what injuries I reported to the nurse. Because of this intimidation, I was afraid to tell the nurse what had happened.

Deep down, I believe that this assault was targeted and “payback” for intellectually challenging their authority. I have never in my life been beaten the way that I was on that day.

I did file a grievance afterward. They said there was no evidence to substantiate my claims, but they didn’t allow me to present evidence or witnesses. After I appealed, I wrote to check on the status of my appeal and was told there was no appeal on record, so I appealed again. Also my family filed a complaint with the Inspector General’s office. But I never heard from the IG and nothing has happened with regard to my complaints.

After the incident, COs continued to intimidate me and I started feeling the effects. I started dropping things. I had never felt this way in my life. There were times that I hyperventilated, and I had never done that before. I am scared to even walk around these COs.

I am a very respectful person. I use please and thank you. In my decade incarcerated, I never had any assault on staff charges. Yet, at the end of the day, I still was harassed, intimidated, and beaten.

What goes on behind these Clinton walls is graphic and bone chilling. There are several places where people get assaulted at Clinton: the clinic, on the way to the SHU, going to the yard, and the blocks. I have witnessed people leave the company one way – in good health – and come back another – bruised, scuffed up, incapacitated, and/or disoriented. The mentality of this facility is hostile and volatile. They breed violence here. When things are peaceful, staff here create discord. I have pretty much been to every maximum security prison in

the state of New York, and I have never experienced what I have experienced at Clinton. Nor have I witnessed such belligerent, bellicose, contentious, self-righteous disregard for another human's well-being. I have witnessed a neighbor being beaten because he had photos of "white women" – turns out they were the mothers of his children. When I was called to testify on his behalf at the hearing, I was forced to write a refusal.

The abuse often gets ignored, overlooked, and/or swept under the rug – the same way the hundreds of dead bodies found at Clinton in the 1990s were swept under the rug. The grievance system is a joke, and Central Office in Albany turns a blind eye to all that happens here. Officials in Albany do not do anything to stop the abuses. If you are not hanging from a rope in your cell, Albany doesn't care.

My punishment for the error of my ways and actions is to be secluded – taken away from the people and the things that I hold dear to my heart. My punishment does not include being beaten, misused, or mistreated. The mentality of the correctional staff here at Clinton, as well as at other facilities, is that they can do whatever they like, whenever they like, because of the fact that we're "convicts" and who cares about what happens to us.

In a place like Clinton, you either adapt or you die. I just want to help others and to keep myself safe. I continue to live in fear because they know that I will not keep what happened to me a secret. They know I have been attempting to shed some light on what happened to me and others during the lockdown of the facility. And once again they are waiting for the smoke to clear so they can pounce yet again – I am afraid of that day.

3. ONGOING BRUTALITY AT CLINTON TO THIS DAY

Half of the people interviewed by the CA at Clinton in 2015 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 continue 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. Although a new administration came to Clinton in the aftermath of the escape and although unthinkable measures of harsh interrogation practices and rampant brutality may have slightly decreased as the months have passed, people incarcerated at Clinton continue to report frequent brutal beatings by staff.

Seriously Beaten Three Times

I have been seriously beaten up by staff three times in the last four years, including multiple times at Clinton and most recently in the fall of 2015.

The first assault came a few years ago at another prison. After a group fight had ended, COs beat me up. A CO busted me upside the head with his baton. It was so bad that I was sent to an outside medical center and received over a dozen stitches in my head. I had never been hit with a baton in the head before. Instead of anything happening to the staff, I was sent to the box for a year and a half. I filed a grievance and then a lawsuit.

After I was released from the box after 18 months, I was sent to Clinton at the end of 2013. While in the reception area, after I asked for a sandwich, a CO told me not to try to soften him up and said, "we know who the f*ck you are, and we know what the f*ck you did in the [other prison's] yard. You better not try any of that here. We kill for f*cking with us." A few days later, after I got into an altercation with another incarcerated person, COs brought me into an interrogation room. When

they asked me for information about the altercation and the other guy, I didn't say anything; I was not going to snitch. So the COs beat me up. One CO grabbed my neck and shoved me into the wall. Two COs then started pounding me. They used my back as a punching bag. They were shouting things like "this is my jail and my rules," and "I can do whatever the f*ck I want." A sergeant was in the doorway, but he did not do anything to stop the assault by staff.

The officers threatened me after the assault, saying that the incident better stay with us. They told me, "you think this is bad; you'll be beat up to the point that you sh*t yourself." So I made no comment for the injury report. I was crying, but I played the possum and at that time told the nurses there were no injuries even though I suffered serious injuries as a result of the assault.

But then when I was back in my cell, I wrote to my family and then to medical, mental health, and everyone else I could to document what had happened. A little more than two weeks later, COs came to escort



me to medical – after my bruises had healed. One of the officers who escorted me was one of the officers who had assaulted me. They again threatened me, but this time I reported the injuries to medical. I told the sergeant that I had an open grievance for the assault against one of the escort officers and that I did not feel safe. Luckily, they did not allow that sergeant to escort me back that day. But a few days later, I went to OMH and the same officer was there, and he threatened me again. At my disciplinary hearing a week later, the CO was there again and once again he threatened me. In the end, I received 90 days in long-term keeplock.

Since my first assault I have suffered physical injuries and been diagnosed with PTSD by mental health staff. I can't filter through all of these thoughts about what happened to me when I was hit in the head. I was having nightmares and flashbacks, and had to take medication. My second assault only agitated my conditions, as did being in isolation. Also, I had back spasms and had to receive physical therapy for my back.

Shortly after I finished my time in keeplock in 2014, they transferred me to another prison and put me on the same block as the person I had been in a fight with at Clinton. They were trying to get my face cut. But they didn't realize that the other person and I had actually worked things out. I spent over a year in general population without any problems. After an altercation with another person, they sent me again to solitary confinement – this time to Southport for four months. The COs are very aggressive at Southport. Southport is a supermax prison and there are no cameras on the gallery.

After completing my SHU time at Southport, they transferred me back to Clinton in late 2015. I couldn't understand how they could send me back there, when I had ongoing complaints and lawsuits about the officers who had assaulted me. But they did. And I heard from another incarcerated person that some of the COs were out to get me. Then, a little over a month later, I was seriously assaulted by staff.

That day, I was on my way to the yard and was carrying a care package of food I had purchased from commissary for a friend who had just come out of the SHU. I was wearing a jacket that was allowed but the metal detector rang as I went through and so I was put on the wall. The CO started looking through all of the stuff I had brought and was about to open up a hermetically sealed food item. When I told him he couldn't do that, the CO started cursing at me. I didn't say anything in response but perhaps they didn't like my body language. They told me to get dressed, and then they told me to get back on the wall. A CO wanded me with a metal detector around my mouth and then told me that I was not going to the yard and instead would be going back to the block.

I asked them why they were escorting me back and they replied, "You'll know in a minute." In the hallway, a CO put on his gloves and suddenly threw a punch at me. I ducked to the wall and crossed my arms in front of me. Then the COs started thrashing me, throwing a flurry of closed fist punches to my head and upper body. They pulled the pin and a ton of COs came running and beat me up badly. They hit me with their batons, gave me many body blows, and kicked me in the face, trying to knock my teeth out. My whole face was swollen. I suffered a closed and black eye, a cut under my other eye, a bruised kidney, and abrasions all over my body. Then they used the hoodie I was wearing to choke me. They pulled me up by the drawstring wrapped around my neck like a noose. They were trying to suffocate me. I tried to scream, "I can't breathe," but it barely came out.

When they brought me to medical after the beat-up, a CO said that I was "one of the most uppity [n-words]", that "mother f*ckers like [me] are the reason why they invented the KKK. I had the [n-word] around a f*cking noose." I said on camera that DOCCS should never have sent me back to this facility – look what happened to me. I felt in fear of my life. I requested to go to an OMH observation

cell for my safety. I stayed there for one night, and the next morning they took me to the SHU. The next day, I wrote to the Correctional Association and others.

For getting assaulted, I was charged with assault on staff, violent conduct, refusing a direct order, and creating a disturbance. I was sent to the box for many months. There are many people in Clinton who have false assault-on-staff charges. The media coverage – in addition to continuing to say how heroic staff are related to the escape – reports that assaults on staff are up 6%. But that is so bogus because COs assault people and then give them a ticket for assault on staff – like what happened to me – and that is included in their calculations.

I believe I was assaulted and set up with a false misbehavior report in retaliation for the civil suit I have against officers who work or worked at this prison. I filed a grievance, and a sergeant even interviewed me about my grievance and the internal DOCCS Office of Special Investigation (OSI) interviewed me about the incident, but later DOCCS claimed that I had never submitted a grievance. There is foul play all over this situation. They are attempting to interfere with my timely access to the courts. Videos would have showed the injuries I suffered but the cassettes went missing. Plus, the nurse lightened up the injury report. The civilians follow the security staff. Civilians can get jumped by COs in the parking lot if they don't. There were two Black female COs who recently left Clinton because they had faced sexual harassment and other abuse by staff. Whenever there are Black COs at Clinton – which is rare – other COs treat them in a racist manner.

I continue to be afraid of what they might do to me. Shortly after the incident, I thought I saw the CO who had beaten me up escorting people to the showers, so I refused the shower. Then the sergeant was trying to pressure me to take the shower, so I got really scared that they were setting me up. I was afraid they were going to kill me. I immediately filed a notice of claim so that in case something happened to me there could be a record of what happened to me and my family could seek a wrongful death claim.

People in movement and control in central office of DOCCS in Albany are responsible for bringing me back to Clinton and having this happen to me. They turned a blind eye when they sent me here, and/or I was deliberately sent back here knowing that I was at risk of being assaulted again by staff. The people at Clinton are trying to kill me. I need to be transferred from this facility. The COs could push me down the stairs. Or break my neck. They have done this before and will fabricate some reason why they had to do it, or say that I killed myself and blame OMH.

This facility went through an escape. And yet there is no recording anywhere. They don't have recording escorts. For the protection of COs and incarcerated people, when you go through the magnetometer or when escorted to the block, they should put a recording device on

whenever they are escorting you in the hallway and in any blind spots outside the view of fixed cameras. They need to have recording on 24/7 because we are getting framed. There are too many people in prison who have false assault-on-staff charges. COs are even fabricating evidence and then re-charging people. Someone can start out with a four year bid and then have 14 to life and likely spend their whole life in prison because he rubbed a CO the wrong way. The COs are fabricating a lot of things and use their powerful union to protect them. New York needs to have independent law enforcement infiltrate this organization (DOCCS). They need law enforcement stationed throughout so they see what is transpiring. They need people on the inside doing investigations so they know what happens and when. Now there are no review panels. They would find a whole lot of things that they don't want to see.

This is the newest form of slavery. People who don't have the resources are the new slaves. It's a caste system. Officials are turning a blind eye because nobody in the public really cares. It doesn't matter if you do well in prison – you are still going to get punched, slashed, beat up. It is hard. You have to be in here to understand.

I want to help spread the word. I am an activist and was an activist in college before I came to prison. It is my honor to now help push forward with efforts to challenge the abuses taking place. I recently had an epiphany – a vision – that I was out on a podium and I was a speaker to my people, letting them know about what was going on behind the walls. I want to get things out to the community and help them to embrace the need for change.

I'm not afraid of what might happen to push for change. Taxpayers may say that it doesn't matter what happens to us because we are bad people. Just because we commit crimes doesn't mean men can treat us like animals. And there is a lot of officer brutality going on here. If New York was to close down a maximum security prison – like Clinton or Attica – it would send a clear message and would really shake things up. I don't know if it could ever happen, but something needs to be done.

The Best Solution is to Close Everything Down

I was sitting in my cell one day in July 2015 when a CO comes to the front of my cell and says, “It’s your lucky day.” I said, what? Cell search.

I faced the cell with my back against the bars. The CO asked what I had in my cell. I told him I had two state razors. His whole demeanor changed immediately. When he asked why, I told him the second razor was there when I got here. I’m in my early twenties and this is my first time upstate and they tell you that you keep all the property that is in your cell. So I hadn’t thought anything of having the other razor. In retrospect I know I wasn’t supposed to have two state razors. He said I was lying and asked me again. I told him it was there when I got there. He kept asking me and kept saying I was lying. He stopped the cell search. He pulled me out of the cell and started walking down the company. He said, “you know where this is going, right?” I just put my head down.

He put me on the wall in front of the bubble. He searched me. And the CO again asked me where I got the razor. I told him it was in my cell. He asked me a couple more times. He said, “I’m sick of you lying mother f*ckers.”

He put his gloves on. I thought to myself, here we go. Then he said, “you’re not gonna tell me the truth?” I didn’t say anything. He told me to let go of the bars (so he could have an excuse to assault me). I held on. He pulled my hands away and put me in cuffs. The CO then started punching me in the ribs multiple times.

Another CO slapped me with the back of his hand in the head and face multiple times. Then the CO told me, “now I’m gonna let my boys have their turn with you.” Several COs came up the stairs and many started beating me, causing me to hit the floor. They kept stomping on me, kicking me, and slapping me. One CO told me to shut up so the other incarcerated people on the company wouldn’t hear me. They had already made all the porters lock in so they didn’t see. One CO tried to poke my eye out. After they were beating me for a while, a lieutenant finally said that was enough. They took me to the infirmary and I got checked out. They told me if I said anything funny on camera, they would jump me again. I was scared so I didn’t say anything.

As a result of the beating, I had a blood clot in one eye, both of my eyes and inside of my ears were black and blue, and I had bruises and cuts on my ribs, elbow, leg and back. They also gave me a ticket and six months in the SHU for alleged assault on staff, extra state property (razor), refusing a direct order, violent conduct, and interference with employee conduct.

I filed a grievance, appealed the disciplinary ticket, and made a complaint to the IG. But nothing has come of any of this, at least not yet. Meanwhile, I am in solitary confinement in the SHU.

The SHU is full at Clinton. And the SHU is terrible. In here, my mind is always racing. The SHU is starting to bother me now. I start thinking about everything, including about my family. Plus they are playing with people’s mail. I know my grandmother is writing me. She always responds right away. But not getting anything from her makes me anxious and worried.

We – people in the SHU – try to make it a little better by talking to each other even while in our own cells. But the COs – often as retaliation – mess with food, showers, and basic services. It is not right. Trays are coming up half empty. Or the COs will bring you an empty tray and walk by the cameras to make it seem he is serving you, even though you have no food. They take these measures for retaliation. We are also denied other essential services. The showers have hair in them from days before. They’re not giving out mops so we can’t clean our cells. Also, while I do go out to recreation –it doesn’t seem like they give us the full hour.

“Since the escape, things have only gotten worse at Clinton. Albany has been putting pressure on the prison, and it is rolling down hill and we are punished as a result. Any little thing you say, they put their hands on you. You can just say, “what?” And they can beat you. Seems now everyday or every other day there are staff assaults and people are getting hurt. Staff also just take stuff from your cell. You have no say so. If you do say something, they put their hands on you. Over half of the people in the SHU are here with false assault-on-staff charges after being assaulted by facility staff.”

Being in your cell all day is aggravating. I am just sitting in here for something that should never justify the escalation that took place or such long-term isolation. I know now that I shouldn't have had the extra razor, but to get jumped on like that? It's also really scary because I don't know what they are going to do and when more abuse by staff might happen. I don't know if I now have a target on my back. And they keep messing with me with little things while I'm in here. One of the COs who assaulted me is the same CO who serves me my food tray. I feel that my food is unsafe, and I feel very unsafe while I am here.

I feel all the staff is against us here. Nothing works in our favor. It's like they treat us like animals. They make us carry stuff while we are shackled. It is just crazy. They give us no respect. They talk to us the way they want to. The phone situation in the general population at Clinton is ridiculous. You are lucky to get 10 minutes if you get on the phone at all. Of course there are no calls in the SHU.

And the staff brutality is rampant. If they don't like what you say, they just jump on you. People are getting bags placed over their heads. COs are pulling real execution-style stuff in here. Putting scarves around people's necks and choking them. You just don't know when something like that might happen to you. You could die in here. And everything will just go under the rug.

Since the escape, things have only gotten worse at Clinton. Albany has been putting pressure on the prison, and it is rolling down hill and we are punished as a result. Any little thing you say, they put their hands on you. You can just say, "what?" And they can beat you. Seems now everyday or every other day there are staff assaults and people are getting hurt. Staff also just take stuff from your cell. You have no say so. If you do say something, they put their hands on you. Over half of the people in the SHU are here with false assault-on-staff charges after being assaulted by facility staff. Plus there are many other people who are assaulted and just left in their cells or placed on keeplock. Whenever someone leaves the Clinton box to be sent to Upstate or somewhere else, there is just another person who comes right into the SHU – often for assault-on-staff.

The abuse happening inside is just like the police brutality in the streets. It is all about people with authority abusing their power. We get beat up on the street and harassed just like in here. Here it is a bit worse because you are so far away and many don't have family or friends up here.

If there were more Black officers, then this type of stuff wouldn't be happening like it is now. There is a lot of racism going on. DOCCS needs to bring in different people who are not from this geographic area. The best solution is to close everything down. Or change the whole atmosphere, the COs, and the methods.

“The abuses are endless. They make you feel not human. Nothing you say matters. I feel so isolated being so far from my loved ones. All I can do to stay sane is read my Bible. That is what helps me make it through. And it is why I am sharing my experiences despite the risks I face – I have to stand up for what is right.”

Standing Up for What is Right, Though Nothing You Say Matters

I feel uncomfortable because I may be unjustly abused for sharing this information, but what the security staff is doing here is wrong. I am not with any of the gangs – I don't do those things, but I need to stand up and fight for what is right. So I'm telling my story.

One day in the fall of 2015 a couple guys and I were out on the courts – the areas in the recreation yard at Clinton where small groups of incarcerated people are allowed to hang together. We were on the court right under the CO watch tower. I was cooking and they were cleaning up. A fight between two guys started nearby. The alarm sounded over the loudspeaker, and everyone was told to get down on the ground. Before when things like this happened, people were allowed to sit on the benches on their courts. Now we have to lie on our stomachs on the ground, even if there is snow, mud, or muck in general. If we don't lay in it, we get beat up.

Some COs came over and broke up the fight. One of the officers hit one of the people fighting with a baton and he fell. The other guy was already on the ground. The COs cuffed them both and took them out of the yard. Even though the two guys who were fighting were already gone, we still waited on the ground for 10 or 20 or 30 minutes. I'm not sure exactly how long. Finally when we were going to go back inside, another fight broke out with several guys three courts down from us. To break it up, the COs shot a number of canisters of gas into the area where the fight was and told us to get back on the ground. Luckily for me, I was so far away from the fight that I couldn't even smell the gas.

The COs ordered everyone on the ground again. Some COs asked the CO in the watch tower to identify the people involved in the fight. He pointed out a couple groups of people, but the other COs kept asking "Anyone else? Anyone else?" Eventually, he said there

were no more people involved. The COs then took a bunch of people away, including older guys who weren't involved. I was still on the ground for a little while longer and then I overheard someone on an officer's walkie talkie say my court number.

An officer came then and put flexicuffs on me. He put them on so tightly that they cut into my skin and I started bleeding. Another officer grabbed me and started pushing me along, telling me to walk faster. I told them I had a bad knee; I had just gotten a brace a few weeks before. Their response was, "shut the f*ck up." They started interrogating me, asking me why I was fighting. When I told them I wasn't part of the fight, they acted like they didn't believe me and said, "You are a lying sack of sh*t." Then one of the COs turned to the other and asked, "You got me on this one, right?"

As we were walking down the hallway, with my cuffs behind my back, one of the COs punched me in the eye so hard that my vision went blurry and dark for a moment. They continued taking me down the stairs and into another hallway, all the while taunting and harassing me, saying things like, "you think you're tough?" and so on. One of the COs then punched me again in the temple of my head. He said, "ow," so he must have hurt his hand doing it. They were still taunting and interrogating me, but I stopped responding because it didn't matter what I said or that I denied I was fighting out in the yard to begin with. Again one of the officers said, "you think you're tough? The CO grabbed my throat and threw me against the wall. One CO was choking me with his hand and then the two escorting COs both started punching me multiple times. The officer who choked me asked me, "Do you know who my f*cking father is?" I honestly had no idea.

When they finally stopped assaulting me, they took me to the gym. Inside were all of the people they had rounded up in the yard earlier. The sergeant who was there had been part of the "beat-up crew" and had recently been made a sergeant. At the time we saw he was promoted, we knew it was all over for us. When the sergeant asked me where my ID was, I said I thought it was in my pocket. The sergeant responded, "oh, you don't *know* where

your ID is, you just *think* you know." A CO used another person's ID and smacked me in the face with it before pushing it between my lips. He told the COs to take me to the barber shop and to make me remember where my ID is.

The COs slammed me against the wall and kicked me in the groin area. Luckily, they missed my genitals and got my leg instead. They put me in a headlock and slammed me against the wall again. They punched, beat, and kicked me repeatedly. When they were done, they took me back to the gym, and the sergeant asked for my ID again. This time I told him it was in my pocket. He said, "I guess they jogged your memory." They led me into the gym and I saw the other incarcerated people lined up facing the wall. The CO who choked me in the hallway then said he forgot to search me, and he slammed me against the wall again and threw all my stuff out of my pockets.

The original fight in the yard was around 8pm at night, but they held us in the gym for almost seven hours into the early morning. The entire time, they kept our cuffs on and tight behind our backs. My shoulder started to hurt, but I couldn't do anything to relieve the pressure because the COs were yelling at us for just leaning a little bit. At some point, a nurse came by and started checking on people. I asked her to make my handcuffs a little less tight, but she said she had to prioritize who she could help. There were some people who were really badly beaten, with missing teeth and swollen faces.

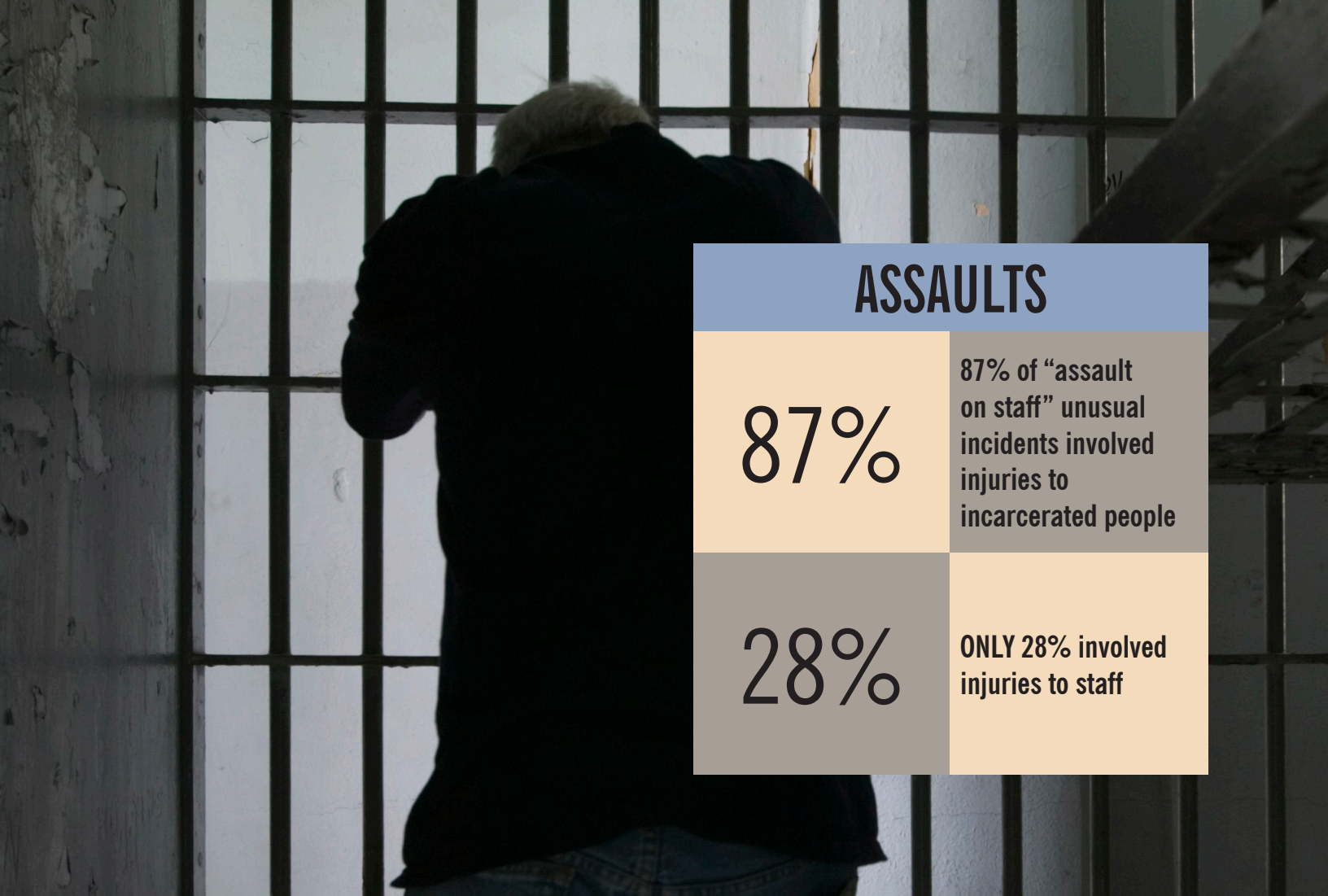
At some point, I was taken into a shop where I was told to sign a paper listing my injuries. I sustained injuries to my eyes, wrists, ribs, legs, and my hand was numb from the cuffs. I still have permanent scars on my wrists from the cuffs and sometimes my hand still goes numb. But all

the paper said was "injuries from fight in the yard." I refused to sign it, so the nurse said, "Well, then I guess no injuries," and told me to leave. At another point, officers took me to another room and asked me about gangs and what I knew about the Bloods and the Crips. I told them I follow the Bible and was not involved. Maybe they realized I had nothing to do with the fight and brought me back to the gym floor. Finally, they took us back to our cells around 3 am. The only time they had video recording was when I was leaving the gym.

The next morning, many of the people that got beaten up were transferred to another prison. I also heard that the people who were left laying out in the yard didn't get back to their cells until around 1 am.

Even though I had nothing to do with the original fights, I still got issued multiple false tickets for fighting, disorderly conduct, violent conduct, and disobeying a direct order. It's a regular practice here for staff to charge the incarcerated person with assault tickets when it's actually the other way around a majority of the time. They also took me to the SHU immediately after. When they went to my cell to gather my belongings, they left behind or destroyed almost all of my property, including a fan I purchased and a radio adaptor. Instead of my property, they put blankets and sheets in the bag. The officer who brought the bag to me didn't give me enough time to look through it, so I wasn't able to look carefully enough before I signed the paper indicating my property was there. I grieved this whole ordeal, but the porter on my block told me the CO opened my grievance and threw it away. They kept continuing my disciplinary hearing too. It was continued for almost 30 days.

At the hearing, they showed a video tape of the fights out in the yard. They kept saying they weren't able to work the cameras to show the



ASSAULTS

87%

87% of “assault on staff” unusual incidents involved injuries to incarcerated people

28%

ONLY 28% involved injuries to staff

court where I was at the time. They made it seem like they couldn't get the video to work and had it zoomed out so far that the people looked as small as ants. I recognized a guy laying in front of my court, so they backed the camera up, allowing everyone to see how far away my court was from the fight. But then they flipped the camera again so no one could see. The hearing officer said that he kind of believed me, but I asked for witnesses anyway so that he couldn't change his mind and sentence me anyway. When the hearing officer asked me what happened, he cut me off right before I was able to explain the part when the CO punched me. When we got to the end of the hearing, I just blurted out, “The COs assaulted me.” The witnesses I called were also COs, and one of them testified that I was on the court lying down during the fights. They ended up dismissing the tickets. I had beaten false tickets in the past as well. But even though I had done absolutely nothing wrong and had been beaten up, I was still in the SHU for almost an entire month until the hearing and they kept me in there for two days after the decision was made.

Unfortunately, people are beaten all the time at Clinton. There was an outspoken individual who has been to a lot of prisons, and the COs beat him up real badly. COs had been harassing him. They took his TV for no reason. Then one day, COs jumped on him and they took him to an outside hospital, and I haven't seen him since. I know one of the people who witnessed the beat-up, and he and others were intimidated and put on keeplock.

And being beaten isn't the only wrong thing staff does to us in here. A few months ago, I had a court date and was out of the prison a few weeks. When I got back, they refused to put me back in my program. It was five months before they finally put me back in, and I had to fight for my pay to be reinstated to my previous rate too. Since the escape, things only became worse. COs open our mail without us present, we'll get beaten for small things like talking in the halls, they won't take us down to the mess hall or out for sick call, and they shut off the water while we're showering when we're still soapy. People even get tickets for having a blanket up for privacy around the toilet, but they'll also get ticketed for not having it up while using the toilet when a female CO is walking the tier.

The abuses are endless. They make you feel not human. Nothing you say matters. I feel so isolated being so far from my loved ones. All I can do to stay sane is read my Bible. That is what helps me make it through. And it is why I am sharing my experiences despite the risks I face – I have to stand up for what is right.

4. PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS TARGETED FOR ABUSE

People with mental illness and developmental disabilities were also reportedly targeted for serious staff brutality and abuse. Several people incarcerated at Clinton expressed concern about how individuals with special needs were abused by staff.

Savagely Beaten

There was a young autistic man at Clinton who was savagely beaten by staff in July 2015.

I was in the law library at the time doing research. An alarm went off, and I saw a sergeant leave the library and run to the incident. The young man – who used to be in the Special Needs Unit – had approached a female civilian staff member and she reacted dramatically and triggered a false alarm. A sergeant and COs led a vicious attack on the young boy. Officers beat him with their fists, feet, and batons. They took him down the stair case and rammed his head into a glass window. He was left all bloody. A question to America: why do we even have an autistic boy in prison?

The staff at Clinton intimidate and threaten people to stay quiet. Officers also punch and beat incarcerated persons all the time, and engage in other abuse. I have been subjected to arbitrary keeplocks and been denied food for days. I have also been subjected to abusive cell searches, where thousands of pages of legal documents were destroyed.

In the aftermath of the June 2015 escape, everyone was locked down and denied all entitlements for 14 days. My cell was trashed twice, and my legal works and documents were destroyed.

Even beyond the lockdown, I have been subjected to verbal abuse and racist name-calling. I was denied access to recreation as retaliation after I raised complaints to the Superintendent. I have witnessed sergeants and COs make their own arbitrary rules as a pretext to punish incarcerated persons. COs are constantly banging mallets on the cell walls at any hour of the day to drive us crazy. They are not letting us out from our cells to the yard on time and daily have reduced our yard time by 30 to 45 minutes or more. They are denying many of us showers. They are doing a lot of abusive frisks and cell searches. The abuses I and others have endured at Clinton are endless.

“They should close Clinton down. There should be a move to get the FBI to investigate. Also, they should make COs wear body cameras. And if COs assault someone, they should be disciplined, and really disciplined – with criminal charges. If we assault COs, the state would be so quick to issue a new charge. Yet, nothing happens when officers beat us up. Something has got to be done.”



Beat-ups on a Mental Health Unit

I came into prison in my early twenties, and I have now been incarcerated half of my life. I am in the Transitional Intermediate Care Program (TrICP) at Clinton because of doctor orders indicating that I have a serious mental illness. I have been on the mental health caseload for over twenty years.

I have some issues with the medical and mental health services at the facility. My current doctor doesn't want to listen to my concerns about medication. My previous doctor had agreed to a lower dosage of medications but the new doctor refuses to honor that agreement, and I believe they are giving me too much medication.

I have been assaulted by staff on multiple occasions. Three times officers have put their hands on me. The last time, I objected to the tight clothes that I was given to wear at the prison. The response was that staff pushed me and shoved me in the face so hard that it knocked my glasses off. There have been other guys in the mental health units who have been beaten up by staff. If you don't want to attend your program, they sometimes beat you up.

After the escape, people at Clinton were subjected to a lot of neglect. The meals were cold most of the time and we were denied showers. It is difficult to speak to the officer on the unit because he is too hostile. And I personally have a difficult time reading and writing, and that prevents me from writing complaints or seeking support from outside agencies.

Overall, beat ups and abuse have been happening both before and after the escape. Whenever there are white officers overseeing men of color in prison, there will be a lot of racism and abuse.

“Staff at Clinton are constantly beating guys up. Sometimes it is while a person is being frisked going out to the yard. Or COs take guys to the hospital area, photograph them, and then assault them. If you file a complaint against staff, your grievances may not even reach the office, and people are being called down for urine testing or having their cells searched and destroyed, all as retaliation for filing a complaint.”



All of the Abuse is Taking a Big Toll on Me

I am a mental health Level 1 patient. My diagnosis is bipolar, schizophrenia and mood disorder. I have had that diagnosis on the street, in NY City jails at Rikers Island, and in the state prison system. I started receiving mental health treatment for the first time at age 10. My father died at that time, and I started to not care about anything, began cutting school and playing hookie. That's when I started receiving mental health services.

Since I have been incarcerated, I have been in the mental health crisis observation cells several times because I have tried to harm myself. I have attempted self-harm several times during my incarceration, including since I have been at Clinton. I have hung up and I have cut myself. I have harmed myself both when I was in the SHU and when I was in general population.

But I have never had a mental health S-designation, which would mean I couldn't be put in the SHU. Instead, I just spent several months in the SHU because I was beaten up by staff at Clinton. The incident happened before the June escape. One day, I was in the mess hall, grabbed my tray, and went to the table. A CO came up to me from behind, grabbed my shoulder, and told me to drop my tray and walk out of the mess hall. According to the misbehavior report I later received, he said I was creating a disturbance, but at that time he didn't say any reason why he was pulling me out of the mess hall. I wasn't saying or doing anything at the time.

Outside the mess hall, he told me to put my hands on the wall. He pat frisked me and took my ID. He told me that other incarcerated persons said I called them "baby rapers" in the past. I told him that I didn't know the other incarcerated people or what he was talking about. I was also wondering – if that was the case, why was he waiting to talk to me about it now? A sergeant then told some COs to escort me back to my block and keeplock me for a ticket for what allegedly happened in the mess hall. The ticket said I had called people "baby rapers" that day, but the CO who accosted me about it said it was something that had happened in the past.

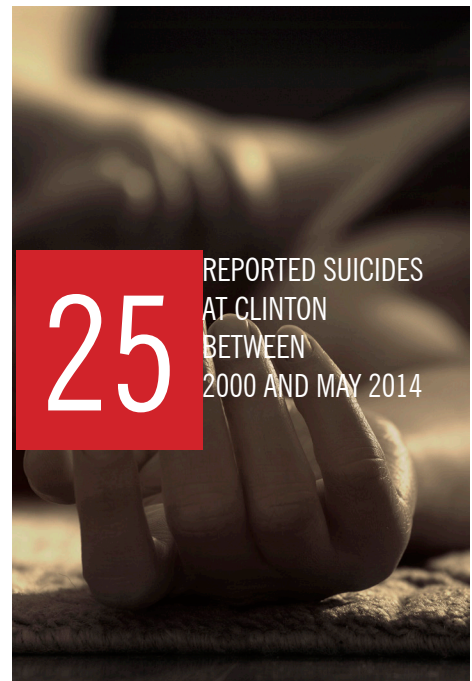
I went back to my cell but didn't make it inside. I was cuffed behind my back at the time. One CO put a hand around my neck and choked me. Another CO threw me down to the floor. They punched me in the back and kicked me in the back, leg, and face. They beat me up for more than two full minutes. I had back pain and my left leg was messed up. I was taken to the medical area and they put me in a room that is basically the "beat up room." There were no medical staff in the room and only officers and a sergeant.

COs did a strip search and then one CO started choking me with his hand. This CO is referred to as Captain America – because he has an American flag tattoo on his arm and he is known for beating people up. I temporarily lost consciousness while he was choking me. Someone then smacked me in the face and threw me to the floor. COs started punching me, kicking me, kneeling me in my stomach, and punching me in the face. I took a severe beating, became dehydrated, and couldn't breathe – in part because I have asthma. After they were beating me, a CO kept telling me to get up, take it like a man, or the beating will be worse. I used up all my strength I had to get up. I just prayed I didn't get killed. Once the beating stopped, they took me to another room to see medical.

In a medical exam room, I saw a nurse and told her about the injuries. She checked my blood pressure and determined I had to have an IV in my arm because I was so dehydrated from the beating. Video coverage showed me on a stretcher with an IV in my arm in the medical area. You could tell from the video that I couldn't stand up or open my eyes at the time. Medical failed to document the injuries that I suffered, including a broken bone in my face, a chipped tooth, and a busted lip. They only documented back pain and pain in my leg.

Mental health staff came and interviewed me while I was at medical. Captain America directed mental health staff to take me up to an observation unit. At the time, I was exhausted from the beating. They kept me in the observation unit for almost a week. I was there because I got beat up, the injuries were showing at the time, and the COs wanted them to heal. Plus, the COs wanted to add that it was a mental health issue and blame the situation on my mental health condition.

From the observation unit, they took me to the SHU, and gave me a ticket for assault on staff, disobeying a direct order, creating a disturbance, and



violating lock-in procedures (saying I didn't lock in). I got 150 days in the box. It could have been nine months in the box for an assault on staff, but because I raised a lot of issues about the problems with their case – like their claim that there were CO injuries but they failed to produce any medical reports documenting those injuries. I filed a grievance and was interviewed by the Inspector General's office (IG). But over 90 days passed and nothing happened and I never heard anything more. I also wrote to the state police, but they told me they couldn't review the situation because it was not in their jurisdiction.

This kind of incident – assault and false tickets – is what Clinton is known for. When I first moved to the SHU after this incident, almost everyone on my company was there for an alleged assault on staff after being assaulted by staff. During my time at Clinton I have heard about many other examples of staff abuse. COs have placed plastic bags over people's heads. People have been killed at Clinton. One person who was in a cell near mine at one point was assaulted by COs and they broke his ankle. This is what they do here: call people out, beat them, and plant weapons on them. And it has only gotten worse since the escape.

In the meantime, I spent almost five months in solitary. The SHU is horrible. It is painful. I was stressing in there. It makes you depressed. I can see that the SHU could lead me down to a point where I might do something I don't want to do. I felt so upset and angry at times that I wanted to just throw a cup of hot water on a CO, but I didn't do it. There have been times I wanted to kill myself. I was so depressed to the point that I didn't want no one to talk to me or call me, including the COs.

There were moments when I didn't even know how much longer I could hold on. I tried to calm myself down. As more pressure built up, I felt I could snap at any moment. I tried to tell a mental health staff person, and she didn't want to listen. She just said she can't do anything and I need to keep holding on. I wasn't taking any medication because it is not going to work for me. I have taken it in the past. But the doctors never told me the side effects it had, and whatever medicine I took always had bad side effects.

I did legal work to stay with it while I was in the box. I tried to do as much legal work as possible to clear my mind. My neighbors told me to stay focused because they could see solitary was taking its toll on me mentally. When I came down for an interview, it felt good just to get out of my cell, walk around, and talk to someone. Otherwise, I was just in the box and I didn't know how much more I could take.

Also, if you are in SHU for assault on staff, you have problems with staff down there as well. The officers hold grudges. On the first day I was in the box, the CO brought me a food tray that had nothing on it but milk and juice; there was no bread, cereal, or anything else. It went on like that for a couple of days.

COs not only mess with our food trays in the SHU, but they also deny us showers and don't take us to recreation. They sometimes have the lights on all day and night. I went for long periods without going to recreation. I usually didn't go out even if I was allowed. I would just be in a cage out there – what's there to do? It is the same thing as being in my cell. While outside I could get some fresh air and maybe see the sunlight, in my cell I have my legal work, books, and toilet. COs also mess with our mail in the SHU. You might send mail out and get it a month or two months later, while at other times it will come on time. Writing is really the only thing you have in there.

While I was in the box, COs told me they were going to beat me up and set me up with a weapon when I went back to general population (GP). I was afraid they would send me right back GP where I would see the same COs that assaulted me. Yet, Albany denied my transfer to another facility. When they released me from the box, they sent me to general population and they put me on the same gallery as other incarcerated people with assault on staff charges. The person in the cell to the right of me had an assault on staff charge that he beat the ticket for, and the person in the cell to the left of me had an assault on staff charge, did his SHU time, and then was returned to general population. Since I have been back in general population, COs have been harassing me. They have denied me recreation numerous times, and have repeatedly refused to let me out of my cell to go to the mess hall. They continued to mess with my mail.

Worse still, one of the COs that beat me up in the June incident is on my block. I am afraid he is going to do something to me. I am scared for my life. I witnessed this CO – along with others – beat up another incarcerated person. The COs had put this other incarcerated person on the wall for a search. They didn't find any contraband. But then one CO pushed him toward the wall, and another CO threw him to the floor. Multiple COs came and beat him – punching, kicking, and hitting him in the face for several minutes. They continued to beat this man in front of a sergeant, and then they likely took him to medical and to the SHU. COs do these beat-ups for their reputation. If they don't beat up incarcerated people, then other COs will turn against them. It doesn't matter how much you try to avoid a situation with the COs, they will make one. I am sick of it. Clinton is out of control.

I am happy that I am out of the box and able to move around. But the transition is taking a toll on me. It is a different environment being in general population, and I have to deal with all of the people around me. I have to adjust and I'm uncomfortable being near so many people, especially being around all of the officers. I am suffering from depression. I can't sleep. I am eating but at times I just don't eat all day. I am losing my appetite. Because of all that has happened – the beat-up, the SHU, the fear of being back in general population – it is taking a big toll on me. Why do I have to see the same officers who attacked me every day and have them work on the same block as me?

“I have been in solitary confinement for three times the maximum length of prison time allowed by the criminal statute. All of us who have been in long-term administrative segregation have been abandoned. Ad seg is the most abusive form of solitary confinement because there is nothing I can do to get out of it.”

This information has got to get out there. We who speak up don't care what happens to us – this abuse has got to stop. People are getting sick and tired of what is going on and it has gotten way out of control.

They should close Clinton down. There should be a move to get the FBI to investigate. Also, they should make COs wear body cameras. And if COs assault someone, they should be disciplined, and really disciplined – with criminal charges. If we assault COs, the state would be so quick to issue a new charge. Yet, nothing happens when officers beat us up. Something has got to be done.

5. WIDESPREAD USE OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT, EVEN FOR YEARS AND DECADES

As seen in the narratives above, 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. In addition to those accounts, many people reported being sent to solitary for other false or frivolous reasons at Clinton. The CA's investigations have encountered many people 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 anything to do. 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 with no release date or opportunity to get out of isolation.



Solitary Instead of Drug Treatment

I am serving 20 to life and have been incarcerated for over 14 years. In all of my time incarcerated, I have had more than 10 dirty urine disciplinary tickets, but I have never had an opportunity to take the ASAT substance abuse treatment program. Instead, I keep getting sent to solitary confinement. Earlier this year, I came to Clinton from the SHU at Upstate after six months for a dirty urine. Then I just recently got another dirty urine and got seven months of SHU time and placed in long-term keeplock.

I have a problem with marijuana. I like to smoke weed. But instead of Clinton giving me the proper drug counseling, the staff here chooses to keep me keeplocked or thrown in SHU. And every time I find a good job here, they come to my job and escort me to a room for a urinalysis test and when they find my urine positive for weed, they put me back inside of SHU or keeplock instead of a treatment program to help me.

The worst part of Clinton, though, is the staff and their racism. I have witnessed staff constantly talking disrespectfully and swearing to the people incarcerated here. Just recently I saw multiple officers open a person's cell and beat him up because he took an extra milk out of the mess hall. They called him a "thieving sp*c" since he is of Spanish heritage.

The staff here are always spewing racial slurs. They always call me [n-word] or monkey. I was even called coal once or twice. One time an officer at Clinton told me that the reason we Black people wear platform high heeled shoes is to stop our knuckles from dragging on the ground. Even at a hearing, the hearing officer said, "I'm tired of all these Black mother f*ckers trying to be Johnny Cochran."

For members of my religious group, it is sometimes even worse. I'm with the Nation of Gods and Earth, and they call us uppity [n-words] and car tires. They won't recognize our religion and won't allow us to wear our kufis and tassels.

Clinton is emotionally damaging and can be physically damaging too. We need more Black COs here and they just need to give us what we are supposed to have. If you file a grievance, it doesn't even get answered for many months, and I've never won a grievance. Plus, if I raise too many complaints, I fear the staff here could hurt or even kill me. One officer has repeatedly walked past my cell and winked his eye and said that I had a big mouth and was a rat. And when they transferred me from Clinton to another box, they threw all my personal property away, including family photos, sneakers, and food. They told me they were not going to pay for it or replace it, and that I should just consider myself lucky that they didn't beat me up. They proclaimed that we "[n-words] these days are too smart and bold for our own good."

"Clinton is emotionally damaging and can be physically damaging too. We need more Black COs here and they just need to give us what we are supposed to have. If you file a grievance, it doesn't even get answered for many months, and I've never won a grievance. Plus, if I raise too many complaints, I fear the staff here could hurt or even kill me. One officer has repeatedly walked past my cell and winked his eye and said that I had a big mouth and was a rat. And when they transferred me from Clinton to another box, they threw all my personal property away, including family photos, sneakers, and food. They told me they were not going to pay for it or replace it, and that I should just consider myself lucky that they didn't beat me up. They proclaimed that we "[n-words] these days are too smart and bold for our own good."



60%

of all people incarcerated at Clinton between 2010 and 2013 were **sentenced to solitary confinement** during that time.

Solitary is a Living Death

I have spent over 20 years in solitary confinement. As a result of an attempt to escape in the early 1990s, I received 12 years of disciplinary confinement in SHU. After completing this disciplinary sentence, I was immediately placed in administrative segregation (ad seg), where I have been ever since. The statutory maximum for the charge that led to my SHU confinement was a prison sentence of three and a half years to seven. At present, I have been in solitary confinement for three times the maximum length of prison time allowed by the criminal statute. All of us who have been in long-term administrative segregation have been abandoned. Ad seg is the most abusive form of solitary confinement because there is nothing I can do to get out of it.

When my disciplinary SHU sentence was going to end, a senior official from the Inspector General's (IG) office issued a recommendation that I be placed in ad seg and a hearing was held. All of the reasons given for why I should be held in ad seg were things that had happened before I was given the disciplinary sentence. At the hearing, all of the prison staff recommended that there would be no problem with me being housed in general population. Even two high ranking captains recommended that I be released from solitary. One captain personally told me that if he could just bring me down to general population himself, he would. The only person who testified against me being released from SHU was the official who wrote the ad seg recommendation. Yet the hearing officer sent me to ad seg. I remained in the very same conditions in which I was being held before my disciplinary sentence expired, but now it was more harsh because there was no release date.

From the time I was placed in ad seg until the present, there have been paper reviews generally every 60 days. DOCCS repeats the same reasons at these reviews as they had at the initial ad seg determination. They sometimes will put in some additional fabricated reasons, though mostly they note that my conduct had been good but then list the same reasons why I was put in ad seg at the beginning.

I have not had one substantiated disciplinary ticket since I was placed in ad seg. I have not received any substantiated disciplinary ticket for over twelve years. Yet, they keep me in solitary indefinitely.

They say it is not punitive. But in ad seg, I am in my cell 23 hours or more a day. I have one hour a day for recreation. I tend to go outside most days, at least when the weather is ok. But it is just in a bare cage with no equipment. Some people in disciplinary confinement have it better than us even though supposedly we are not being disciplined. People at Southport level 3, for instance, can get more privileges than us. People who have blown up buildings as members of Al Qaeda have TVs and commissary in their cells in federal prison. Ad seg is the ultimate punishment.

I have had a total of eight phone calls in the last 21 years. I have never had a commissary buy. In 2012, they tried to offer us some pilot privileges, but some of us in long-term ad seg rejected them. The pilot program offers: two hours of TV *a month*, a commissary buy that you *can't use in your cell*, an extra hour of rec a week, an extra visit and one phone call *a month*, and a pair of sneakers and shorts. When it first came out, I made a few phone calls, but then others and I decided to refuse all these privileges because they are token offerings. They are trying to offer us basic things that have already been given to others in SHU; trying to offer us crumbs to make it look like they were giving us something. At Southport, guys had sneakers, in-cell commissary, and phone calls since the 1990s.

Plus, they have used mental health patients as weapons against us in ad seg. People who have significant mental health needs or have a low IQ but are not S-designated and so aren't excluded under the SHU Exclusion Law are still in the SHU. And solitary just eats them up – they get worse and worse, and will bang on the walls, throw feces, and do other disruptive and destructive things. Staff will place these patients in nearby cells to people in ad seg to use them against us. The person in the cell next to me laughs and talks to himself all day long – which creates stress for me and makes it hard to read.

Solitary makes you hateful toward the people who hold you in here. There is nothing you can do. It is a slow death one day at a time. You become very resentful. I can see myself deteriorating in my thought processes. I start laughing hysterically at a very serious moment. For example, I was listening on the radio to the movie, *Green Mile*, and at the time of the botched execution I just started laughing hysterically even though it is a serious part.

You become warped in solitary. Any relationships you have get harmed. Even just dealing with people in here. I just make quick judgment calls about both COs and incarcerated people. For instance, I might see arrogance right away and I am not giving anyone a fair chance. It's a survival mechanism. There are a lot of treacherous people. And I am always on guard. And stressed. You feel that everyone is out to get you – both COs and incarcerated people.

You just get tired of the abuse. I'm on my guard all the time. I can't have normal interactions with people. I can't interact on a basic human level. I'm at the point now that I am always thinking that I am not gonna let guys hurt me. I'm not gonna be a victim. I treat people right and want to be treated right. If someone comes near me – I have to act. So I just avoid people. I have become anti-social. I'm not trying to be your friend or your enemy. You see the guy in Colorado who killed the commissioner

after he was released from solitary. You get kicked, beaten, disrespected and abused. When you go to the street, there is the possibility of a ticking time bomb.

Solitary is a living death. And there is no end in sight. I know it has affected me. The deterioration is there. I could use therapy. But, I need someone I can trust. Mental health is not an option for me here. If I speak to OMH, it is like I'm speaking to the guards; it is like talking to my enemies. People in OMH and DOCCS are boyfriend and girlfriend. Plus in the mental health crisis observation unit there are no cameras, and there are reports that staff deny patients food and are beating patients up in that unit.

I sometimes think of ending it. The finality of getting this over with. But I don't want to hurt the few people who care about me. And I don't want to give my enemies any help. I try to survive by exercising and reading.

The people who are doing it, who are pushing solitary and overseeing it, they wouldn't last two weeks in here. It is dehumanizing. It makes you feel you are not a human being. Just an animal. You have to fight not just to remain sane but to keep what little humanity you have left. People who claim to be upstanding humans – officials and DOCCS staff – are enforcing a practice of dehumanizing other human beings.

And at places like Attica and Clinton, the dehumanization is even worse. Attica may be the worst prison. Attica is a sick malignant organization. COs wipe guys' bloody faces with dirty mops. They did a work slowdown for the COs who were on trial for the George Williams beating. Now at Attica – where I spent several years in the box until I came to Clinton in 2014 – they are beating guys and then sending them back to their cell, sometimes without even giving a ticket so that it is not reported. Just as one example, there was a guy who had part of his face ripped off by COs and they had the porter stitch it up so there wouldn't be any injury report. They want to run that jail by intimidation. And they beat the sh*t out of people.

But if Attica is the worst, Clinton is running a close second, as far as physical abuse by guards goes. Staff brutality has been going on for a long time at Clinton. Guys have been killed by being thrown down the stairs. Other guys have mysteriously died. Clinton has many staircases and a long history of people being thrown down flights of stairs. There have been a number of deaths there over the years of incarcerated persons who all of a sudden supposedly decide to break away from guards inconveniently at the top of a staircase. It is murder, and it's swept under the rug by the powers that be.

There is a lot of racism here – the abuses are targeted at Black and Latino people. They operate their own fiefdom here, with power over the district attorney's and judges because the staff are all interrelated to the community here. The COs are the people who vote and put into power the DAs and the judges. Those officials are not going to go against the COs in this area. So the COs carry out their abuses with impunity.

In solitary, I have seen many guys come into the SHU after being beaten – people have their hands and their feet shackled and then they're beaten. Then they often shuffle people around – including to other prisons – after beating them up.

After the escape, they put new rules in place – but all of the rules are about restricting things for the people who are incarcerated here, rather than anything related to staff. Plus they spent scores of millions of dollars in overtime just in the aftermath of the escape. But the abuses have been going on long before the escape.

The brutality and the use of endless solitary are perpetually punishing people under the guise of security. For some of us in ad seg, this is a lifetime in solitary. Are they going to punish those of us in ad seg forever?



6. POOR CONDITIONS AND LACK OF TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ABUSES

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. Moreover, numerous people reported a complete lack of accountability for staff abuses at Clinton. Many recounted frequent issuances of false tickets or plantings of drugs or weapons, particularly in retaliation for people raising complaints. People described how medical staff failed to fully and accurately document injuries resulting 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 Office of Special Investigations (OSI) (previously DOCCS' Inspector General's office) or others had not resulted in any follow-up or concrete actions to hold staff accountable or end the pattern of abuse.

No Hope or Faith

Although the June 2015 Clinton escape did not involve any incarcerated persons other than the two escapees, the rest of the Clinton population was made to suffer for their actions and the obvious misdeeds and incompetence of the Clinton staff that facilitated the escape. While very little was done to address the problems with staff, there was no time wasted in attacking the limited privileges that the people incarcerated at Clinton once had, as well as turning this place into the most uncomfortable prison in the country to reside in.

In the months after the escape, there was an extreme increase in staff abuse of incarcerated people. There is a certain group of officers at Clinton that were unleashed on the population, beating people, taking property from us, constantly banging on the bars and walls, knocking our power out, and leaving people in the dark for days. Almost every day someone was being beaten and sent to the SHU. Plus there was a lack of mental health staff to deal with the issues.

The family visiting room was also made to be the most uncomfortable in the state. The tables were all pushed together so families were forced to sit further away from you and forced to sit on top of one another. Worse, the visitors are treated by staff as if it was their fault that staff allowed the men to escape.

Also, our programs, and where we're housed were being changed for no reason. Myself and others received bogus tickets and our appeals are never responded to.

The situation at Clinton went out of control. This facility has always had a high level of staff misconduct, where staff is very abusive in nature. But it got even worse after the escape. The main reason for so much of the abuse is that a major cover up is going on. Those that know about past and ongoing illegal activity and misconduct, as well as those who are believed to be providing information, have become targets.

I personally felt that my life was in danger because I raised some concerns about what is taking place. My writing to people on the outside placed me at great risk to be set up, beat up, or killed at Clinton. Certain officers will stop at nothing to cover up wrong doing, and others are going out of their way to prove that they hate us. So they write false reports and swing their sticks at us

“Count Dumas said this truth, ‘All of human wisdom can be summed up in two words, Hope and Faith.’ In this place, we have neither hope nor faith. It has long been robbed from us, and this unfortunate situation is now being used to incorporate an agenda of pure punishment on those of us that made human mistakes.”

31

DEATHS AT CLINTON FROM 2007 TO 2013.

without any provocation. Staff started paying very close attention to me. I was denied a religious call-out. Officers made threats upon my safety. Without any provocation, unknown officers came to the front gate of where I lock in and asked me whether I had a problem with them, and then threatened that they would harm me. Because I have had no personal issues with these officers in the past, I fear that they have seen the information I sent out of the facility. My wife was forced to endure undue harassment each time she came to see me to the point that she did not really want to come to Clinton at all. I was denied a program for months and thus remained in my cell 21 hours a day on those days when recreation was closed.

Then, ultimately my fears were realized. After I had contact with a media outlet, I was set up by staff at Clinton in the fall of 2015. I received six months SHU time on false charges that were a direct result of me speaking out against the abuse by staff at Clinton. I was sent to solitary confinement due to my efforts to call attention to the misconduct going on at Clinton.

Due to this set up, it is likely that I will be hit at my upcoming Parole Board. This fact has me depressed. I have been incarcerated for over 20 years since I came to prison as a 16-year-old boy. In the time I have been incarcerated I have done everything that I can to prove that I am not that troubled child anymore. I was doing well, and then the escape happened and all the things that soon followed. Now here I sit, in SHU, for something I didn't do, and the penalty will likely be another two year parole hit.

What are we to do? Who do we complaint to? Where are the media outlets to inform the public of the truth rather than perpetuating lies about what takes place at Clinton? There are no blue jeans here, as was reported. And as for any other privileges reported, this prison is void of such things.

Staff at Clinton lacks any diversity. There is no other race besides white officers, and this contributes to the staff abuse. The staff abuse has gone unchecked for many years. However, the union is already working to cover up the tracks of their fellow officers, and the main media story became about what incarcerated persons have in our cells, even though nothing that is allowed was used in the escape. It is very unfortunate that the people incarcerated at Clinton are still very much dealing with a great deal.

Count Dumas said this truth, "All of human wisdom can be summed up in two words, Hope and Faith." In this place, we have neither hope nor faith. It has long been robbed from us, and this unfortunate situation is now being used to incorporate an agenda of pure punishment on those of us that made human mistakes.

Most of us will return to society. Consider how it is that we will return, broken and devoid of faith and hope. We don't need a million privileges, but the few we had, gave us something to work for. Once these are removed, what will be left to work for?

The only real changes that needed to be made were not restricting the basic necessities of incarcerated people, but to ensure that security staff do their job. That would have prevented another escape. Instead, some hopeless men may now escape to an early death by suicide simply to avoid that feeling of having no hope and faith in a world where they've been forgotten by the majority and left to be used by a broken system. I pray that exposing these abuses will bring about change. I need to believe that my personal pain and efforts won't be in vain. I pray that we will be able to call attention to the issues at Clinton and inspire true change.

Horrendous Conditions

There are horrendous conditions at Clinton. The prison staff is very racist and abusive, there are not enough programs, and hundreds of people are idle waiting for something to do. We have been asking for the most basic and reasonable things – access to showers, phones, and commissary, and yet, they are still denied. Incarcerated people can't help the administration if the administration doesn't help us and the beat-ups and the abuse continue.

Before the June 2015 escape, the facility was bad; after it the prison became chaotic. There have been numerous beatings of people incarcerated at Clinton since the escape, and these beatings have been continuing. Most of the people assaulted were either Black or Latino, and officers have hit people in the head with batons. There has also been lots of verbal harassment and bogus disciplinary tickets. They recently locked up 40 people – accusing them of participating in a demonstration – but the whole thing was bogus. The accused people hadn't done anything wrong and the COs just falsely claimed they had participated in a demonstration. COs also use disciplinary tickets to cover up their abuse. In the vast majority of alleged "assault on staff" tickets, the situation at Clinton is that the COs are the ones doing the assaulting of the incarcerated people. In addition, there is a spot in the medical area that we call the beat-down room because of all of the staff assaults of incarcerated people that take place there.

Because all of the attention in the fall of 2015, the incidents of brutality may have slowed down a little bit in comparison to the immediate aftermath of the escape, but what that means is that I hear about a serious beat-up once a week rather than three or four times a week. Generally, the COs are not afraid of any outside scrutiny since they have been getting away with anything and everything and know it will be covered up.

After I spoke with the Correctional Association, one officer said to another that "here is another one of them" while another officer made a fist at me. Similarly, when I spoke with a reporter, COs asked me, "are you trying to snitch or something?" Also, another incarcerated person told me that he overheard officers talking about me, saying that they had to watch out for me because I was a rat and no good. Other people at Clinton – including some people who were on the Inmate Liaison Committee – have been retaliated against for raising complaints and have been transferred out of Clinton.

Everyone from the captain on down to the COs are all running together. The officers do not respect the higher ups. They have been carrying out a slowdown at the prison. The COs will even state that things will only get worse once Albany clears out. The COs run this prison; the administration does not. The only changes the new administration has made after the escape is to supposedly shore up security, but they have not done anything to stop staff abuse of incarcerated people.

If something happens in the yard, they make everyone lay down on the ground – even in inclement weather. They will take people's IDs just to harass you and make you get a new one. And they will beat people up. Even the hospital itself is a hotspot for physical abuse.

Just recently there was a fight in the yard. Although there were no weapons involved in the fight, staff fired a shot in the yard from one of the towers. The next day, there was another fist fight in the yard, again without any weapons. This time staff shot tear gas in the yard and then closed the whole prison down and locked everyone in for a week without showers, phones, or officer rounds. When someone tried to raise a concern, they threatened disciplinary tickets or a beat down and said that we were lucky we were getting what limited items they were providing us because if it was up to them, we would get nothing.

“I’ve been here three years and I’ve seen people commit suicide. The COs don’t listen to you when you try to tell them something important. They don’t care. Someone told staff he was going to commit suicide and the COs only patrolled three times that day. By the time they came around to the man’s cell, he was already dead.”

“I fear for my safety at this prison. There must be greater protection for incarcerated persons at Clinton to combat the abuse by staff. Complaints raised by the people incarcerated here should be taken seriously.”



85%

of survey respondents in the Clinton Main Facility reported feeling at least somewhat unsafe at Clinton.

Moreover, they aren't providing people with the programs that they need. A long time back, we used to have more in-house training and opportunities for jobs and programs. Now, DOCCS just leaves guys in their cells all day looking at the walls. Around half of the people at Clinton need school, but aren't able to get into a program.

Worse still, for people like myself who have done all of the programs they can do, we get denied release by the Parole Board. I have done everything I was supposed to do while incarcerated. I have a GED and I have done my vocational and all of my programs. I have already served over 25 years and I got hit the first time I went to the Board. There are guys who are getting denied by the Board as many as 10 or 12 times. I will go to the Board without expectations. About five denials – 10 extra years – is probably what I would expect. Anything before that would be a blessing.

In the meantime I am going to continue to be part of the struggle, pushing for change little by little, and carrying on the advocacy together with people on the outside. Albany officials need to come in and meet with people incarcerated about these abuses that pervade Clinton. They also need outsiders to come in and investigate all of the abuses at Clinton, and need to put undercover investigators of CO misconduct. The abuses are continuing and will continue until serious action is taken.

All In

To the COs, incarceration is like slavery. We're not treated as human beings or even criminals. We're treated as nothing.

Just as an example of the most petty power plays and the dehumanization: a couple of months ago in the mess hall a CO told me to sit down. I was walking over to my seat to sit down. Then he said to me again very aggressively to sit down. I sat down. He later came back, put me on the wall, and after the rest of the company left, he said to me, "when you get a direct order from me, you follow it." Then he said, "don't look at me like I'm a piece of sh*t. You're the piece of sh*t." Luckily, he didn't beat me up or give me a ticket.

The abuse is so serious that people don't even want to come out for chow – even guys who can't afford anything at commissary. The abuse is unbearable.

When the administration goes home from this prison, it is like a reign of terror. The COs do whatever they want. They deny people phone calls and showers and recreation – whatever they can take away they do. Whatever the officer feels today, that's how the day is gonna be.

For example, during the lockdown, a person in a cell on my company was being interrogated by officers and getting a lot of hassles. One night, a bunch of officers meant to come to his cell again, but instead came to a different cell on my company by mistake. I heard the officers saying things like "shut the f*ck up" and the person in the cell asking what was going on. I saw the COs drag him out of his cell and down the company. Then I saw them bring him back some time later, after having been beaten up. He said there were a number of other people who were all beaten up down where they had taken him. He said they had picked him out by mistake and meant to get the other guy on the company they had previously been hassling.

Besides the physical abuse, the COs take away even the small things that could make it easier for us. The phones are a perfect example. A couple years ago, there was a riot over the phones. So they changed the policy and they assign people to groups to use the phone when they are in the yard. Only people in a designated group can use the phone at a certain time. When a block goes out toward the end of recreation and end up in group 11 or 12, and then the COs only run a total of eight groups, those folks don't get to use the phone at all. And meanwhile, during the whole time there would have been a number of phones just not being used in each group. Plus for recreation itself, the COs carried out a long-term slowdown after some COs were placed on administrative leave following the escape.

“Despite all of the attention on Clinton, there is still verbal abuse every day, and brutality still takes place.”

Most of us are from NYC or even Rochester or Buffalo. It is bad enough that we are multiple hours away from our families and it is hard to get a visit. Then to not be able to use the phones? Add the fact that mail is slow and problematic. We feel the COs and DOCCS are trying to break the relationships we have with people who give us support from the outside.

Similarly for showers, we don't even get the minimum three showers per week mandated in the directive. We may get two showers a week, and then the other shower opportunity is to take a shower in the yard and the gym. And that is not accessible to everybody. Plus, there is not hot water in the yard; the water can be as low as thirty degrees. Even in the hot summer, the water is so cold that your heart stops and you lose your breath. Just imagine in the winter. This creates a problem for health and hygiene. Plus, for even the most basic weekly supplies you may only get toilet paper, or envelopes, or paper, or soap, but not all of them. Some people can't go to commissary to buy soap and then they smell bad. In another prison, if someone smells bad, they would make sure you get to a shower. Here they don't care. They just don't view us as human beings. Even brooms – at other prisons they are given free but here you have to buy them with \$5 at commissary.

Despite all of the attention on Clinton, there is still verbal abuse every day, and brutality still takes place. For example, if there is ever a fight in the yard, the response is crazy – COs will beat people in the head with batons. There may be a little less blatant abuse because of all of the attention, but the COs are just waiting to see when the attention will pass over. Even when Commissioner Annucci and other officials from Albany were at the prison, the COs' approach was to keep things quiet to just try to get the Albany officials out of here and then they would go back to what they have always been doing.

Things have gotten worse at Clinton from the time I left here in 2011 until when I came back in 2013. In 2011, COs at Clinton were still beating people, but the functioning of the prison was better. It is way worse now. It is so tense. The COs should come here to work – instead their objective seems to be to make our lives h*ll. There is a complete lack of communication between COs and incarcerated people. The way COs talk to you and look at you is so egotistical and macho for no reason. Before 2011, you knew what you were supposed to do, and if you followed the

rules you'd be fine and if not, then there would be a problem. But now, there is overall animosity and abuse.

The intense racism is interlinked with the abusive culture. They go hand in hand. Racist thoughts are always manifesting themselves at Clinton, whether in direct or subtle ways. Even with good intentions, the almost exclusively white COs don't know or understand the culture of others and thus can't meaningfully help people rehabilitate.

Police brutality is based on the same culture as the culture of the COs in here. The reason why they do what they do and get away with it is because of the blue uniform. I am convinced that the abuse going on is the culture at DOCCS. This abuse is not just what is happening at Clinton, but it is happening at every prison. Brutality is everywhere. The prison system is an industry run by families. A CO at Clinton has a daughter working at another prison and a son at a different prison.

Something has to be done to stop this culture of abuse. When Governor Cuomo was closing prisons, he was closing too many near New York City and left the abusive prisons and the prisons in the northern counties open. Almost none of the people incarcerated at Clinton are from this area, and we shouldn't be housed here. Also, COs should be evaluated before they are hired in the same manner incarcerated persons are evaluated – regarding mental health, drug use, and so forth – as well as the way that juries are evaluated to guard against bias. People are going to have their prejudices. But we just want staff to do what they are supposed to do – nothing more, nothing less. There needs to be a complete change in the culture – there need to be more female, Black, and Latino officers, and attitudes must shift.

I am all in. I am going to go home and I am not planning on coming back. So this is not my fight. But I am all in because it is for the other guys, and I am willing to continue the struggle.

Keeplock for Being Slow in the Yard

Staff at Clinton are constantly beating guys up. Sometimes it is while a person is being frisked going out to the yard. Or COs take guys to the hospital area, photograph them, and then assault them. If you file a complaint against staff, your grievances may not even reach the office, and people are being called down for urine testing or having their cells searched and destroyed, all as retaliation for filing a complaint.

For me personally, one day, an officer asked me for my ID. After I handed it to him, he pocketed it instead of just taking information from it and handing it back to me. The IDs are important – we can't go to the yard or do anything without an ID. When I asked the officer to return the ID, he told me to “shut the f*ck up and get back in the line.” The CO then put me on the wall, searched me, pushed my chest into the wall, and said “I will knock your teeth out of your mouth. I will bury you.” The CO then brought me back to my cell, searched my cell, and told me to stay in my cell for the rest of the day.

Then, more recently, I was sent to keeplock along with around 40 other people because they claimed we were attempting a demonstration. Our block is always the last block to go out in the yard, and therefore, we never get an opportunity to use the phones. The blocks are not being rotated to go to the yard like they are supposed to be doing. But when the recreation period was over, they said we weren't moving fast enough to get in line and return back inside from the yard, so they said we were protesting and gave us all tickets and put us in keeplock. We weren't protesting and we were just following the usual procedures. But they sent all of us to keeplock for nothing. In keeplock, they denied me showers. They also messed with my regular mail and legal mail.

I further faced retaliation for grievances I made related to trying to restore my visiting privileges. After filing grievances, I got a cell search and all of a sudden they claim to have found a sharpened toothbrush in my cell. They are covering their dirt by setting me up with a weapon and giving me SHU time. I fear for my safety at this facility. I'm really scared and my family is also worried and scared for my safety.

After the escape, outside people came to investigate, but they were just investigating the escape itself. They never asked anyone about any staff abuse or assaults. Staff attitudes have only gotten worse since the escape. They run things here slower now – for example we only get out to the yard around 4 pm when the yard time is from 3 to 5 pm. And there is no communication between staff and incarcerated people. Staff won't acknowledge you if you try to talk to them. They ignore you or say something like “what the f*ck?!” or otherwise respond negatively and sometimes physically. They need to retrain the entire staff in order to address this abuse.

“I am a Black man in my 50s and I have spent nearly two decades in prison. There are no programs for me to participate in to help improve or better myself for when I hopefully, one day, return to society. I know that there may be retaliation for my speaking out. But I sincerely hope these efforts will bring the abuses to light and make the public aware.”

7. RACISM AND DEHUMANIZATION 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, as well as Latino people, 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 and less than .5% of COs were Latino, while 53% of the people incarcerated at Clinton were Black and 22% were Latino.

Brutalized Because of Milk

I was recently assaulted by multiple officers at Clinton in the summer of 2015, several weeks after the escape. It was written up to look like I was the aggressor. My back and shoulders were injured. My situation took place because I was trying to get a couple of milks off of the feed up table. I asked the porter and he gave me the ok so I took it. The officer told me to “put that sh*t down.” When I said it was only milk, he said “I don't care. If it was up to me, all you [n-words] would starve.” I put the milk down and said something angrily. We got into a verbal dispute and he got even angrier. He followed me up the stairs and put me on the wall for a pat frisk. He waited until the rest of the incarcerated people locked in, and proceeded to search me and then slap me in the back of my head.

He called me a [n-word], grabbed my hair, and told me that in his world I was his “f*cking slave” and he's my master and I should never disrespect him. He slapped me again and then hit me and sent me on my way, with other officers there ready to pounce on me. As I walked away, I got punched in the side of my face by one of the officers. I tried to run, but COs grabbed me and dragged me to the stairwell. Three officers jumped on me. I curled up and they punched and kicked me everywhere. One kicked me repeatedly in the same spots of my back and shoulders. The CO that started it all then claimed that I assaulted him. I was taken to medical and threatened into not giving a statement.

You have no idea how racist these people are. Officers have extreme bias against anyone who is not of their culture. I didn't do anything but grab a couple of milks in front of a racist officer and got beat up for it.

I don't think it's fair that all they have to do is write a ticket and they can do what they want with us. They have killed people in here. Last winter, it is believed that officers killed someone and documented it as a suicide. People are repeatedly beaten with sticks after they stop fighting and are given new charges based on staff's fabricated statements. They usually beat up people of color and then write it off as an assault on staff. I'm lucky to only have a messed up back and shoulder. I have to slouch over so it won't hurt me. I can barely sleep. I still haven't gotten any medical assistance.

Many things got much worse due to the escape – they mess with people more, hit people. They are even more racist, and the white shirts (supervisors) are in on it too. The corruption in here is beyond belief. During the lock down, some people have said that officers stabbed someone and covered it up by alleging that one of the victim's peers inflicted the assault. At the time that he was stabbed, the entire prison population was locked-in, but officers still used the fabrication that another incarcerated person carried out the stabbing.

I fear for my safety at this prison. There must be greater protection for incarcerated persons at Clinton to combat the abuse by staff. Complaints raised by the people incarcerated here should be taken seriously. Half of the officers at the prison should be from New York City – perhaps that would stem some of the abuses taking places. There also need to be charges filed against staff that assault people in prison. And an outside agency should be made

responsible for the grievance system, including with involvement of formerly incarcerated people, to try to make the grievance system fairer. Albany knows what is taking place, but they do not give any importance to it, unless the media is involved. Their lack of concern only fuels officers to continue their abuses, without fear of any consequences. It is even worse when the media promotes officers as if they were saints and honest people, instead of telling people about the instances of racism and brutality. There is starting to be some awareness of what is going on in the prison system, but there are not enough remedies to alleviate the harsh conditions and harsh realities of staff abuses.

Latino People Need Support, Not Abuse

I'm currently housed in keeplock where it's very difficult to communicate with the staff there. I have no trust in the staff like most people in here, and there are no Spanish speaking programs. I was in an ESL program but no instructor has come in the last three months and I was told that the person who was running the ESL program retired last summer. I've spent the last five months in my cell, and I have not been able to participate in a lot of programs that require the ability to speak English, land a job as a porter, or work toward getting my GED. The only job that I am eligible for is a job in the mess hall. There are a lot of Spanish speaking people in the same boat here, and it doesn't matter where we are from, the COs refer to all of us as Mexicans. There are a lot of problems that happen because the staff does not speak Spanish and there are no translation services. There are a lot of times when I do not understand what a staff member is saying to me or what they are telling me to do, and they don't let other Spanish speaking incarcerated people help. I can't even submit a grievance because you are not allowed to write it in Spanish.

Being at Clinton is mentally disturbing and the worst part is the COs. I was working the mess hall once and the CO told me to do something that was someone else's job. I told him I did my job already and that the other task was someone else's job. That's when he escorted me to the stairwell and multiple COs jumped on me and beat me up. They then waited three days to take pictures of my face for the file. Another time I was brutally beaten in my cell and put in the box because the COs lied and said I lunged at them. There's a group of COs in here who just beat up incarcerated people and curse people out causing some guys to become seriously depressed. Another time, it was the middle of the night and I was going to the bathroom when a CO grabbed the curtain I put up for privacy and dragged it down the hall. They like to terrorize us.

I've been here three years and I've seen people commit suicide. The COs don't listen to you when you try to tell them something important. They don't care. Someone told staff he was going to commit suicide and the COs only patrolled three times that day. By the time they came around to the man's cell, he was already dead.

There are also a lot of new COs since the escape, but they're just learning from the old guards. Just recently I witnessed an incarcerated person being jumped in a B-block frisk area and saw blood on the ground where he was beaten. Since the escape, the COs have been taking away

our recreation time and gym time too. They are not giving us enough toilet paper and grievances are disappearing. I've filed a grievance before and, though it didn't disappear, I waited four to five months for a response, and after that I was assaulted and placed in involuntary protective custody for a week so my wounds could heal without anyone seeing. There is a lot of retaliation for filing grievances, and there is a lot of trashing of property too. There is one CO here who tries to regulate our clothing on the weekends when we are supposed to be allowed to where our normal clothes. They don't give us permits for electronics we buy at the commissary that leads to us having our stuff confiscated. They mess with our meals, and deny us meals sometimes too. They attacked a friend of mine for passing sugar, claiming that it was drugs. They will do random searches and write excessive tickets. One morning they gave out 16 tickets to people they claimed were sleeping during morning count but were not. There is also this one CO who takes people out to the garbage area and assaults them. They are trying to get away with something big in here.

The lack of proper medical attention is also a serious problem here. I had an ear infection that was so bad I couldn't hear and it took four months to get seen by a doctor. I had a knee injury once too, and it took six months to get seen by a doctor that time. It's very hard to get seen here. There are not enough doctors. Sick call is easier to access but not if the COs don't want you to be seen.

Nothing in here has changed with the new administration; it's all the same. I want to see better education programs, better mental health care, and some support for Latino people who are incarcerated.



Merle Cooper Graduate Stuck at Clinton

I was at Clinton for over four years. I volunteered to come to this prison from a medium security prison in order to participate in the former Merle Cooper program. I successfully completed the program before they closed it. Yet, I was still here until late 2015. My request for a transfer was sitting in Albany for nearly two years after Merle Cooper was closed

So instead of being at a medium security prison, I was stuck at Clinton, where many abuses were going on. There are no security cameras in most of the prison. The vast majority of the people incarcerated at Clinton are Black and Latino, and I believe there is only one Black officer in the whole prison. Everyone else is white. It reminds me of Ferguson.

At Clinton and across the whole system, there is a lack of oversight and a lack of accountability. Directives and policies are passed down from the top but there's no one to check to see whether these policies or directives are being implemented properly. As a result, things go seriously wrong, abuses come into play, and no one is held accountable.

Looking at the immediate aftermath of the June 2015 escape from Clinton as an example, the Superintendent and the Deputy Superintendent of Security were allowed to resign with their full pensions before the Department could even decide if there was any wrongdoing on their part. Similarly many officers who could have been held responsible or accountable will be resigning before the Department can take action against them. So they get away and leave everyone else with the job of cleaning up. And instead of staff accountability for the escape, officers have been carrying out their own rules targeted at all of us who are incarcerated here.

I finally was able to get transferred out of Clinton to another prison. But I was recently hit by the Parole Board for the second time, and I remain incarcerated. I am a Black man in my 50s and I have spent nearly two decades in prison. There are no programs for me to participate in to help improve or better myself for when I hopefully, one day, return to society. I know that there may be retaliation for my speaking out. But I sincerely hope these efforts will bring the abuses to light and make the public aware.

Most Don't Care; Someone Please Help!

I have been in SHU too many times to count. I have spent multiple years in SHU during this and previous incarcerations. I lost over 30 pounds just in my first month in SHU. I've suffered anxiety, depression, sight sensitivity, panic attacks, weight loss, sleep deprivation, muscle atrophy, and disorientation. I am on the Office of Mental Health caseload, and I am a level 2 patient. All I have is a short session with OMH staff once a month. I also sometimes have to wait to get my medication, and then I have a difficult time dealing with my mental health issues. I recently stopped taking my medication altogether because I didn't think they were doing much to help, especially with the delays to even get them sometimes.

The last time I was in SHU I was there for six months, and I just recently got off keeplock. I have been in keeplock at Clinton numerous times and have spent many months in keeplock there. At the end of 2015, I received two bogus tickets as retaliation for a complaint I filed on an officer. I can't understand how the people who are supposed to be in charge of our safety lie and cheat, so that we get in trouble and put in a cage for 24 hours a day, then lose our release date and are not able to go home to our family.

In keeplock, they only gave us one roll of toilet paper a month. And they constantly turned off my lights and water. They denied my meals and showers. One time when I politely asked the officers about me not eating all day, their response was to shut off the power in my cell and leave me in the dark. They also tampered with my mail, cut recreation hours, and failed to provide me with cleaning supplies so I could clean up my cell. I suffer from asthma, and this place is so dusty that I'm developing a bad cough, and I can't get access to medical care.

Even when I have been in general population recently and not been on any deprivation orders, I was still being denied showers. And they're still tampering with my mail and packages. I was expecting a package from my family with some perishable items, but when I finally got the package, the items were rotten. This made me wonder how long they had the package without telling me. When I finally got it, I tried to go up to the desk to ask about it. I was very polite, but I immediately was told to "Get the [expletive] over there!" and was sent to the wall. I stayed calm and complied because I didn't want any problems, but I never did find out why my items were rotten.

Plus they just beat people up – both before and after the escape. If two incarcerated persons fight, the worst beating comes from the COs after the fight is over. They will brutally beat you. Or they will put two people

who fought back together again to set it up for them to kill or seriously harm each other. If people were in a fight, they shouldn't be allowed to go back to yard at the same time or to the same housing unit. It sets them up to fight again. This is a very, very serious security issue. They are putting people's lives at risk. I am aware that the officers do not see me as a person, a human being.

Nothing changed at Clinton after the escape except more abuse and harassment. After the escape, the COs turned their anger on us. They lied and blamed us for their incompetence. They did a shakedown and lots of cell searches. They destroyed and took people's property. One time, a few COs came to search my cell. They didn't find any contraband, but they slammed my TV, cracking it. The CO said he was "just doing his job." They also gave a lot of bogus tickets and beat people up. I personally witnessed staff brutality; they beat my neighbor in a nearby cell and then put him in the box. Broken wrists and dislocated rotator cuffs are just some of the injuries I've seen other people sustain.

Even following the escape, they still don't do the rounds they are supposed to do. You could die in your cell and they won't know until the next day. Yet, they come by with big metal mallets and bang on the walls to harass us. They even took away our hot pots and our hot water. They facetiously and purposely move slowly when it comes to our recreation time, causing us to lose almost an hour of yard time. And when we do get out on time, they still find a way to make us lose it. More than once, I've been sent to the wall on my way to the yard even though the metal detector didn't go off on me. One time when they sent me to the wall, the CO told me to take my right hand off and unlace my left boot, which was difficult to do while keeping my other hand still on the wall. After I complied and they found nothing in my boot or on me after searching me, they sent me back to my cell and I lost my recreation time. I'm not sure, but this could be because I'm Latino and the racism is bad here. When a white guy goes through the detector and it beeps, the CO will ask what he's got. The guy will say a lighter, or whatever he has, without even showing it, and the CO will say okay and let him through. It doesn't seem fair that I get sent to the wall where I'm harassed even though the detector doesn't beep on me, but a white guy who beeps gets through without being checked. Once when I was on the wall, an officer grabbed my genitals during the pat down. But that wasn't the only time I was sexually assaulted. Before the escapes, a deputy called me out and brought me to the stairwell. He put his hand up my rear end, but I didn't do anything about it because I don't want others to hear about it.

Being at Clinton is the worst. Racism in here is ongoing, along with intimidation, including against Latino people like myself. One CO in particular has a real problem with me even though I can't think of a real reason why. Despite the fact that I am always calm, never vulgar with staff, never raise my voice to them, and they've never found a weapon during the multiple searches of my cell, this CO is still on my case. He once told me "This place was made for people like you," and

all I was doing was reading my mail in my cell. After my grandmother died, he came by my cell not to offer condolences, but to tell me "You're a f*cking problem." A guy I know on the second tier told me this same officer was creeping in the shadows behind the wall next to my cell just listening to and watching me for 40 minutes. I couldn't see him because he was around the corner, but this creeped me out enough that I told my mental health counselor. Shortly after I told my counselor, Captain America, the Superintendent, and another captain called me out and told me I needed to file a written statement about the incident with the CO's name, and this all had to be completed within two weeks. I never knew the CO's name, and I don't know if anyone else knows it either. Even if they did, they wouldn't want to say his name because everyone here is afraid of retaliation. I anticipate this meeting is the start of a set up. There's no way I can get the CO's name, and even sharing this story with advocates from the outside probably puts me at risk. I think they'll send me to the box again soon. But I want to contribute to efforts to make a change.

Also, they deny so many people programs. If you don't have your programs completed, parole will hit you at the Board. But it is up to corrections to provide these programs and they are not doing it. I sit idle, as do lots of other people incarcerated here, doing nothing but sitting in a cell waiting for a bogus ticket. And then in 2015 I got hit by the Parole Board for the second time. We get hit at the Parole Board because corrections is incompetent and the system is broken. Still now, I have not had access to the basic programs I need, and so I am set up to fail.

There needs to be more Latino officers at Clinton. Any efforts to improve our living conditions would be greatly appreciated because most people in the general public just don't care. The number I have doesn't define who I am as a human being, as a person. Mistakes we make play an important role in our lives, in who we become. I have chosen to learn from mine and be a better person and parent. I will always fight for what I believe in. It is who I am. If we live in the greatest country in the world, why are American people being tortured in the so-called "correctional system"? It is a bigger problem than society thinks because most people get released back into society and then become someone's neighbor, employee, parent, husband, and member of society. So why torture your neighbor? Why traumatize him or cripple him? It is unbelievable that taxpayers keep paying taxes so that their loved ones can go home and be provided with basic necessities, and yet we are denied medical care, rehabilitation opportunities, and vocational training. The grievance is a failed option to solve a problem. I have written to the administration numerous times and they have ignored my pleas for help. I have no way of protecting myself from officer abuse and retaliation. I don't want to become a hateful person full of resentment toward society. Someone please help!

8. CONCLUSION

Clinton has a long and brutal history of abusive conditions for people incarcerated there. The level of physical violence and staff abuse and intimidation, the overall oppressive environment, the long distance from New York City and any urban centers, and the tensions derived from the vast racial and cultural disparities between staff and incarcerated persons epitomize some of the worst aspects of the racist system of mass incarceration in New York. The levels of brutality and the use of the torture of solitary confinement are simply unacceptable, and the dehumanization and racist attitudes reported throughout the facility are an affront to our sense of humanity.

In a related manner, despite the fact that Clinton imprisons the largest number of people across the state, there is a relative dearth of programming opportunities at the prison. In addition to large waitlists in general academic, vocational, transitional services, and substance abuse treatment programs, the facility does not provide any college program other than correspondence courses, has very limited volunteer programs, and does not offer substantial support for peer-led initiatives. Moreover, DOCCS closed the one program, Merle Cooper, which received near universal praise from staff, participants, and the administration. Also, as across the system, Clinton has low rates of parole release similar to other maximum security prisons, holding people in prison for years and decades after becoming parole eligible almost exclusively based on the nature of their crime of conviction rather than their current risk, accomplishments, or readiness for release.

New York must end the violence and abuse at Clinton and across the state prison system. Clinton has such a long history of staff abuse and such an entrenched culture of racist brutality that this prison should be closed. Closing Clinton – along with other infamously abusive prisons such as Attica – would both finally stop the ongoing abuses there that have been happening for decades and send a ripple effect throughout the prison system that abuse will not be tolerated. So long as New York continues to confine people at Clinton, as well as at other prisons, the state must create mechanisms to end staff violence and abuse, including through a broad package aimed at transforming the entrenched racist and punitive culture of the prison system and ending mass incarceration.

Specifically, the state must replace a culture and environment of brutality, violence, excessive punishment, dehumanization, intimidation, fear, and abuse with a culture that prioritizes mutual respect and communication between staff and incarcerated persons; conflict resolution, transformation, and de-escalation; and individual autonomy, support, programs, empowerment, and personal growth for incarcerated persons. Examples from around the world – such as systems in Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden; from around the country – such as the Resolve to Stop Violence Project

in San Francisco jails; and from within New York State and Clinton itself – the now closed Merle Cooper program; demonstrate that an alternative culture can exist. These examples also demonstrate that a culture focused on growth, transformation, and preparation for return to the community can have much more successful outcomes, including decreased violence within prisons, better job satisfaction for staff and experiences for incarcerated people; and lower recidivism rates and greater success for people returning home.

Further, the state must effectively implement a no tolerance policy for improper or excessive use of force, including absolute prohibitions of certain types of force (such as blows to the head) and strengthened prohibitions against any use of force other than in exceptional circumstances in response to imminent violence or harm. Moreover, New York must greatly expand transparency and accountability at Clinton and across the prison system. For example, there must be expanded public oversight and transparency, through media access, community member access, and mandatory public reporting. There must also be independent investigations and accountability, including through a federal Department of Justice investigation of Clinton and the entire DOCCS system, the creation of an independent state oversight and investigatory body, augmentation of the CA's authority and access, and an overhaul of the disciplinary systems for both incarcerated people and staff.

The experiences described in these narratives also reveal the need for more fundamental changes in our criminal justice system. New York should end the torture of solitary confinement at Clinton and all prisons, create more opportunities for college and other educational and treatment programs, release parole-ready people, provide greater reintegration support for people going home, and reduce the number of people coming into Clinton and the prison system by raising the age of criminal responsibility and reforming policing and sentencing practices.

Overall, New York must reverse the downward spiral toward persistent punishment and warehousing at Clinton and across DOCCS, and envision a system where the state puts people before prisons. Where additional therapeutic and rehabilitative support, services, and programs – rather than isolation, punishment, violence, and warehousing – are the response to difficulties people and communities face, needs they have, and behaviors deemed problematic inside prisons and in outside communities. New York should begin by expanding and replicating, rather than closing, programs that have proven successful like Merle Cooper, and by closing – or at least ending the brutality of – prisons like Clinton.

(ENDNOTES)

¹ See <http://www.correctionalassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Clinton-Correctional-Facility-Final-Draft-2.pdf>; <http://www.correctionalassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Attica-2014-CA-Updated-Report-Final.pdf>; <http://www.correctionalassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Greene-C.F.-Report-Final.pdf>; <http://www.correctionalassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Fishkill-C.F.-Final-Report.pdf>.

² See <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/01/nyregion/attica-prison-infamous-for-bloodshed-faces-a-reckoning-as-guards-go-on-trial.html>; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/12/nyregion/after-2-killers-fled-new-york-prisoners-say-beatings-were-next.html>; http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/19/nyregion/fishkill-prison-inmate-died-after-fight-with-officers-records-show.html?ref=nyregion&_r=0.

³ Matthew Purdy, "Brutality Behind Bars: A special report; prison's violent culture enveloping its guards," *The New York Times*, Dec. 19, 1995, *available at*: <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/12/19/nyregion/brutality-behind-bars-special-report-prison-s-violent-culture-enveloping-its.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>.

⁴ Michael Winerip, "Notoriety and Scorn Shadow Clinton Prison," *The New York Times*, June 7, 2015; *available at*: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/08/nyregion/clinton-prison-known-for-its-toughness-and-violent-criminals-is-embraced-by-town.html>.

⁵ Michael Schwartz and Michael Winerip, "After Two Killers Fled, Prisoners Say, Beatings were Next," *The New York Times*, August 11, 2015, *available at*: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/12/nyregion/after-2-killers-fled-new-york-prisoners-say-beatings-were-next.html>.

⁶ Michael Schwartz and Michael Winerip, "An Inmate Dies, and No One is Punished," Dec. 13, 2015, *available at*: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/14/nyregion/clinton-correctional-facility-inmate-brutality.html>.

⁷ CA 2014 report on Clinton, *available at*: <http://www.correctionalassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Clinton-Correctional-Facility-Final-Draft-2.pdf>; 10 Things You Need to Know about Brutality and Abuse at Clinton C.F., Correctional Association of NY, September 2015, *available at*: <http://www.correctionalassociation.org/news/10-things-you-need-to-know-about-brutality-and-abuse-at-clinton-c-f>.

⁸ See CA 2014 report on Clinton, p. 10, *available at*: <http://www.correctionalassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Clinton-Correctional-Facility-Final-Draft-2.pdf>.

⁹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/02/nyregion/prison-guard-known-as-captain-america-is-feared-on-upstate-cell-block.html>.

ABOUT THE CORRECTIONAL ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK

Founded in 1844, the Correctional Association of New York is an independent non-profit organization advocating for a more humane and effective criminal justice system and a more just and equitable society.

The Correctional Association works to counter the abuses inherent in the criminal justice system, to affirm the value of all people, and to promote policies that transform individuals and society for the better. Through coalition-building and leadership training programs for formerly incarcerated people, the Correctional Association works to build the power of the communities most negatively affected by criminal justice policy.

One of only two private organizations in the country with unrestricted access to prisons, in 1846 the Association was given a legislative mandate to inspect conditions of confinement in New York prisons. The organization utilizes its unique mandate to educate the public about what goes on behind prison walls and to advocate for far-reaching, progressive change to the criminal justice system.

CONTACT US

Correctional Association of New York

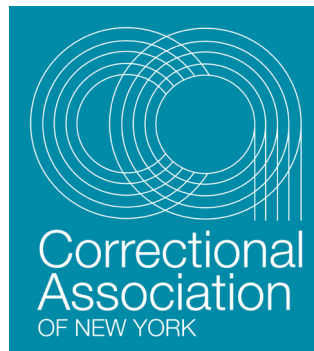
2090 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd., Suite 200

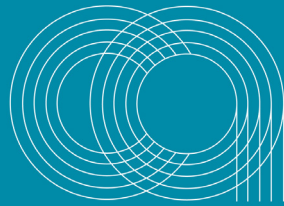
New York, NY 10027

Tel (212) 254-5700

Fax (212) 473-2807

www.correctionalassociation.org





Correctional
Association
OF NEW YORK



VISIT US
www.correctionalassociation.org



LIKE US
[FB/CorrectionalAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/CorrectionalAssociation)



FOLLOW US
[@CANY_1844](https://twitter.com/CANY_1844)



IG US
[CANY_1844](https://www.instagram.com/CANY_1844)