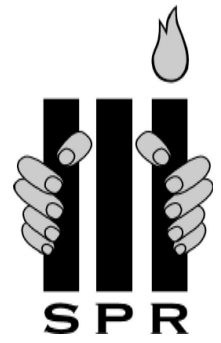


Stop Prisoner Rape (SPR) is a national nonprofit human rights organization that works to end sexual violence against men, women, and youth in all forms of detention.



Action Update

a newsletter of Stop Prisoner Rape

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Commission Examines Texas Abuse Scandal

It's a mother's nightmare come true to learn that her child has been sexually abused. For Genger Galloway, whose son Joseph was raped after entering a Texas Youth Commission (TYC) facility at age 15, the horror only intensified when she and her son reported the abuse. "We will handle this internally, our own way," explained a facility case worker, who then proceeded to do nothing.

Tragically, Joseph's case is far from exceptional. In recent months, some 7,000 allegations of abuse at TYC facilities have come to light, many of which concern sexual violence. Subsequent investigations have revealed that hundreds of these complaints were ignored or egregiously covered up, sometimes by high-ranking officials.

At a public hearing in Austin on March 26-27, 2007, the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission addressed the epidemic of sexual abuse within the TYC. Remaining faithful to its belief that government officials need to hear about sexual violence in detention directly from those affected, Stop Prisoner Rape (SPR) facilitated Ms. Galloway's testimony at the hearing.

The Commission also heard from Jay Kimbrough, who has been appointed by the Governor of Texas to resolve the TYC scandal, and from Jerry Madden, the Chairman of the Texas House Committee on Corrections.

They both acknowledged the need for major reform throughout Texas' 22 youth facilities.

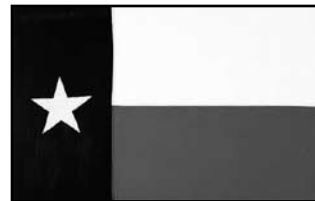
Unfortunately, youth detention centers are not the only troubled facilities in Texas. Sexual abuse is also rampant in adult prisons and jails, as made clear in the many letters SPR receives from Texas inmates. In the past five years, more than 130 prisoners from Texas have contacted SPR, reporting devastating sexual abuse, often over long periods of time and by multiple assailants.

SPR ensured that the Commission heard one account of such ongoing abuse, at the hands of a corrections official at a Texas women's prison. The testimony was given by the fiancé of a current inmate. Concerned about the safety of his fiancée, he appeared as John Doe, illustrating the fear of retaliation that so often silences prisoner rape survivors for years, even decades, after an assault.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) also had the opportunity to speak before the Commission, focusing on its new initiative, the Safe Prisons Program. This program provides peer education for inmates and training for staff about prisoner rape. SPR believes that this effort is an important step in the right direction and has provided input into the inmate peer education materials.

In recent months, SPR has intensified its work in Texas, monitoring closely the proposed

(see *ABUSE* cont'd on Page 2)



New Law Proposed in Texas

SPR was pleased that the Texas House of Representatives unanimously passed an important bill addressing sexual abuse in detention in early May. Among its key provisions, House Bill 1944 strengthens the external oversight system of Texas' troubled prisons by creating a Sexual Assault Ombudsperson. The bill also improves the opportunities for inmates to file grievances in the aftermath of an assault. At the time of writing this *Action Update*, a similar version of the bill had also passed out of the Committee on Criminal Justice in the Texas Senate, and was expected to be approved by the full Senate before the close of the Texas Legislature's current session.

SPR is one of the key supporters of the proposed law and the organization brought experts and survivors of prisoner rape to testify before the House and the Senate Committee. Should the bill become law, Texas will become only the second state in the country—after California—with legislation in place addressing sexual violence in custody.

A Summit of Courage and Dignity

There was silence in the room. Some people shifted lightly in their chairs. Then Erica Hejnar spoke up, beginning slowly and bravely to share her story of abuse and humiliation at the hands of a police officer in a Philadelphia lock-up. She had spoken about her ordeal before, with journalists and investigators and loved ones. But this time it was different. The men and women around the table were fellow survivors of sexual violence in detention. They weren't just listening; they knew what she meant, and could feel every word.

Keith DeBlasio, also a survivor and an experienced advocate, later commented on how nervous it had made him to speak before this

group, and what a deeply meaningful experience it was. Chino Hardin agreed, "Although every survivor comes from a unique racial, ethnic, economic, and social background, we share a common bond of having survived sexual assault behind bars."

SPR's first Prisoner Rape Survivor Summit, held in Los Angeles on February 16-17, was an exceptional event. Nine survivors from across the country gathered to share their stories, hone their public speaking and advocacy skills, and develop their own set of recommendations for addressing prisoner rape and other forms of sexual violence behind bars (see sidebar on page 3). Working with them were SPR staff, journalists, and mental health specialists.

Welcome, David Kaiser

In January, Stop Prisoner Rape welcomed David Kaiser as the new President of its Board of Directors.

Mr. Kaiser is a writer living in New York who first joined SPR's Board of Directors in 2004 and previously served as its Secretary. A graduate of Columbia University, he was on the editorial staff of *The New York Review of Books* from 1998 to 2001 and recently completed work on a novel. Mr. Kaiser has extensive experience serving

on the boards of nonprofit organizations and foundations, including Winrock International.

"Thanks in large part to its brave survivor advocates and dedicated staff, SPR has brought unprecedented attention to this nation's most widespread and neglected human rights crisis," Mr. Kaiser said. "I am honored to be a part of SPR's unique effort to end prisoner rape."

(ABUSE cont'd from Page 1)

reforms within the TYC and the TDCJ. In meetings with high-level officials and during visits to various detention facilities, corrections staff have committed to including SPR in their efforts to make prisons and youth detention centers safer. SPR will continue to offer its expertise and to bring survivors of sexual violence to the table. In particular, SPR will stay firm in its insistence that changes in policy and

practice have to be profound and focus exclusively on the need to protect detainees, as opposed to cosmetic changes made in response to negative media coverage.

In addition to its much called-for focus on Texas, the Commission also heard survivor testimony and received expert briefings on sexual violence in police lock-ups and within Native American detention facilities.



Rape Survivors Make Policy Recommendations

Since the passage of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) in 2003, SPR has worked hard to ensure that survivors of prisoner rape are actively involved in the implementation of the law. At the Survivor Summit, the participants developed detailed recommendations for the prevention of sexual violence behind bars. These recommendations will be submitted to the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission as it drafts national standards for addressing sexual violence in detention. The survivor recommendations include:

1. Survivors should be seen by an outside rape crisis counselor or other external mental health professional immediately after a rape.
2. All cells should have emergency call buttons.
3. Predators, not victims, should be moved to a different cell following an assault.
4. Corrections officials should receive detailed training on how to respond to a sexual assault.
5. Procedures for collecting and logging evidence should be standardized across the country.

In a press release lauding the Survivor Summit, the Commission expressed its eagerness to receive the participants' input. The Commission further assured SPR that it would give these recommendations the utmost consideration.

These portraits of the Survivor Summit participants were taken by photographer James Stenson, to document the dignity and courage of men and women across the country who have refused to be silenced by the abuses they endured while incarcerated. Left to right, top to bottom: Chino Hardin, Garrett Cunningham, Erica Hejnar, Thomas Clinton, Bryson Martel, Jason Lydon, Keith DeBlasio, Esmeralda Soto (large photo), Michael Williams (bottom left corner).

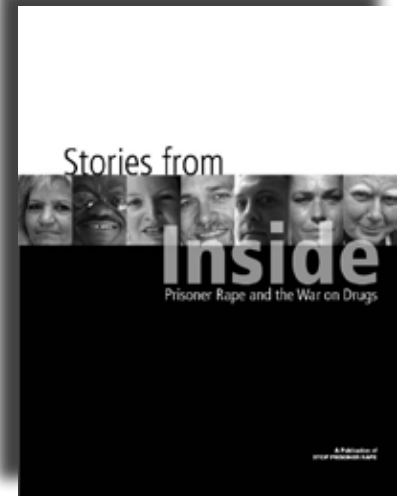
SPR Releases PREA Update

In March, SPR released a new *PREA Update*, summarizing and analyzing the work being carried out by federal agencies with specific mandates under the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003. The update, available at http://www.spr.org/pdf/SPR_PREA_update_3-29.pdf, also examines the inadequacy of the appropriations proposed for PREA implementation efforts in fiscal years 2007 and 2008.

New Report Links Prisoner Rape to War on Drugs

It is increasingly accepted that the U.S. “war on drugs” has been both costly and ineffective. Less known is the devastating link between current drug policies and rape behind bars. In March, SPR released *Stories from Inside*, a report that makes clear how people detained on non-violent drug charges—who are often young and unschooled in the ways of prison life—are targeted for sexual abuse in prisons and jails across the country.

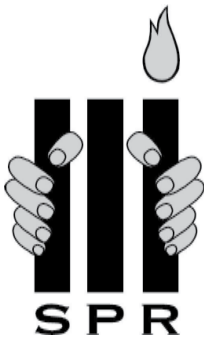
Stories from Inside includes first-hand accounts by 24 prisoner rape survivors, all of whom were sexually assaulted while serving time for a non-violent drug-related offense. The report also provides an overview and analysis of U.S. drug policy and related state and federal sentencing laws. At the end, SPR offers a set of concrete recommendations for corrections reform. These include a call for inmate classification and housing policies that protect vulnerable detainees from violence and for reduced incarceration rates for people convicted of non-violent drug offenses.



Hidden Devastation: Sexual Abuse in Immigration Detention

Sexual violence in U.S. immigration detention facilities is an appalling, yet little-known, form of human rights abuse that devastates the lives of its victims. Detainees held in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facilities are especially unlikely to file formal complaints, as they typically face language barriers and the fear of retaliatory deportation.

Esmeralda Soto—a transgender woman who sought asylum in the United States after suffering gender-based persecution in Mexico—is a brave exception. In December 2006, at a public hearing of the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission in Los Angeles, she spoke out about the rape she endured at the hands of an official at the San Pedro Service Processing Center, an immigration detention facility in California. Ms. Soto told the Commission that she could “not comprehend how a federal employee who was supposed to maintain a secure environment... could abuse his authority in such a flagrant and appalling manner.”



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