

In Their Own Words: Recent Examples of Sexual Abuse Behind Bars
March 2006

Stop Prisoner Rape (SPR), a national human rights organization, receives letters every day from survivors of prisoner rape. The correspondence excerpted below is a small sample of letters received at SPR's offices in recent months. These letters recount in sometimes searing detail sexual abuse that occurred in 2005 or in early 2006 in U.S. prisons and jails.

SPR has preserved the exact words of the survivors, without correcting grammatical errors. Where necessary, brackets have been added, for reader comprehension. Because SPR maintains the strictest standards of confidentiality for all survivors who contact the organization, information that could identify any of the involved parties or the incidents has been removed. In addition, the first names of the survivors have been changed and the exact dates of the abuse omitted.

Unfortunately, in U.S. detention facilities, sexual assault is neither a phenomenon of the past nor an aberration. The letters below underscore how crucial it is that policymakers and corrections officials take urgent action to address the issue of prisoner rape, beginning with full implementation of the landmark Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) of 2003.

1. Jason is a black inmate in a California state prison. In a September 15, 2005 letter to SPR, Jason states that he was raped by his cellmate in January 2005.

"Staff at [facility name omitted] housed [an] inmate up with me that I did not want in the cell with me at all... I became the victim of forcible rape with an inmate home-made knife held on me and forced to do all kinds of sexual acts on [name omitted]."

2. Christopher, an inmate in a Washington state prison, states in a September 5, 2005 letter to SPR that he was sexually abused by a female prison counselor in March 2005.

Recently, Counselor [name omitted] groped my crotch area in an effort to engage me in sexual activity... I declined. [The counselor] is very powerful, and was the chairperson of my classification committee. I was entitled to a custody promotion, facility transfer and earned time credits but [the counselor] denied these because I wouldn't engage in sexual activity."

3. Amy is an inmate in a Utah state prison who wrote to SPR on February 18, 2006 stating that she was raped by a cellmate in April 2005.

"One of my close friends was moved into my cell. We had sex. The first two times I was willing, but after that I got uncomfortable and no longer wanted to

do anything with her. I felt I couldn't say no because she would physically hurt me, or worse emotionally. I was moved out of the cell on a routine move and she started tormenting me. She was released on parole and I finally came out about what happened. A lot of people say I wasn't raped, but I feel like I was."

4. Daniel is a gay white inmate in a Texas state prison. He states in a September 15, 2005 letter to SPR that he was raped by his cellmate, a "lifer," in April 2005.

"On or about April [date omitted], 2005, I was raped by my cellmate, [name omitted]. Although I did report the rape, nothing was done and I was kept in that cell. I tried to get medical attention, but the nurse on duty refused to see me. Over the next two days I was raped repeatedly by [name omitted]. On April [date omitted; 11 days later], 2005, I was finally released."

5. Michael is a gay white inmate in an Oklahoma state prison. He states in an August 3, 2005 letter to SPR that he was raped by fellow inmates in May 2005.

"... [W]hile incarcerated at [facility name omitted], I was beaten and raped by 3 inmates. Because I was fearful of these inmates as they are all members of an 'Aryan Brotherhood,' I recanted and told staff I was lying. The Aryan gang members now threaten to kill and rape my corpse."

6. Brian is a black federal prison inmate who states in an October 26, 2005 letter to SPR that he was sexually assaulted by another detainee in a county jail in Oregon in June 2005. Brian explains how he was affected by the assault.

"Too many problems to list. Day to day life is hell. Always afraid, scared. Depressed, memory loss, panic attacks. Bad dreams. Tried to commit suicide after attack."

7. William is a white inmate in a Texas state prison. He states in an October 27, 2005 correspondence to SPR that he was propositioned by a prison guard to perform oral sex in September 2005.

"I was waiting to go into my cell (while being handcuffed behind my back), Officer [name omitted] asked me 'to suck his dick.'... As I was kneeling down at my tray slot to be unhandcuffed, he then pulled down his zipper attempting to have me perform his desired sexual act thru the tray slot... I refused and he later refused to feed me as a result of my refusal."

8. Richard is an inmate at a Utah state prison. In his January 13, 2006 letter to SPR, Richard states that he was raped when he was placed in a cell with a gang member on October 2005.

“When a lieutenant wanted to cause me problems, he moved me to the [gang unit]. I have no tattoos and no gang affiliation at all. While there, I was drugged with 300 mg of Serequil and raped...by my homosexual celly.”

9. Joseph is a white inmate at a Florida state prison. In a letter to SPR dated October 28, 2005 he describes being raped earlier that month by a corrections official. His letter states that he immediately reported the incident to prison officials.

“I was sexually assaulted by Sgt. [name omitted] while handcuffed behind my back... [Another staff member] had me buried in ... confinement, having ALL EVIDENCE DESTROYED ... [name omitted] had me taking showers, no photographs of my injuries, my testicles were the size of plums... Please, Please Help Me!”

10. Scott is an inmate in a Georgia state prison. He states in a letter to SPR on February 7, 2006 that he was raped by a fellow inmate in January 2006.

“On Monday, I was moved to another cell with [inmate name omitted]. This inmate claimed Crip and informed me of just how dire the situation was. I was lured by him into a false sense of security then raped... A medical examination was never performed. On more than one occasion, I believed that they did not believe me.”