

STOP PRISONER RAPE
JUNE 2006

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

Stop Prisoner Rape (SPR), a national human rights organization, receives frequent reports of sexual abuse against youth in custody. Represented here is a small sample of excerpts from letters received at SPR's offices, as well as other publicly available cases. These passages recount in sometimes searing detail cases of sexual abuse against youth in U.S. detention facilities by corrections authorities and other inmates or wards. The first two accounts are excerpted from the testimonies of survivors who will appear before the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission in Boston on June 1, 2006, at a hearing which will focus on sexual abuse against juveniles in detention.

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, based on each survivor's preference, information that could identify any of the involved parties or the incidents has been removed as appropriate. In some cases, the first names of the survivors have been changed and the exact dates of the abuse omitted.

Several of the incidents included below occurred in 2006, highlighting the undeniable fact that sexual abuse against some of the most vulnerable members of the U.S. inmate population continues unabated. Instead of being rehabilitated, many youth leave detention deeply scarred as a result of sexual violence. The excerpts below underscore how crucial it is that policymakers and corrections officials acknowledge that shortcomings in current policies and practices render children and teenagers behind bars in danger of sexual exploitation. The landmark Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) of 2003 must be fully implemented in order to bring an end to these abuses.

- 1) Cyryna, now 18 years old, was threatened with violence and rape, touched sexually on various parts of her body, and experienced constant sexual harassment while incarcerated at the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility in 2004 and 2005. Although she is a transgender girl, she was housed with boys, but advised to keep her distance from them in order to avoid harassment. The boys terrorized Cyryna daily, telling her, "*I want to feel your ass,*" "*I wanna fuck you,*" "*show me your tits,*" "*be my bitch,*" and "*suck my dick.*"

Testimony of Cyryna Pasion before the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission (June 1, 2006).

- 2) Chino, who witnessed many incidents of sexual abuse while incarcerated as a juvenile in several New York detention facilities during the 1990s, was the victim of an attempted rape when she was 15 years old and housed in an adult prison. Chino was showering one morning when a much older inmate who had been sexually harassing her punched her in the face, pinned her against the wall, and

announced that she was going to 'take' what was hers. While Chino was able to fend off her attacker, she was devastated by this incident.

Testimony of Pamanicka "Chino" Hardin before the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission (June 1, 2006).

- 3) In April 2006, a 33-year old inmate at the Escambia County Jail in Florida was charged with raping at knifepoint a 15-year old boy who was awaiting transfer to a state prison after violating a house arrest sentence. The attack occurred during the night, when the lights were out in the 22-bed dormitory where the victim and his assailant were housed.

Amy Sowder, "15 yr. old Raped by Adult Inmate in Pensacola Florida," Pensacola News Journal (May 11, 2006).

- 4) In April 2006, charges were filed against ten employees of the Marion County Juvenile Detention Center in Indianapolis following a five-month investigation that uncovered "a pervasive pattern of detention center officials molesting young female detainees." Eight youth managers and a control booth operator were charged with 52 counts stemming from these allegations, while the tenth defendant, who had been the superintendent of the detention center for 12 years, was charged with concealing evidence linked to one of the molestations and failing to report that abuse to Child Protective Services.

Press Release; Marion County Prosecutor's Office (April 24, 2006).

- 5) In March 2006, a 12-year old boy in a holding room at a Compton, California courthouse was raped by two older male juveniles while two others held him down. Probation officials who were supposed to be monitoring the holding room appear to have deliberately obstructed their view through a glass window in order to prevent the boys from seeing them.

Noam N. Levey; "Rape of Boy at Court Site Reported," Los Angeles Times (March 25, 2006).

- 6) After being released from the Ventura California Youth Authority in 2004, a 20-year old woman reported that she had been sexually assaulted by corrections staff at the facility in 2003 and 2004. The woman's father stated that six male corrections officers had engaged in sexual acts with six female wards, one of whom was his daughter. The case illustrated that the facility's efforts to prevent these kinds of abuses, such as requiring that a corrections officer transporting wards be accompanied by another officer, were ineffective. The victim's father stated that, "*the problem with my daughter [took place] in the midst of more than one officer,*" and "*when you have two bad guys, those changes don't matter.*"

The facility's executive director, Daniel Macallair, stated in response that "there are indeed major structural problems within the Youth Authority," that sexual misconduct by corrections officers is "nothing new," and that "this has been going on for as long and as far back as we can go." In the late 1990s, similar complaints surfaced and an officer was sentenced in late 1999 to four years in prison after he admitted to having sexual relations with two underage female wards. Macallair attributed the problem to a secret code of silence and fear within the institution, stating, "If you snitch on a staff, you will face retaliation."

Angelica Martinez, "Overhaul Urged after CYA Abuse Allegation: Critics Say Youth Correctional Facility has 'Structural Problem,'" Ventura County Star (December 12, 2004).

- 7) A 19-year-old University of Florida college student with no prior criminal record was arrested in 2002 for possession of about an ounce of marijuana. His 35-year-old cellmate, a career criminal awaiting trial on sexual battery charges, raped him in their county jail cell. Jail and city officials acknowledged that the youth should never have been placed in a cell with a known predator, and attributed the mistake to overcrowding and a flawed inmate classification system.

Tim Lockette, "Jail Gets Flak over Policy," Gainesville Sun (June 14, 2003).

- 8) In 2002, "Jacob," a 16-year-old high school student and first-time offender convicted of auto theft along with a friend, was a victim of attempted sexual assault in custody in Illinois. Jacob told SPR in a letter that he was assigned to a cell block with high risk sex offenders at a juvenile detention facility. Jacob asked the corrections officers why he was not assigned to the same cell as his friend, and the guard responded that, *"There once was a magical cell where there was a boy who enjoyed taking advantage of boys and hes gonna love it when there is a new person in his cell THE END!"*

Inmates then told Jacob that his cellmate, a prison gang-leader, was notorious for *"hav[ing] sex with other inmates by force."* In order to avoid being victimized, Jacob kept to himself. On their first night housed together, Jacob's new cellmate greeted him by exclaiming, *"Ahh Yeah A New Bitch,"* and told him, *"Don't worry, you're not going to suck my dick tonight, I'm going to show you off to my boys and tell them how you're going to get turned out."*

That night, the cellmate ran up from behind Jacob when he got up to use the toilet and began choking him while trying to pull his pants down. While Jacob was able to strike his attacker and fend off this attempted rape, later on that night, a guard allowed three other inmates into his cell. They beat him, forced him onto his knees and said, *"Your gonna suck our dicks and then where gonna fuck you in the ass until it bleeds."* As Jacob cried, his three attackers unzipped their pants and told him to *"suck."* When he refused, one of the men pulled out a knife. When Jacob continued to refuse to comply, the attackers all masturbated and then ejaculated onto his face, telling him *"You're dead bitch for hitting [his cellmate]."*

Jacob told SPR how he became aware that a friend of his in the prison had also been sexually assaulted. *"I went to [another area of the prison] to see my friend. I was shocked when I saw him, he had on 'lipstick' and his eye was swollen and he had fresh scars. I asked another inmate what happened to him, and he told me that my friend was turned out and beaten. I attempted to run over to talk to him but the inmate grabbed me and said no, talking to him now is like being turned out yourself."*

- 9) Synthia is a male-to-female transgender inmate in a New York State prison. Synthia recounts in a July 2005 letter to SPR that she was raped by a prison gang member at knifepoint in October 1998, when she was 14 years old. In early 2002, she was raped by a corrections officer.

I was removed out of a victim-prone unit...where the [corrections department] houses high profile inmates. I was transferred to [facility name omitted] and placed in General Population. A white inmate affiliated with the Aryan Nation came to my cell and told me that...he would protect me and make sure nothing happens to me. I said no and he returned with other inmates holding a prison-made shank and forced him self on me. In 2000, I discovered that based on that sexual assault, I tested positive for Hepatitis B Virus...

On or about April 2002... a corrections officer steps into my cell and demands oral sex. After numerous of 'no's', he sat me by my toilet and exposed his penis and forced me to give him oral sex.

- 10) In a May 2006 letter to SPR, prisoner "Bill" described his experiences of sexual violence and coercion behind bars in the State of Washington.

I have come to believe that my experiences were not unique. Most guys are terrified when they first come to prison, and a [man's] youth seems to be an automatic calling card for preditorial people 'behind bars'...

I was sixteen years old when I was sent to prison in 1995....When I first arrived I was placed at a receiving facility to be classified for permanent placement. I was assigned to the segregation unit because of my age [and] I stayed in that unit for about a week. While in the segregation unit there were a couple other inmates in neighboring cells who would call over to me with sexual invitations and threats of violence and rape. Also, when I would go out to the yard to call home, they would stand in their doors making crude gestures, exposing their genitals or masturbating while loudly calling out to me. I never responded to those guys. Not even to tell them to stop, I felt it wouldn't help. I never spoke to anyone back then. But I felt humiliated and embarrassed by what they did...so I tried to kill myself in order to get away from them...

I was eventually transferred to another facility specifically designated to classify people with intense mental/emotional issues. [An inmate I met there] began to joke about selling me to this guy who supposedly wanted me as a 'Bitch.' He told me that [another inmate] was advertising me to other guys, and that I had better choose someone on my own if I didn't want to be sold. And he told me it didn't really matter that I didn't want to be involved with anyone, because if I were sold, I wouldn't have any choice...I agreed, and became [his] 'Bitch.'
