

IN RE:

NEW YORK CITY BOARD OF CORRECTION
PROPOSED RULES FOR ENHANCED
SUPERVISION HOUSING

AFFIDAVIT

I, Henry Bell, reside at Otis Bantum Correctional Center, 16-00 Hazen Street, East Elmhurst, County of Queens, State of New York, 11370, and I affirm the following to be true under the penalty of perjury:

I have been housed in unit 3 Southwest Central Punitive Segregation Unit at OBCC since November 1, 2014. I was put in 3 Southwest after a riot in 5 West. I was not involved in the riot. I wasn't participating and ran into my cell, but I still got sprayed with mace. People were beat up, injured, their property was taken and we weren't able to call our families. The riot started after an officer punched one of the people in 5 West in the face. I was given 70 days in the box for participating in the riot, even though I wasn't involved.

In 3 Southwest, Department of Correction does not do anything they are supposed to do. We get recreation maybe twice per week. Staff comes around while everyone is asleep to offer yard. When we do go to yard, if the weather is bad, people are left out there in the snow and rain for hours. People are forced to defecate in the recreation cages in front of other people, which is just not right. You have some officers who are okay, who understand what we are going through. But there are other officers who won't take certain people out to rec, who won't shower certain people, who will give out the PIN numbers of certain people so they can't use the phone. People need to get out of their cell, people need to speak with their mothers, it's just not right to deny that.

We have no general library access, the young people get some school, but how are the adults supposed to occupy their time? Even when we go to the law library we have to be in a separate room where nothing works and we can't access the civilian staff to help us. We can only get other books from our families. The chaplain doesn't come to the box, Social Services doesn't come, all the people we are supposed to have access to do not come around. The officers don't even let the Suicide Prevention Aides do their jobs. When services come to the unit, custody staff try to hide it from us.

The only commissary we have access to is basic soaps and toiletries. At least upstate, you can get dictionaries from commissary and learn something – there are guys in here who don't even know how to read. The food is too little, it comes late, it's cold, they serve rotten food, and there is no fruit at all – you always get fruit in General Population.

When we get visitors, staff tells us to get ready in the morning and we have to wait for hours in intake in a cell with no bed before they finally bring us out, and then our visits get cut short; we only get an hour. Our mail almost always comes late, sometimes weeks late. When there are family events, we don't get to attend and be with our families.

Staff tells us when to eat, when to sleep, when to get up; they have control over the most basic things we need. If I need toothpaste and for whatever reason – maybe the officer has something going on at home – he doesn't want to give it to me, I don't have any other choice but to act out to get the basic things I need. If social services aren't on the unit, I have to act out just to call my lawyer.

When we are denied all these things and the ESU (Emergency Services Unit) can come in and beat people, we feel like we have no other choice but act out. Sometimes I think I don't want to be here after the things I go through. We ask to see mental health but we don't get to talk to anyone. Mental health comes around but they don't speak to everyone, even when you call out that you need to speak to someone. What's it going to take, for me to hang up? It might be too late before they come talk to me. I'm lonely, I don't get much mail, I don't get visits; I just need someone to talk to from time to time. There are times when I just sit in my cell and cry, and think I can't be here anymore. There are days when I want to take my own life, when it's just too devastating. I feel like the only time I'm free is when I write to my mother or my daughter, but when the writing ends I'm back in hell.

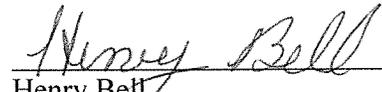
I understand people break the rules and there are consequences, but if you treat us like animals, we may as well behave like animals. I am trying to be better, trying to learn from my

mistakes, but when people are brought out into the hall and beat up, how do you expect people not to defend each other? I'm just trying to live life, but they are not trying to let us live.

When I was housed in 5 West before coming to the box, the biggest freedom we had was the basketball tournament. The bloods played the crips, and nothing bad happened. No one got hurt, because we were doing something we like to do. If we had things to do with ourselves there would be much less violence. If they take away things like the basketball tournament, in this place, the only outlet left is violence.

We need things to rehabilitate ourselves so we can go home better, but this isolation is turning me into more of an animal.

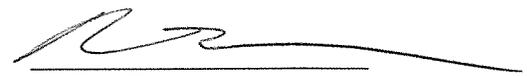
Dated: December 18, 2014
East Elmhurst, New York


Henry Bell
Otis Bantum Correctional Center
16-00 Hazen St.
East Elmhurst, NY 11370

State of New York
County of Queens

Before me, Riley Doyle Evans, on this day personally appeared Henry Bell, known to me or through Jail Identification card to be the person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing instrument and acknowledged to me that he executed the same for the purposes and consideration therein expressed.

Given under my hand and seal of office this Eighteenth day of December 2014


Notary Public's Signature

RILEY DOYLE EVANS
Commissioner of Deeds, City of New York
2-13807
Qualified in Kings County
Term Ends: June 1, 2016