

**Comment on Restrictive Housing Rulemaking
Person in Custody at MDC
Board of Correction Hearing
December 16, 2019**

To change solitary confinement, you need to change the culture of the jails, the officers, and the individuals who work here. You need to have a culture where people actually treat each other like people.

This environment breeds hate.

When I go to the box, I build a wall around myself. I read. I try to get my time through sleep. The box is bad. It does something to me. Every time it makes me worse than I am. Worse than when I went in. I'm always coming out of it with a vengeance...especially if I didn't do something. I'm not a violent guy, but I can become extremely violent if I feel like my safety and life is at risk. My parents taught me to defend myself, but not to the level of violence that I feel. When you are put in a cell, you get angry and then you have nothing but time to think about how you are going to fight back.

September 12, 2004 was the night I had my jaw broke. I was a kid, in a fight with another kid. An officer pushed me to the ground, punched my face and broke my jaw. They took me to Bellevue, I had surgery and my jaw was wired shut. That night changed me forever. Every officer is a threat to me now. When I came back to Rikers in 2005, I came back fighting for my life.

I've been in and out of solitary during incarceration. 6 months, then 9 months. My longest stretch in solitary was upstate from December 2011 to March 2013. The first time I was ever in the box was 2005, at OBCC. I was 17...24-hours a day, I was locked-in. In the city, you aren't supposed to be in for long periods of time- but if they get a "security override" for the 7 days out, you can stay in the box for months without a break.

This April at GRVC was the last time I was in the box. I got into a fight with another inmate, and then a verbal altercation with a CO, Officer Valdez. I noticed he favored a certain group of inmates. Trinitarios. I picked a bone with him about that. He looked at me, touched his badge and said, "I'm untouchable." That night, I was sent to the box. Officers pick a side -if they don't like you, they can mess with your solitary sentence. All they have to do is change the number in the computer to say 45 days instead of 30.

Officers steal and starve people. When you lock someone in a cage, all the mistreatment breaks you down, even if you're good when you go in. I have PTSD and I have certain triggers. Because of my mom and aunt, if an African American woman disrespects me, it really gets to me - I freak out. If some officer tells me to *suck her dick*, I get upset. And if I get upset, I get stuck in the box. And if they are angry at me, I don't get fed, don't get a shower.

They feed us like savages in the box, especially if they are angry at you. They walk around and ask if you want food, but if they don't want to feed you, they don't wait for you to

say yay or nay. And the box is disgusting- it's never cleaned properly and the slot in the door and the cage around that slot are not clean. So you get a small amount of disgusting, dirty food. And you have to eat it because you need to survive and that's all you have.

Sometimes the lights, water and toilets don't work. And there's no communication. Everything you hear is screaming. You have to yell, but you have 40 people screaming around you so you can't actually get attention if you need it. Officers are supposed to make their rounds, but they don't. Once when I was in the box, the man next to me almost died. I had to yell, and yell.

In city jails, you get a 6-minute phone call every day when you are in PSEG. 6 minutes. So you call your lawyer, quickly. And then you try to talk to your dad and sister, but you can't, really. So then you get upset- how can you not get upset?

This gets depressing just thinking about it. I can't help but think that this could be the rest of my life.

Mental health professionals behave the same as corrections officers. I have suffered from mental health issues for a long time. I know a lot about my diagnosis. I know how I am doing. Mental health professionals don't like that – they get offended if I know more about my PTSD, depression and anxiety. And they work with the officers. In the month that I've been here at MDC, I haven't had mental health therapy. Twice I saw a psychologist, most recently because I called 311 on an officer for sexual harassment. He said, "suck my whole dick with no lip gloss on. Oh yea, I said it you fucking monkey." That was his response when I made a comment about how we don't get REC here if we wake up after six. There is supposed to be afternoon rec.

One officer does everything to try and help you. He looked something up for me legal wise once – it put his job at risk helping me like that. If you had more officers like him, corrections would be totally different.

DOC says that inmates and their visitors are responsible for contraband being brought into jail, but contraband is NOT coming through visitors. A lot of officers do drugs just to get through this job. You've got drug addicts policing inmates. Think about that. So the same person buying from you in the streets is now policing you, and they get to take vengeance. And they do.

At GRVC, there was an officer, Hogan, who pissed in a cup and threw it in a man's cell. Think about what happens if you see something like that. Who would you tell? If you told a captain that happened, how would you know he did anything about it? Honestly, if you did tell someone - your cell would get stripped of all the evidence.

DOC uses dogs in the jails to conduct searches. Those police dogs are racist you know. If a white civilian walk by, they won't do shit, but as soon as they see a dark man wearing – tans they freak. Dogs are not unbiased- This place breeds hate. You know I love dogs. Dogs and horses are my favorite - I would never even think about hurting one. But sometimes I think about what I would do if one of those things came at me. This place breeds hate. The culture of this place can make you hate all of mankind. Then, when you go to court, they'll tell you that you have a high disregard for human life.

Think about what's happening here. You have people who are super violent and negative operating this place. You have officers that live out in Brooklyn, commute all the way here, and work however many hours in a row. It's a thankless job. These people come in angry too because they're mistreated by COBA. And then they bring that anger to us. I see it when new officers start. You have some who start out strictly pro-officer. They're the ones who think, "I don't care if you're right, you're wrong." And you have others who want to be good – who do mean well. But then they get jaded and angry. And they don't have the mental health screenings that they should be getting either.

They say it's a necessary evil – the violence that comes from officers keeps this thing going around and around. It's never about COs, inmates, cops. We are all human here. If you were a fly on the wall in this place, you would morph back into a human just to do something about it. Solitary does things to you. This place breeds hate.