

Ronnie's Story: First-person account of racism in lockdown

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a black man in a Missouri prison where the administration is exclusively white. No black caseworkers, no black unit managers, and no black wardens. There is a continuous pattern of abuse toward blacks by staff. For example, in the administration unit, black offenders, Muslims, are being refused non-pork meals. Black offenders are being thrown in the hole (ad seg units) when family members call to inquire about claims of abuse, arbitrary censorship of mail, and worst of all the daily use of pepper spray on black inmates for no other reason than to inflict pain.

These are daily themes and these things have just recently set off a small revolt, where staff totally disregarded procedure by using excessive force, punching, slamming and banging inmates' heads on the ground while in restraints, with medical staff ignoring complaints and refusing the injured medical attention. Now the administration is requiring unrealistic obligations to document their behavior—for example, poor uneducated blacks have been required by certain caseworkers in the adseg unit to recite the First Amendment. If they cannot do so, this caseworker denies the offender access to the grievance/complaint documents.

There is a requisite procedure for legal relief in the courts for this abusive environment.

Quite literally, this white administration is re-enacting "Jim Crow" laws to deny me access to my civil rights. I have many witnesses who are willing to attest to all these complaints/issues but are not willing to sign any petitions in fear of retaliation and undeserved punishment.

I am asking that my plea for help from your organization not be overlooked or less valued because of me being an offender in prison.

With that being said, I am asking if you would please send a representative to speak with me, helping me to address these concerns. Thanks!