

Transgender Justice

Michael T. is an African American transgender in his early twenties. He is serving twenty-five years at the Eastern Reception Diagnostic Correctional Center, in Boone Terre, MO. At the time of his correspondence, he was being held in adseg.

“My name is Michael, I am transgender. In the political arena, I am titled as an agitator. We are the small people that fight against the powers that be. We believe that no act of defiance is ever unimportant in the overall scene of things. We are the smoke before the fire. We are the marchers. We are the ones that boycott against unrighteousness and injustice. We was once blinded by the stereotypical behavior of adolescence, but now that we have awoken, we will never go to sleep again. Once there wasn't no prisons, and it will be no more again when all these acts of defiance come together as one in the puzzle of justice.

On 6/20/2017, I was in adseg waiting on the guard to come by to take me out to recreation. CO Bennett came to my cell and stripped me out before rec. In the name of safety and security only one guard is at your door. They started this practice in summer to discourage prisoners from going to recreation. They have too many prisoners to cuff, take out, bring back and uncuff. CO's don't like doing their jobs so they come up with little ways to beat you out of recreation to make less work for them.

I see this strip out nuisance as a PREA violation. We have to expose ourselves in order to go to recreation. I call it, “seeing our sex for rec.” They don't strip you out when they do a cell search or go to medical, go see the adseg committee, visits and etc. Are not all of these parts of safety and security too? I have filed a grievance on it.

They (CO's) have three hours to complete rec if they start it on time. From 6:30 to 9:30 they have to take out 116 prisoners for one hour. Cellmates are caged together. So I say they have to take out only 72 cells, if we all decide to go out. It's only 20 cages. They don't want to use all shifts to help with rec like so many other Missouri institutions do.

I don't like the fact that I'm transgender and only one guard strips me out. They need another guard or sergeant at the door as a witness. Cellmates strip out in front of cellmates. That's promoting rape. If a cellmate was thinking about raping his cellmate then seeing him naked will give him an incentive to do it. Anyway, CO Bennett had me bend over and cough three times. I asked him why he have me doing

that three times. He just looked at me and smiled and said, "I didn't tell you to do that." He was looking at me with man-lust in his eyes. He kept trying to get me to make eye contact with him but I refused. I felt violated because for one, they just trying to stop prisoners from taking canteen items out, which they can do with a pat down search. You don't wear anything except boxers, T-shirt and socks in your cell anyway. They give you a pair of orange pants to wear to rec. It's not like you got a lot of clothes on.

Sergeant Haze was working that night. He wouldn't let me file a PREA report on CO Bennett. I tried filing it the next shift to no avail. This was the shift from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm on 6/21/17.

On 6/21/2017 officer Bennett wasn't working adseg. On 6/22/2017 he was in adseg working the wing I was in. NOTE: If I call a PREA on another prisoner, they separate us until the investigation is over, whether the complaint is verbal or physical.

At this institution if you file a PREA on a guard they put the guard right in your wing with you the next day. They shouldn't be nowhere near my presence without another guard being present with him. CO Bennett came to my cell four times that day, for count, for meals, to ask do I want rec, and to bring me my orange pants all by himself. He tried to come and strip me out again, but Sgt. Haze didn't let him. Sgt Haze ended up stripping me out for rec and taking me out.

CO Cummings was the first guard I called PREA on. He came to my cell the next day. He works adseg too. The same shift as CO Bennett. It's lesbians and homosexuals that work the 3:00 pm -11:00 pm shift here.

Around 8pm, Sgt. Haze and CO Bennett came out to get the last two people to bring in from rec. It was another guy and myself left. I was the next to come in. I was already cuffed up waiting to go. Sgt. Haze came out first and skipped me to get to the next guy. Sgt Haze came out and stopped by my cage. (It was planned). I told Sgt. Haze that I called a PREA on Bennett for sexual harassment and I didn't want him taking me back in because I didn't want him sexually assaulting me. The Sgt. denied my request. He told me to "go ahead, he'll be right behind me."

At that point CO Bennett grabbed me and said, "Lets's go." He was strong. He was pushing me to the point I lost one of my house shoes that he wouldn't let me retrieve. He bent my arms over my head. He grabbed my wrist and thumb and bent it upward with pressure like he was trying to break them. We had left the Sgt. and the other

prisoner behind. I asked him why he was pushing me like that. He said, "You filed a PREA on me snitch bitch. I wouldn't rape you if I was in prison. You can't stop me from coming to your cell."

There is not a doubt in my mind that if I would have showed any act of aggression, he would have did more damage. He did a minor assault on me. I just filed a grievance and incidence report on the matter. All of this happened because I called a PREA on him and he acted on his own will without any justifiable reason. It's all on camera.

He (CO Bennett) came back to adseg on 6/25/17. He came back to my cell by himself and called me a bitch. On 6/25/17 he was passing out food trays and told me to go to rec. I refused that day. When are these people going to do something about him harassing me? I have filed everything I could. They know I was in the right.

ACTIONS REQUESTED:

I would like to press assault charges on CO Bennett. He had no cause to use excessive force on me.

I would like a camera with a voice recorder on me when he comes to my cell to get me out for anything or to do anything until the investigation is over with.

I am now in adseg pending transfer because I have enemies up here but they been prolonging and playing games about that. I would like to hurry and be transferred because I fear retaliation. I been staying out of trouble. I don't have a behavior problem.

Thank you in advance."

Being LGBTQ in a U.S. prison often results in daily humiliation, physical and sexual abuse, and the genuine fear that any complaints or grievances will only add to the abuse and torment, from both fellow prisoners and prison staff. Many LGBTQ people are held in solitary confinement for months or years with little or no activity or human contact. While in adseg, prison staff frequently hinder their right to the grievance process by refusing access to required forms or failing to take reports of abuse seriously. As is apparent by Michael's T's reported experiences, the prison environment is an especially dangerous and traumatizing place for those in the LGBTQ community.