

Name: Anonymous 876 Anonymous 876
Title: Community Outreach Fellow
Organization or Agency: The Coalition
Topic: Meeting Date Not Listed
NA

Testimony:

I was in the block with J'Allen Jones that day in 2018. I recall how bad they beat him during that cell extraction, supposedly "for his own good" when he needed inpatient medical attention. I heard his screams. I saw them put the spit bag over his head, heard him choking.

Most importantly, I have been through the "controlled strip search" that they were telling him to submit to when they finally beat him to death. It is scary, let me tell you. They bend you over a bed with six to eight male officers holding you down and pulling your pants and underwear and shirt off. Garner is the only facility that does it like that. It is so humiliating and degrading, and just scary. They hold a can of mace to your face and if you flinch they spray you. Then if any you try to spit the mace out or any snot comes out of you, which the mace causes to happen, they put that bag over your head. You think you are about to be raped. Its even worse if the bag is ALREADY over your face, because you can't see anything. You just feel them forcing you to your knees and bending you over. There is absolutely no reason to bend you over like that if you are cooperating.

For the free citizens listening, actually imagine being forced to your knees, pinned down, mace in your face, bent over a bed, clothes forcibly ripped off you, just because you are having some mental health issues and need "help".

This is what they do to us every single time we are admitted to the inpatient medical unit or seg in Garner, and only in Garner. The Commissioner has us designated as a controlled strip search facility because we are mental health. But when you are having acute issues and feeling paranoid as it is, the last thing you need is to feel you are about to be raped. To be humiliated. To be degraded.

For those of you who have seen the actual video of the strip search he "resisted" that led to him being beaten to death, let me tell you this was not some unusual occurrence. It happens to every single inmate here any time we need "help". And, a lot of us do fight it in one way or another, and end up sprayed and beaten. It is totally degrading, and its just hard to remain calm while they do this to you "for your own good".

Even if there IS a need for a "controlled strip search", there are other ways to do it, such as allowing the inmate to remain standing.

Being forced onto your knees bent over and pinned down with mace held to your face every time you need help is unconscionable.

I call for you to ban controlled strip searches in Garner, or at least have the department modify how it is done so inmates don't feel the need to fight to the death to keep from having it done to them.

You hear them in the video... "submit to the strip search".

Well I'm here to tell you, that's easier said than done. No man wants to be forced to his knees, bent over and pinned down, clothes ripped off, one leg, one arm at a time, while a room full of men are watching and recording the whole thing on camera.

Facilities across the state allow inmates to strip themselves. Garner should be the same. Mental health inmates have dignity too.

And if the department claims its necessary, at least make them modify how its done to preserve our dignity.

J'Allen died that day resisting the controlled strip search so many of us have been maced and beaten resisting, and its just not necessary.

I call on our legislators to make sure J'Allen did not die in vain.

J'Allen... we used to just call him 'Jones' in here... he was a good guy. He had some mental health issues, but he was a good, peaceful person with a sense of humor. I will always remember him.

Ban or modify those controlled strip searches in Garner.

Additionally, let it be said that in my housing unit alone, there have been two cases of inmates being beaten by officers AFTER they were secured in handcuffs in just the last two months. We need to treat mental health inmates better than this. Its like some of these officers took the job JUST to hurt mental health inmates. There are a lot of good officers, but seeing these two incidents in the last two months remind me that, though its 2026 and things HAVE improved, there is a long way to go.

I've seen too much abuse from officers in this facility. I once watched an officer punch an inmates eyeball right out of his head, so it was just hanging by whatever nerves were attached. That was a few years ago and that officer no longer works here, but seeing inmates are still being beaten in handcuffs is traumatizing.