

City of New York Sent Young Pretrial Detainees to Albany to be Beaten, Sodomized, Subjected to Racist Taunts & Put in Solitary Confinement; Eleven Young Men Say Enough is Enough & Sue City of New York & Albany

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May 5, 2020 – NYC Department of Correction (DOC) officials transferred eleven (11) young men who were awaiting trial at Rikers Island to the Albany County Correctional Facility (ACCF). This was done despite it being an open secret that Rikers transferees were brutally assaulted and subjected to racist taunts, sexual abuse, and endless solitary confinement when they arrived at ACCF. Today, the young men filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the City of New York, New York City Department of Correction Commissioner Cynthia Brann, Albany County, Albany County Sheriff Craig D. Apple, Sr., and numerous individual correctional officers.

In 2018, the City of New York made the decision to send a number of their Rikers inmates to ACCF. These were young black men between the ages of 18 and 28. Upon arrival at ACCF, each man was met by the Green Team, whose job it was to put the fear of God into him. Once he was naked and cuffed, Green Team members, all dressed in riot gear, would viciously beat him. The young man would be accused of having a weapon and told to “shit it out.” Racist epithets would be hurled at him between punches and kicks. Under threat of more beatings – or worse - he’d be ordered to defecate onto the cell floor or to remove what they believed was inside him from his rectum. If they didn’t get what they wanted quickly enough, the C.O.’s would repeatedly hit the young man in the stomach or shoot him with a taser - or both - to force him to defecate. One young man was digitally penetrated by a member of the Green Team while other Green Team members held him down and beat him. Afterward, the man would be left lying naked, bleeding and befouled in excrement on the cell floor. Following the beating, a “hearing” was usually held, the outcome of which was predetermined. The man would be sentenced to spend however many months or years he was at ACCF in solitary confinement.

These eleven (11) young men, the Plaintiffs, share something in common: the City of New York DOC decided it no longer wanted to deal with them and shipped them off to Albany. This was done knowing what awaited the young men at ACCF. Another thing they had in common: after being “handled” by ACCF’s Green Team, none of them would ever be the same again. One has a damaged elbow, another a damaged

wrist. Several of them experienced rectal bleeding and two have permanent facial scars. There is one more thing these young men share in common after their stay in ACCF: psychological scars that will last a lifetime.

Today's lawsuit was filed in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York. The eleven (11) men are represented by the Law Offices of Goldman & Associates and the Law Offices of Jesse Hoberman-Kelly.

Steven Goldman at Goldman & Associates said:

I've seen many disturbing things during my 30+ years as a lawyer, but what happened here stands alone for sheer ugliness. The Albany Green Team was given a green light by those in charge to do whatever they wanted to these young NYC residents. Vicious beatings, racist taunts, sexual abuse, endless solitary confinement and more were perpetrated upon these men. Such outrageous behavior is rarely seen outside of war zones. But most troubling is that this was not a one-off by a couple of bad apples. NYC DOC sent more than 15 young men to ACCF knowing what awaited them. Indeed, it now seems clear that DOC sent the young men to ACCF precisely because they wanted to punish them. And ACCF more than satisfied its part of the bargain. For \$175/day - the amount Albany charged NYC to house 1 NYC inmate for 1 day at ACCF - they were willing to torture men who had not been convicted of any crime. Nobody would allow animals to be abused the way these young men were abused, yet such abuse was not just allowed at ACCF, it was encouraged. This lawsuit aims to answer two questions. 1 - How could NYC and Albany have allowed this to happen? 2 - What can we do to make sure that what happened to these young men never happens again?

Jesse Hoberman-Kelly of The Law Office of Jesse Hoberman-Kelly, said:

Behavior that has been condemned by the United Nations with regards to prisoners of war was here perpetrated against young men from our community, people who had not been convicted of any crime. In our great State, in our name, young men from our city were shipped to Albany to be tortured. Behind high walls and barbed wire, these young men were told through violence that they did not matter; that nobody could prevent them from having their bodies violated and their dignity trampled upon. Such rank abuse of the public trust cannot be allowed to stand. This lawsuit is our attempt to rectify that violation by ensuring that the people who are entrusted to watch over our inmate population do so with sound judgment and common sense, not violence and racist epithets.