

From: Gerald Harris <gharris317@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, December 6, 2019, 01:33:38 PM EST
Subject: NYT letter

In Feb. 2014 I sent the letter below to the NY Times. It was published with a minor edit.

What I wrote at that time is just as relevant today and even more urgent.

Like Judge Hamill, I was brushed aside by an administration that felt threatened by my progressive views on limiting the barbarous overuse of solitary confinement.

My expressed hope, that the new administration would be more receptive to needed changes, sadly has not been realized.

I fully support the standards proposed by Judge Hamill, and urge the Mayor to get behind them.

Please submit this statement on my behalf at the Public Hearing.

**Judge Gerald Harris
Former Chair, NYC BOC**

To the Editor:

Your editorial mentions that New York City made reforms to its jail system in January by referring mentally ill inmates to psychiatric treatment rather than solitary confinement. The implicit suggestion that the city is leading reform efforts is misplaced.

Too many inmates, a large proportion of them young, continue to be held in punitive segregation far too often, for far too long and under debilitating conditions.

The city's Board of Correction, made up of nine citizens charged with oversight of the city's Department of Correction, is working on developing new or modified minimum standards governing the use of solitary confinement.

The Bloomberg administration opposed this effort, arguing that change should be left to jail administrators.

But such change was simply not being carried quickly enough, and my advocacy of its speedier adoption led to my not being reappointed when my term as chairman of the Board of Correction expired last October.
[Oct. 2013]

It is to be hoped that the De Blasio administration will be more receptive to the changes being formulated by the board, and will ensure that they are put into practice promptly once adopted.

GERALD HARRIS

New York

The writer is a retired New York City Criminal Court judge.

Feb. 21, 2014