

**Board of Correction Meeting  
February 9, 2021**

**Statement of Incarcerated Person  
Presented by Claire Bartholomew and Susannah Waldman**

I am 46 years old. I grew up in Harlem. I've been incarcerated for 23 months on the current charge. I started at the Tombs (Manhattan Detention Complex), and have been moved around a lot. I'm now at the NIC (North Infirmery Command). I'm a CMC (Centrally Monitored Case) because I have an escape on my record from 1999, which I already served my time for. This means I must be escorted everywhere I go. Food gets delivered to me; I don't go to the mess hall. I'm handcuffed and shackled whenever I go to recreation or anywhere else. There are cameras in the cell depending on how high the classification is.

Right now, at NIC, I'm in a gallery of 10 cells. There are seven of us here. One cell is a shower. Another cell has a slop sink and mirror where you can shave. The whole tier area is only about 50 feet x 10 feet. There are three tables on the gallery, four seats to each table. Each cell is 8 feet x 8 feet, and everyone has an individual cell, but you're basically inside a cage. There is absolutely no social distancing. I try to stay at the edge of my cell to avoid people. I eat in my cell now.

There is no date for me to get out of NIC. Once you're here, you're here. I'm CMC because of an attempted escape that happened when I was around 26 years old. I was denied a hearing to challenge being placed in CMC for the escape. I never even left Rikers Island grounds. We were young kids, the backdoor of the dorm was open, and we went out and played basketball. That's why I'm CMC.

Here, at NIC, we are in cages during the one hour we are allowed outside for recreation. We don't have access to basketball courts. Now we go to single man cages. We didn't have a hearing for that – and you're supposed to having a hearing before you are required to spend rec in a single man cage.

What gets me more than anything is the strip searches. I can't do it. I write it up every time and they get mad, but I don't care. Instead of fighting, I file grievances.

They conduct visual cavity searches. They do it when they feel like it – once a week, two times a week, three times a week. As harassment and punishment. If something happened in another block, they'll come to us. None of us has been outside this building since February – there's no reason for them to even strip searching us when they have a body scanner, hand wands, and x-ray machines. There are 7 cameras in the area they are in. There is no reason for them to strip search us when they already watch us all day every day.

If it's a fire upstairs, they'll storm upstairs, and then they'll come and search us. They're stripping us as a punishment, to embarrass us. "If you behave, you won't get strip searched no more." They come to your cell, 3 of them standing right outside your cell, 3 men fully dressed, wearing illegal motorcycle gloves with the knuckles that can hurt you – leather gloves with carbon fiber over the knuckles. The Board of Correction should check the Genetec video for the gloves they wear. They search us with the same gloves that they use with the detainees on asymptomatic tiers. They storm in our cell and strip us naked. I ask them – are you gay? You're about to see me naked. They get hostile

and wanna spray me with mace. I say, “this is illegal. I don’t consent.” That’s when they wreck my cell, threaten me, put me through all kinds of chaos. I don’t ever fight them back.

The worst of the worst was when I was in the box at GRVC. Once you get in the box, they ignore you. You’re locked in your cell all day. They don’t care about you. It’s no man’s land. I was supposed to be on a liquid diet the whole time, but they didn’t feed me; during the 30 days that I was there, I only had 7 pieces of bread. People light their whole cells on fire just to get attention and get out of the cell. I had 3 showers the whole time I was in there. I wrote down the dates. The only reason I got a shower was because I told the Warden to check the video tapes, and she saw it was true that I hadn’t showered, so she let me out. The second time I was able to shower was through the chaplain; I told them I’m talking to clergy, and she went and raised hell and got me a shower. Then a social worker got me out for the third time. I stopped her asking her to complain that I didn’t get a shower in 2 weeks.

When you first come in there, they strip you again. They have all the equipment there so it’s unnecessary. They take all your property, you’re in there without a Walkman or anything. You get one phone call a day. If you wanted to call your mother and your lawyer, you couldn’t. You have to call one or the other. In order to get the phone brought to you, you have to scream and scream for days.

I was sent to GRVC for allegedly assaulting an officer. The crazy part is, I had what is called a blackout. It is on camera; the Genetec never lies. I came out my cell, had a blackout, fell down the stairs, and had a seizure. They came for a medical emergency. I was thrashing. I don’t know what was going on; I don’t remember this. They said when they were trying to put me on the stretcher, I was lashing out and punched a captain. In the behavior report, it says it looks like I’m in and out of consciousness, don’t know what is going on, and incoherent. And still, they sent me to solitary.

After the seizure, I went to Bellevue for an IV. The seizure was stress related. I’ve only had it twice in my life. At that point, I was at MDC – the jail in Manhattan known as the Tombs. It is stressful there – you have a cell that doesn’t open, you’re just in a room, and it’s locked by a steel door. It’s miserable, gloomy. It’s a seriously stressful environment. That’s why they call it the Tombs. Each cell will remind you of a tomb you’ll be buried in.

After the seizure, there was a hearing to determine whether they could put me in the box – but they never even let me go to the hearing. I was railroaded. I included all of that in the grievances I filed. I said I wanted to go to the hearing. They said I refused the hearing, but there is no record to show I refused anything. The officer kept calling there, telling them I wanted to go – and then they put down that I refused. That’s their tactic to make sure you get slayed on these misbehavior reports. You have to wait for someone to pick up and escort you. Someone writes in the logbook that you refused.

In the box, they don’t even pick up my mail - not my social mail or my legal mail. My lawyer has been trying to contact me for months and hasn’t been able to. My visits have been denied; it took four hours for them to come get me when my fiancé was here for a visit. And once they finally let me see her, a fight broke out in the visiting room, so I was trying to protect her from that garbage. The officers got mad at me for that, so they didn’t feed me that night, and they held my fiancé for three hours and wouldn’t let her leave.

In the box, they don't give you nothing – no writing utensils, no writing paper, no supplies, no cosmetics, no cleaning supplies, nothing. You go in a cell that someone just came out of. You won't be able to sweep, clean, or mop it. There's still feces on the wall from the last person who was there, toothpaste all over the walls. My whole first day there I used my t-shirt and toothpaste to scrub the toilet and the sink, because of the fluoride in the toothpaste. The Genetec cameras will show that my cell was flooded for the first three days I was there in January 2020.

In the box, you have to yell to get their attention. They say, “shut the f up,” saying they won't come because you're yelling. They never come, even when people are banging – no matter if they have a seizure, a heart attack. You're in there, you're stressed, and it's cold. You can't open and close your window. They leave you in there burning up in the summertime. They don't care. If there are fires in the box, they don't give you saline for your nose or check if you suffered smoke asphyxiation.

I also am supposed to have a cane, but while I was in the box, they wouldn't let me have it.

The smell alone in the box should give you authority to shut it down. They treat people like animals in the box - that's why that trans woman died in the box, because they don't check on you at all in there. All the suicides happen in the box because no one checks on people. They don't know or care what type of mental problems people in the box go through. The people who work here have to change; the attitude that people have has to change.

Jail is so demoralizing. You just came from a nice home, and now you're sleeping on a slab of metal that's killing your back. If it's not too hot, it's too cold. They feed you garbage, they treat you like crap. They come through every hour on the hour and shine a big lantern in your face so you can't sleep at night. During the day they don't check on you, but at nighttime they come with the big flashlights, flash on the cell as they walk by. Some people in jail will throw feces on the officers when they come in, but I never have. I try to be respectful, and I get no respect back.

The people who work in the jails should change how they deal with people here. Look at the attitudes. It's crazy. If you don't want to do the job, don't do it.