

MICHIGAN WOMEN'S JUSTICE & CLEMENCY PROJECT

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*Working to free women unjustly
convicted and sentenced and for
human and civil rights for all
incarcerated women*

Endorsements:

Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency, Amnesty International USA, American Friends Service Committee, Michigan CURE, Ann Arbor, CURE Life-Long, AAUW, Michigan Lifers Association, Team for Justice, Michigan Women Lawyers Association, Safe House, Jean Ledwith King, Esq., Sen. Elizabeth Brater, Rep. Alma Wheeler Smith, Sen. Michael Switalski, Rep. Frank Accavitti, Jr., Dr. Chandra Mudaliar, Dawn Van Hoek, Esq., Sen. John Conyers, Jr., Lynn Rivers, Mary Schroer, Lynn Martinez, James Neuhard, Esq., Governor William Milliken, Helen Milliken, Eve Ensler, William Edwards Foundation, Dr. Rosemary Saari, Jeanice Dagher-Margosian, Esq., Evanne Dietz, Esq., Human Rights Watch, Dr. Mieko Yoshihama, National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women, Free Battered Women, American Civil Liberties Union, University of Michigan, Michigan Women's Foundation, Michigan NOW, First Step, Dr. Angela Y. Davis, New Visions: Alliance to End Violence in Asian/Asian American Communities

Governor Gretchen Whitmer
PO Box 30013
Lansing MI 48909

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel
G Mennen Williams Bldg., 7th floor
525 W Ottawa St PO Box 30212
Lansing MI 48909

Executive U.S. Magistrate Judge Steven Whalen
Theodore Levin US Courthouse
231 W Lafayette Blvd., Room 635
Detroit, MI 48226

Hon. Pamela Lightvoet, President
Michigan Judges Association
227 W Michigan Ave.
Kalamazoo MI 49007

Heidi Washington, Director
Michigan Department of Corrections
206 E. Michigan Ave. PO Box 30003
Lansing, MI 48909

January 8, 2019

Dear Governor Whitmer, Attorney General Nessel, Judge Whalen, Judge Lightvoet, Director Washington:

We are writing out of extreme concern for health and safety of prisoners at Huron Valley Women's Prison who are suffering miserably from dripping and oozing black mold and asbestos exposures, filthy walls and unsanitary cleaning equipment to clean it up, extreme overcrowding, drugs being brought in by guards, and on top of this misery are the guards who are urging women to kill themselves, calling women profane names, body slamming women to the floor, screaming at women, ignoring suicide attempts, even encouraging women to suicide. Scabies is the least of the problems at Huron Valley. Due to all these critical issues, the health of women is evident by the breathing problems, coughing, terrible rashes, bleeding and permanent damage to women's health. The conditions are causing an epidemic of deaths and injuries. **9 women have died in 2018 (known),**

undoubtedly due entirely or in part to the black mold, asbestos and filthy infestation throughout the compound. In Gladwyn A and B where the mold has been the worst, the prison had the walls painted over, rather than removed and cleaned. Large black hole in ceiling of Gladwyn B where water is dripping. Black worms are evident in Lenawee Unit. Units 1-5 have asbestos in the walls. The water throughout the prison is brownish. It is unsafe.

The 9 women known who died needlessly, in our opinion, in 2018:

2/17/18 Donna Debruin 227328 age 59
4/10/18 Natalie Foster 275142 age 50
4/22/18 Vicki Kruger 181173 age 54
5/25/18 Toni Cato Riggs 238233 age 49
5/28/18 Terry Borgia 833482 age 69
6/21/18 Annie Williams 145485 age 62
9/14/18 Ashley Harris 651634 age 31
9/26/18 Mary Ann Topps 193677 age 59
10/13/18 Beatrice Taylor 213175 age 65

Abuse of Women, Especially Mentally Ill Women, in Solitary Confinement

The abuse, cruelty and mistreatment of women as routine practice is out of control at Huron Valley. The arbitrary and overuse of solitary cells is producing a nightmare of mental breakdowns among women who have mental illness but do not deserve to be treated like wild animals. They are not animals. And they don't deserve to live in squalor or die as too many women have in the past year. I have met with a number of women over the years who were socially capable human beings, who are today totally depraved because of the horrible abuse at Huron Valley and because of their confinement in solitary. The suicide attempts are exacerbated by the abandonment of these women into solitary confinement for long stretches of months and years and mistreatment and deprivation while they are in there.

Solitary Cells are scattered (hidden) around Huron Valley Women's Prison, which keeps them hidden from most investigators. They are located in Calhoun Unit/Acute; in the Infirmary/Kent; in Unit 1 (west side), Emmett A & B, in Segregation and elsewhere. Segregation and Infirmary are filthy. Rarely, if ever, cleaned. Women are placed in these solitary units around the prison, often for arbitrary reasons and/or retaliation by guards. Many women who did not have mental illness are coming out after months both thin and pale from lack of food and exercise and are suffering. They are often refused food and water. Many women go weeks with no shower in there. Guards sometimes take mattresses away so the women are left to sleep on hard, cold floors. Guards frequently are heard by prisoner aides telling women in solitary units, "why don't you just kill yourself." Or if a prisoner in a solitary unit tries to tell a guard she needs a therapist because she is feeling suicidal, she is told, "Go ahead and kill yourself!"

Women who have tried to speak to the Warden about these conditions have been angrily brushed off with, "What do you want me to do about it!" and walked on. Families who try to find out about their loved ones in solitary units are ignored.

Iesha Elmore #786743

Hung herself then overdosed. She was in seg.

Kelly Messenger #493340

has been locked in seg too long

Rebecca Fackler #185292

Has been locked in seg most of her incarceration. Has hugely swollen legs. Needs to be taken to a hospital.

Crystal Dymond #863249

Has been locked in seg most of her incarceration. I visited her in 2016. She was in seg then. But I could talk to her I know she was placed in a group home for a short period but sent back to prison. Her sister states that her condition is dire due to long term lockdown in solitary. She needs to be taken to a hospital and to forensic care. When her family tried to visit her in 2017 (they live in the upper peninsula) they waited 4 hours to see her and then were denied. They have called staff and requested that her counselor call them back but have never had a call back. They can tell she has deteriorated terribly because of her inability to talk straight when she has called, so they know she is overmedicated. She has been overdue for parole since 2013!!!

Rochelle Bielby

Has been locked in seg so long she is like an animal. She's so medicated she sleeps all the time. I met with her several years ago and she was able to converse with me. But no longer. She has been mentally abused, physically abused, hogtied, refused food, locked in seg for years.

Wynona Harvey #949767

She hallucinates and is locked in Acute room for a long period. Guards refuse her food.

These and many more mentally ill women are being abused in solitary cells, especially in RDC/RGC, Calhoun, Emmett, Infirmary, and Seg. Officers lock women in cells without water or toilet in Acute, Calhoun, Emmett, RD/GC. Guards are mean to them. They are not equipped to work with mental illness. But they are supposed to let women out every few hours to use toilets and get water, but it does not happen and many women. Women in segregation and other solitary cells are being abused, over medicated, and mistreated. It is no wonder there are so many suicide attempts and overdosing by staff.

Hostile, Cruel, Vindictive, and Dangerous Officers

This is a list of offending officers who should be removed from their jobs. I have received confirmation of their abuse of women by at least two sources:

Officer A. Johnson refused help to Donna DeBruin, who begged for medical care for over a week because she could not breathe and died in a pool of her own blood from unattended critical illness. Other women, including Carlene Roache, also asked Ofcr Johnson to help Donna, but Ofcr A Johnson refused. She curses the women, mistreats them.

Officers Bradford, Littlejohn, Smith and Reed sprayed Katie Sanders #689700 with 3 cans of gas for having a bit of her bra showing. She did not assault anyone. In order to protect

themselves after what they did to Sanders, the guards charged her with assault. It was the officers who committed the assault and violence against the prisoner Sanders.

Officer Westbrook, violently assaulted, beat prisoner Yolanda Hobson, body slammed her on concrete walk in 2017 (more information below on this incident)

Officer Moppet, a danger to women: frequently tells women to "go kill yourself"

Officer Odem is cruel to women. And Officer Paris is not only abusive but destroys grievances, sets prisoners against each other, and threatens disabled prisoners with segregation.

Officer Paris is abusive, destroys grievances, sets prisoners against each other and threatens disabled prisoners with segregation. She frequently tells women to kill themselves. Numerous prisoners report they are afraid of her. Officer Paris got into a physical fight and was laid off for four months. She should be fired.

Officer Allen who works in Acute, screams at women, tells them to kill themselves, degrades women, is cruel.

Sgt. White (female) is "taser-happy", abuses women by tasing them without cause

Officer Morgan curses women, is terrible to mentally ill women

Officer Motts is dangerous. Women have told me he may kill someone one day. He body slams women at the drop of a hat. Tells women, "I'll beat your ass."

Officer Canallis bullies women

Officer Zirker tells women, "I hate you, bitch." "go kill yourself", degrades women, shouts at them.

Officer McCreary is mean, retaliates against women by placing them in seg/solitary

Officer Whitt also retaliates against women cruelly, abuses them by placing in solitary

Officer Uago harasses women, abuses power, mean

Officer Wood refuses water to women in solitary units to be mean

Officer Potter cusses women, calls them "fucking idiots", makes up rules

Officer Walls calls women "bitch", makes up rules, cusses women

Officer Ratliff degrades women, writes retaliatory tickets, refuses to do job

Sgt. Bronson threatens and tases women, sends women to segregation for retaliation

Officer Donnell abuses her authority, very callous with the mental patients

Officer Morgan abuses authority and is cruel to women in Acute unit

Nurse Hammond is a serious problem who threatens disabled women with seg and retaliates against prisoners who complain or kite for needed medical care. Even other employees warn prisoners to "watch out" for Nurse Hammond.

We urge you to rid Huron Valley Prison of the above listed officers, put in place proper training and domestic violence/sexual assault education programs for all guards and MDOC personnel. We know of one therapy counselor who was hired and told us she could not stay after witnessing so much abusive instruction to new officers by trainers, and abuse of prisoners by officers/guards. One prisoner wrote:

"I live in a housing unit with 200 women and a dayroom with capacity for only 42. That means most women must stay in their rooms...not mentally or physically healthy. Overcrowding has meant thinner portions of food, less clothing inadequate healthcare and diseases because of the overcrowding."

Prisoners who have been abused by officers

Yolanda Hobson # 679265 was brutally assaulted

Yolanda Hobson (5'2" 145 lbs) was brutally assaulted and beaten by Officer Westbrook (6', 250-300 lbs) on 6/10/17. Several women witnessed the unprovoked attack by Officer Westbrook while he was ushering Yolanda to seg. She was in handcuffs behind her back. She was not resisting. She complained that the handcuffs were too tight. That is all. Officer Westbrook suddenly swung his fist at her and punched her in the throat. He then lifted her off the ground and banged her to the ground where she hit her head on the ground so hard she was knocked unconscious. To cover himself, Officer Westbrook lied, saying she assaulted him.

Carleen Roache #460474

Ms. Roache is seriously ill with Parkinson's Disease, and has suffered bouts of pneumonia. She needs to see a neurologist at UM Hospital or St. Joseph Mercy Hospital. She needs proper medication for the Parkinsons and for her pain. She has grieved Nurse Hammond for refusing to assist her condition, and further for retaliating by taking away her blanket, which was ordered by Dr. Qin. She also needs breathing treatments. She is frail and unwell. She is in the medical unit of Gladwin B. When I saw her in July. She also said the guards are not allowing disabled women (Ms. Roache is in a wheelchair) to use the bathroom and shower that are assigned to disabled women. Instead, everyone uses these and the disabled women sit lined up and waiting to use a toilet or shower. Ms. Roache is very afraid of both Officer Paris and Nurse Hammond. This is a disabled unit. The cruelty that is perpetrated by guards and nurses and a few prisoners who do their bidding is not acceptable and must end immediately. Other prisoners have verified this information from Ms. Roache and she is courageous to speak out because she is subject to cruel retaliation.

Rosemarie Jackson #251778

Ms. Jackson had a stroke in the TV room in 2016, witnessed by many prisoners who were horrified that the prison did not send her out to the hospital and did not call a doctor when it happened. She may still be in the infirmary. Many of the nurses and officers refuse to feed her and refuse to allow others to feed her.

Anne Marie Humphries #509833

When I visited Anne Marie Humphries #509833 in August 2017, I learned that no guards ever called Anne Marie out for my legal visit, though I asked repeatedly for officers to call for her again and again while I waited almost 3 hours for her to be brought to the visiting room. Finally, when she arrived she said the guards never told her she had a visit. She had just received the message of a visit by chance from another prisoner who had overheard the call-out on the guard's intercom and came and told her. While AnneMarie was in the legal visiting room with me, the Deputy Warden and other officers came into the visiting room and stood around with the guard on duty. It was very unusual. AnneMarie said she felt it could be a warning to her not to speak about witnessing the assault by Ofcr Westbrook. I am concerned for her safety from the guards.

Some Officers who deserve commendation for compassionate, hard work:

Very few officers are kind or helpful to prisoners; I have been informed by counselors that officers are trained to be hostile, to take an antagonistic attitude toward prisoners. However there are some who are outstanding, good officers who do their job and remain humane toward the human beings in their custody, something all guards should be doing: Ms Anderson, Ms. Cox Ms Potter, Ms Davis-Henderson, Ms Hinton, Ms Fisher, Ms Smith, Mr. Williams, Ms Piggee.

We are alarmed that the 10 deaths of women, the outbreak of disease, the mold, the asbestos and terrible culture of cruelty have made Huron Valley Women's Prison a hellhole and death trap. It is no wonder that 10 women died in the past year in there. We cannot tolerate this kind of madness and inhumanity to human beings.

Sincerely,



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MICHIGAN WOMEN'S JUSTICE & CLEMENCY PROJECT

Cc: ACLU Michigan Legal Director, Michael Steingold
ACLU Director, Affiliate & Nationwide, Kary Moss
ACLU Director, National Prison Project, David Fathi
Amnesty International USA, Prisoner Rights, Director Erika Guevara-Rosas
Amnesty International USA, Communications, Robyn Shepherd, Mariya Parodi, NYC
Amnesty International USA. Gender, Identity, Tarah Demant, Washington, DC
Amnesty International Executive Director Margaret Huang
American Friends Service Committee of Michigan, Natalie Holbrook
Human Rights Watch, Executive Director Kenneth Roth
Human Rights Watch, Criminal Justice Advocacy Director, US, Jasmine Tyler
U.S. Justice Dept: Civil Rights Division; Ofc on Violence Against Women; Bureau of Prisons; Justice Ofc.
Dr. Angela Y, Davis
Safe & Just Michigan, John Cooper
NAMI Michigan, Linda Burghardt
FAMM, Washington DC, Kevin Ring, President
Michigan Alliance for Justice, Lynn Schechter
MDOC Ombudsperson Keith Barber
Sen. Debbie Stabenow
Sen. Gary Peters
Rep. Rashida Tlaib
Rep. Elisa Slotkin
Rep. Rebekah Warren
Rep Yousef Rabhi
Rep Donna Lasinski
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Michigan Association of District Court Magistrates, Att Magistrate James Brennan
Michigan Judges Association President Tracey Yokich
Michigan Representative Elissa Slotkin
Michigan Senator Deborah Stabenow
Michigan Senator Gary Peters
U.S. Representative Rashida Tlaib
Michigan NOW, Nina Muckenthaler; Kathy Fojtik Stroud
Michigan Domestic & Sexual Violence Prevention & Treatment, Debi Cain
Michigan Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence, Kathy Hagenian
Michigan Women's Forum, Sharon Kimble