

One woman, who has chosen to remain anonymous, wrote the following account of her experience of the transfer from the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women to the New Jersey State Prison in May 2007. The account begins with her initial incarceration in September 1992 and ends with the current situation as of December 2007.

September 1992

While awaiting trial at the county jail...a guard allowed a male inmate entrance to my cell while I slept, experiencing great fear as I fought his forced attack on me. This was just the beginning of the many more experiences I had to live throughout the 16 years I have been incarcerated.

May 1995

I was transferred to the only female State Prison. A place I was hoping my fears would lessen. Oh but how wrong I was, when from 1998 - 2001, I was repeatedly raped by the men in blue, the very men who held me captive. With no where to run or hide.

After the rapes, I had to go under therapy in hopes to bring myself esteem back. After years of counseling my strength was back, but not for long...

January 2007

Rumors came about throughout the prison. Inmates whispering that the State was transferring the maximum unit female inmates into the Trenton State prison for men. The highest maximum security prison in the state, a prison where inmates who were on death row were housed.

Since January 2007 we all tried questioning all of administration and custody at their highest rank, we even questioned the psychologists, the psychiatrist, but yet no one would give us answers, at least not straight answers.

My life took a turn where stress set in; depression took over, nightmares after nightmares, waking up my neighbors as I awoke myself in screams, sweats and tears. Horrified of the thought to being transferred and confined in a prison where I would be surrounded by not only more male officers but thousands of male prisoners... maybe the guards would again open my door and allow entrance to male inmates as they did at the county jail? ...Who is to say that this would not happen again...

Edna Mahan Correctional Facility: March 6, 2007

...all work was cancelled. We were all ordered back to our cells and the guards came and locked us back in. We were all confused while questioning the guards as they locked us in...giving us no answers...the grounds of the prison looked nothing more like a ghost town. You can sense the fear in the air as it all looked like this as the end of the world. Fear sets in more when you have no answers or explanations...

At this very moment fear just took over my life, my body began to tremble uncontrollably, my heart started to palpitate faster, harder....

We can hear the guards opening the wing gate, we can hear there are more than one, as they marched down the long wing hallway, passing my cell I was frightened to see them all in gear. They had helmets on, arm pads, knee pads, chest pads, elbow pads, night sticks, mace spray, video cameras; they looked like Ninja Turtles, but scary ones. It was HORRIFYING!!!

They stopped down the hall in front of another inmate's cell. I hear than speak out as they spoke in robotic tones, instructing the inmate with orders to follow.... "put on your state uniform, stand by your desk, turn around face the window, do not move or we will be forced to spray" ... They then opened the inmate's door and I can hear the handcuffs go on and they started to walk down the hallway as they took her away,

They left with another victim, and then again and again. As soon as they took the inmate out of her cell here came yet another team of officers ...leaving the cell door open and empty, as though this inmate no longer existed ...

I can hear the officers laughing as they made jokes to my distress. That evening I cried, well I had to wait until they locked us in for the night because if you are seen crying they will lock you up, strip you and put you in an ice cold room with nothing but a mattress on the floor. So I learned to hold my tears until after lock in, if not don't cry at all.

Edna Mahan Correctional Facility: March 14, 2007

This very same event took place yet Again! A week later ... Same routine, same lock down ... Ninja Turtles mocking, laughing at us as this time, more women experienced anxiety attacks... crying, asking to see the psychiatristmental health staff...were trying to make us believe that we were over exaggerating our conditions

Reflection

It is so sad how incarcerated women are treated and dealt with. They take away our self esteem, they take away our womanhood, our motherhood, they take away our hearts, our feelings. They want us to act as robots and god forbid we dare express any emotions, it is not allowed.

Many of us women have been at one time in our lives been abused by men while out in society, be it our husbands, boyfriends or family members. Then there are many here who are here due to violence in their lives from men. Then they capture us, lock us up, forbid us to show emotions, abuse us themselves, rape us, strip us of our dignity, strip us of our womanhood, motherhood and then expect us to someday, if ever.. go back into society and be everything expected of a woman again.

How can we.....

December 2007

Rumors of more transfers have returned at both prisons.

Staff reportedly warn prisoners of transfers and lockdowns.

Units are reported being cleared out in New Jersey State Prison.

The DOC denies that any more transfers will occur...