

Shut Down Rikers Fact Sheet

Rikers Island is the second largest jail system in the country. It is located on an island in the East River, right next to Manhattan, a mere 300 yards from the runways at LaGuardia Airport. It consists of 10 jails which house an average of 14,000 inmates per night. Since 1990, the city has settled six class action filed against Rikers due to rampant brutality and gross violations prisoners' rights. The most recent (2015) class action suit found a culture of "deep-seated violence," resulting in a "staggering" number of injuries, where "adolescents are at a constant risk of physical harm."

The systematic brutality and abuse going on at Rikers is what's going on in prisons all over this country. It is part and parcel of mass incarceration in the USA, serving an essential function for this system of repression and control.

Languishing weeks, months, years without trial

- 85% of the people at Rikers have not had a trial or been convicted of a crime.
- As of March 2014, 400 people had been at Rikers for at least two years without being convicted of a crime.
- Half a dozen had been there six years without being convicted of a crime.
- Some 1,400 people had been waiting at least a year to have their cases settled, some of them arrested for crimes that wouldn't even have sentences for that long if they were found guilty.

129 “serious injuries” inflicted by guards in eleven months in 2013... increased violence in 2014

- "Serious injuries" includes fractures, wounds requiring stitches and head injuries.
- 77% of those seriously injured had been diagnosed with mental illness.
- 80% of those seriously injured reported being beaten *after* being handcuffed.
- 5 of those seriously injured were beaten *following suicide attempts*.
- On a single day in 2012, over 43% of 705 adolescent males at Rikers had been subjected to violence by staff on at least one occasion during their time there.
- In 2014, the use of force by guards at Rikers had gone up nearly 90% over the previous five years, even as the jail's population had declined.
- In the first six months of 2014, guards at Rikers used force on inmates 1,927 times – an increase of more than one third compared to the same period the year before.

Culture of sexual violence

- A 2012 survey of women at Rikers found that 5.9% report being sexually victimized by staff.
- Two women have sued for a culture of rape – and repeated rape – by a guard (Benny Santiago) who they said openly carried out rape and sexual assault against them, including by threatening their families on the outside if they did not comply.

15 deaths precipitated by medical neglect in 5 years, including:

- **Bradley Ballard**, age 39, a schizophrenic prisoner was denied some of his medications and left alone in his cell for seven days. His toilet was clogged and overflowing. He was found naked, covered in feces, with his genitals swollen and badly infected. He died hours later.
- **Andy Henriquez** was brought to Rikers at age 16. After three years, he was still waiting for trial and was put in solitary confinement. He complained of chest pains for months, but guards did not take him seriously. On April 7, 2013, he called out for help, but the guards did nothing. Other prisoners who shouted in alarm were also ignored. He died from a tear in his aorta.
- **Rolando Perez**, 36, died at Rikers in January, 2014, two days after he was put in solitary. Inmates heard Perez screaming for his medication — pills he relied on since age 16 to control a severe seizure disorder. The medical examiner said he died of a seizure disorder and heart problems. He'd been put in solitary without clearance from the mental health and medical staff.
- **David Caban**, a 38-year-old with diagnosed schizophrenia, died four days after arriving at Rikers. State investigators found that Caban received a drug injection to calm him down without being monitored or sent for emergency hospitalization. Then he was sent back to a dorm where he ran amok, charging at a guard. He was then handcuffed and left alone on a holding cell floor, rocking and grunting. One guard checked on an unresponsive Caban and nudged him with her foot but didn't call doctors because, she said, he was still breathing. He was found dead 10 minutes later.

Driven to suicide and long-term trauma

Inmates subjected to the brutality, long-term solitary confinement, and deprivation of basic freedoms and rights typical of Rikers Island suffer life-long trauma and damages.

Kalief Browder was only 16 years old when he ended up at Rikers, accused of stealing a backpack. He was held in solitary confinement for two years and repeatedly beaten by prison guards and other inmates. He refused to plead guilty, insisting on his innocence. Finally, the charges were dropped and Kalief was released, but he was unable to escape the damage of the years of torture and abuse. On June 6, 2015, he took his own life. But really, his death is on the hands of Rikers and the whole criminal “justice” system that stole his youth and tortured him for years.

Join the movement to STOP Police Terror and Shut Down Rikers!
www.RiseUpOctober.org

Thanks to www.RevCom.us for much of the information gathered here. Other sources include the NYTimes, AP News, cnn.com, Correctional Department data, Legal Aid Society, and more.