



- [PEOPLE](#)
- [GROUPS](#)
- [DIARIES](#)
- [TAGS](#)
- [LABOR](#)
- [COMICS](#)
- [ELECTIONS](#)
- [ECON](#)
- [RADIO](#)

SEARCH TERM



shaunking [FollowRSS](#)

Daily Kos staff

- [Profile](#)
- [Diaries \(list\)](#)
- [Stream](#)

WED JAN 14, 2015 AT 11:20 AM PST

Record 346 inmates die, dozens of guards fired in Florida prisons

by [Shaun King](#) [Follow](#) [forshaunking](#)

•

•

• [143 Comments / 143 New](#)



Jerry Washington (left); Latandra Ellington (middle); Randall Jordan-Aparo (right). All died in prisons at the hands of guards in the most unjust ways imaginable.

The United States has a prison crisis of epic proportions. With just five percent of the world population, but **25 percent of the world's prisoners**, the United States has, far and away, **the highest incarceration rate**, the **largest number of prisoners**, and the largest percentage of citizens with a criminal record of any country in the world.

The highly respected Prison Policy Initiative **breaks it down:**

The U.S. incarcerates 716 people for every 100,000 residents, more than any other country. In fact, our rate of incarceration is more than five times higher than most of the countries in the world. Although our level of crime is comparable to those of other stable, internally secure, industrialized nations, the United States has an incarceration rate far higher than any other country.

Nearly all of the countries with relatively high incarceration rates share the experience of recent large-scale internal conflict. But the United States, which has enjoyed a long history of political stability and hasn't had a civil war in nearly a century and a half, tops the list.

If we compare the incarceration rates of individual U.S. states and territories with that of other nations, for example, we see that 36 states and the District of Columbia have incarceration rates higher than that of Cuba, which is the nation with the second highest incarceration rate in the world.

Now, what we are learning is that the United States is not just imprisoning people at an outrageous pace, but that men and women are dying in these prisons at all-time highs, often at the hands of guards, in the most awful and brutal ways imaginable. The state of Florida, it appears, is ground zero for the deaths of prisoners, and the crisis is so deeply corrupt and out of hand that it needs immediate national intervention.

In 2014, Florida recorded at least 346 deaths inside of their prison system, **an all-time high for the state** in spite of the fact that its overall prison population has hovered around 100,000 people for the five previous years. **Hundreds of these deaths** from 2014 and from previous years are now under investigation by the DOJ because of the almost unimaginable role law enforcement officers are playing in them.

Below the fold I will highlight some of the most egregious stories.

Jerry Washington, pictured in the top left, filed a sexual harassment complaint against two officers in the Santa Rosa Correctional Institute. A few days later, after the officers learned of the complaint, they threatened to kill Jerry. Jerry filed another complaint with the prison about the death threats. Afraid for his safety, he wrote his sister a letter and included copies of both of the grievances he had filed. You can read the letter and copies of the complaints **here**. In the letter he tells her very clearly that if anything happens to him, she should know that it wasn't an accident.

Seven days later, Jerry Washington was killed in prison. According to the **Miami Herald**: In letters to the family, two of Washington's fellow inmates claimed that several corrections officers warned the inmate that they were going to "f--- him up," when they returned to the prison for their weekend shift.

"They were going to get him that weekend, which would have been on pick-a-nigga Friday," one wrote Washington's family, using a slang version of the n-word. "It's a saying that the officers have ... that comes from slavery when the master goes to the slave quarters on Friday to pick a nigger to hang."

In detail, the inmate, whose name is being withheld by the Miami Herald, claimed that one of the sergeants placed drugs in Washington's food that day and an orderly served the 5-foot-8 inmate his poisoned meal that afternoon.

By dinnertime, Washington was seriously ill, inmates told DOC inspectors. He was found sprawled in his cell at 9:20 p.m. on Sept. 16, but he was still alive, and officers and other staff reported he was able to sit up and talk.

Jerry died a few hours later and the family has been given few details on what happened after 9:20 PM until he was pronounced dead at 6 AM the following day.

What isn't redacted from the report is the bulk of statements provided to the DOC's investigator by seven inmates — most of whom told the same story: that Washington feared for his life and that Sgt. Marcus Stokes, Officer Pugh and Officer Charles Asbel were conspiring to harm him because he had filed complaints against them.

One inmate, Aaron Porter, went further — stating to inspectors that he overheard Stokes, Pugh and Asbel planning their revenge on Sept. 16.

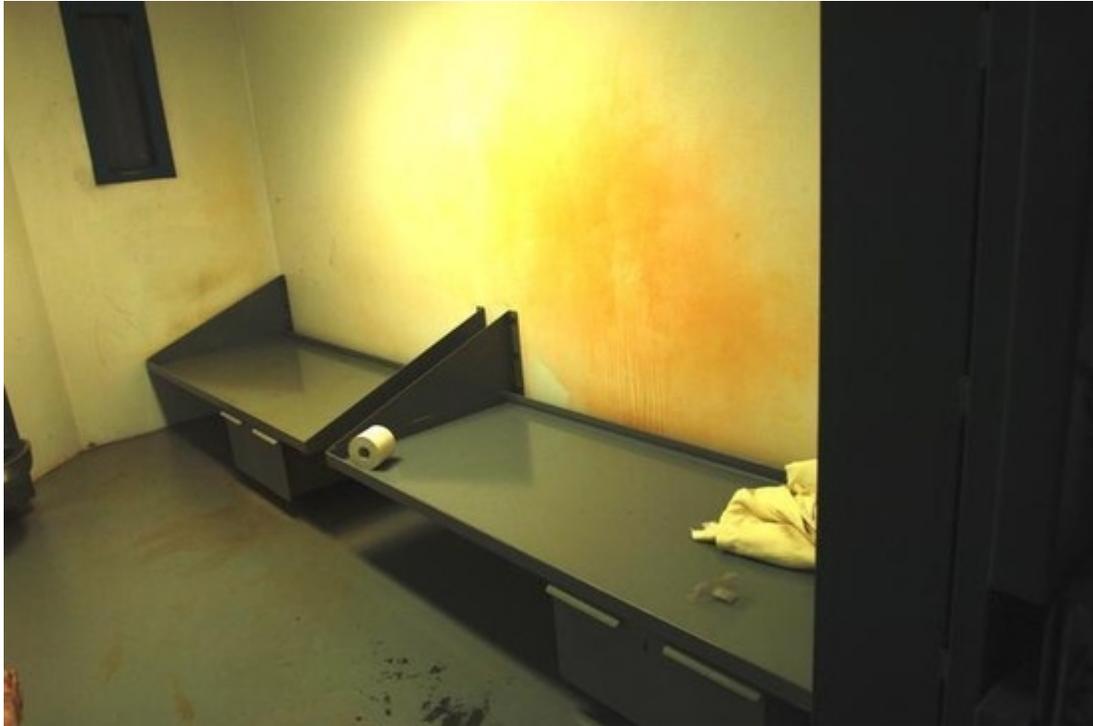
Before we move on to the next case of the murder of Randall Jordan-Aparo, Jerry Washington and his fellow inmates in Santa Rosa mentioned in their letters to Jerry's family that they were being "gassed" by the guards. Jerry thought it might actually cause him to die. Jerry and a fellow inmate both mention it here,

"I just want you to know how they are playing," Washington wrote. "I got real, real, real bad blood pressure, and if they gas me and jump on me [and] I happen to have a stroke or a heart attack ... don't ya'll believe nothing they try to tell y'all."

He enclosed copies of the grievances he had sent to the inspector general's office and told them to call several sexual violence groups, including one in Florida.

At the same time, the fellow inmate was also writing the Washington family about alleged prison abuses and said he had been sexually harassed like Washington. He claimed corrections officers were watching them and making sexual remarks to them in the showers, gassing them for no reason and refusing to feed them.

I had actually never heard of inmates being gassed before until the death of Randall Jordan-Aparo, pictured in the top right corner. He died, completely covered in the gas, his body a tinted orange, with stains of it on the wall of his cell as shown in the picture below.



According to the *Miami Herald*:

Randall Jordan-Aparo died weeping and gasping for breath on the concrete floor of his prison isolation cell, naked except for his white boxer shorts.

Incensed that he had cursed at a nurse, guards at Franklin Correctional Institution in the Panhandle fired nine blasts of noxious gas into his 13-by-8 cell through a slot in the door and, ultimately, left him there, sobbing.

"I can't breathe, I can't take it no more, please help me," he pleaded.

Five hours later, the 27-year-old was found lifeless, face-down on the bare slab. His mouth and nose were pressed to the bottom of the door, as if trying to gulp fresh air through the thin crack. His hair, legs, toes, torso and mouth were dusted with a faint orange residue, a byproduct of the gas. A paperback Bible was under his shoulder.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement sent two investigators, Michael Kennedy and Michael DeVaney, to look into what had occurred. Their conclusion, summarized in one paragraph: The "disciplinary actions" taken by guards had no bearing on the death.

"They just said he got sick," Jordan-Aparo's father, Thomas Aparo, recalled being told by corrections officials.

Hearing these claims, inspectors from the state began looking into the case right away. After reporting their findings, they began suffering retaliation themselves almost immediately.

They interviewed inmates, studied the use-of-force report, the video captured by surveillance cameras, audio of the incident and photographs of Jordan-Aparo's body. Among their findings:

- A claim by prison staffers that Jordan-Aparo was being "disorderly" before his death was false.

- Initial reports downplayed the fact that Jordan-Aparo was complaining about experiencing extreme pain and simply wanted medical attention, preferably in a hospital.
- Contrary to claims that his cell had been decontaminated after the gassing, photos clearly showed residue everywhere — orange smears on the floor, in the sink and in the toilet bowl. There was a dense orange cloud above the bunk where Jordan-Aparo would have sat.
- Although reports said Jordan-Aparo was issued a fresh set of clothing after the gassing, he was dressed only in dirty, orange-stained boxers.
- Nobody assigned to investigate the matter administratively from the Department of Corrections watched the “use of force” video showing Jordan-Aparo being gassed. Their conclusion: Jordan-Aparo died as a result of medical negligence and the “sadistic, retaliatory” use of chemical agents on a sick and helpless inmate who did nothing wrong. And that staff reports following the death contained inconsistencies, errors, omissions and outright lies.

Less than a year away from being released, Latandra Ellington wrote a disturbing letter to her aunt detailing that an officer in the prison was threatening to beat and murder her. **Neal Colgrass from Newser** details the short time frame between Latandra writing her aunt the letter, her aunt calling the prison, and Latandra being found beaten to death. On Sept. 21, Latandra Ellington wrote her aunt about prison officer "Sgt. Q" who, she says, threatened to beat and murder her. Further, he would flip his badge around to obscure his name. Wrote Ellington, "Auntie, no one knows how to spell or say this man's name. But he goes by Sgt. Q and he works the B Shift a.m." Her concerned aunt called the Lowell Correctional Institution on Sept. 30 and talked to an officer who said he would "look after" Ellington. The next day, the 36-year-old was dead. A private autopsy paid for by the family shows that Ellington—who had seven months left to serve—died of blunt-force trauma to her stomach consistent with kicking and punching, according to the family's lawyer.

While Reuters reports that 32 prison guards and officers were fired across the state this past September related to dozens of cases of abuse, corruption, and death, one should lose a lot more than their job for poisoning, gassing, or beating inmates to death. This is not enough. It's not even close to being enough. These officers should be indicted and convicted of murder and given the stiffest penalty allowed under law. They've not only abused their power, but they've abused it at the expense of citizens who are virtually defenseless in our country. It's unacceptable.



With the hope that it motivates you to push the cause of prison reform and justice for the officers who murdered these men and women, I'd like to tell you the story of Darren Rainey.

Fifty years old, battling mental illness, and serving two years in the psychiatric ward of the Dade County prison for the victimless nonviolent offense of cocaine possession without the intent to distribute, Darren Rainey would soon experience a death so cruel and so violent and so unthinkably heinous that we would expect such a thing to happen only in a country governed by a so-called evil dictator. It's almost too ugly to type.

After allegedly defecating in his cell, Rainey was handcuffed and locked into a tight shower cell and blasted for nearly two hours with water that was over 180 scolding hot degrees in temperature. Begging for his life, screaming apologies and remorse so loud that other inmates could hear them, the officers kept the water so hot and forceful that the steam began to melt off Darren Rainey's skin. Video shows Rainey forced into the shower at 7:38 PM and he was pronounced dead at 9:30 PM.

Mark Joiner, a prisoner in Dade County, was called in to clean up the chunks of skin left behind. He detailed it for the ***Miami Herald***:

Mark Joiner was roused from his cell earlier than usual on June 24, 2012.

He was handed a bottle of Clorox and was told it was clean-up time.

Joiner was used to cleaning up cells in Dade Correctional Institution's psychiatric ward, and many of them were frequently brimming with feces and urine, insect-infested food and other filth.

Joiner thought he pretty much had seen it all, from guards nearly starving prisoners to death, to taunting and beating them unconscious while handcuffed for sport. He recalls one inmate was paid a pack of cigarettes to attack one sick inmate whose only offense was to ask if their mail could be delivered before bedtime.

On the floor of a small shower stall he was ordered to clean, he saw a single blue canvas shoe and what he later realized was large chunks of human skin.

The skin belonged to Darren Rainey, a 50-year-old mentally-ill prisoner whom the guards had handcuffed and locked in the cell the night before. Witnesses and DOC reports indicate Rainey was left in the scalding hot water for hours, allegedly as punishment for defecating in his cell.

Rainey's official cause of death, in a clear case of a coverup, was listed a heart attack, but Mark Joiner and other officials, know otherwise.

Joiner remembered and said he also later made a written record of what he saw and heard the night Rainey died.

He had a view of some of what happened and was ordered to clean up the shower the following morning. He said he placed all the skin he found in Rainey's shoe.

"I heard them lock the shower door, and they were mocking him," Joiner said, as the guards turned on their retrofitted shower full blast and steam began to fill the ward.

"He was crying, please stop, please stop," Joiner said. And they just said "Enjoy your shower, and left."

Joiner went to sleep, not knowing that it would be the last time he would see or hear Rainey alive. Witnesses would later say that after two hours, at temperatures of 180 degrees, Rainey collapsed, with his skin peeling from his body. Rainey, who was serving a two-year term for possession of drugs, was carried to the prison's infirmary where a nurse later said his body temperature was so high it couldn't be measured with a thermometer.

Darren Rainey, tragically, had only one month to go in his sentence.

ORIGINALLY POSTED TO [SHAUNKING](#) ON WED JAN 14, 2015 AT 11:20 AM PST.

ALSO REPUBLISHED BY [POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY GROUP](#), [PRISON WATCH](#), AND [DAILY KOS](#).

- [Darren Rainey](#)
- [Florida inmate death crisis](#)
- [Jerry Washington](#)
- [latandra ellington](#)
- [Randall Jordan-Aparo](#)
- [Recommended](#)