

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

HEARING THREE  
COMMISSION ON SAFETY AND ABUSE  
IN AMERICA'S PRISONS

DATE: November 1, 2005  
TIME: 8:30 a.m. to 3:37 p.m.  
PLACE: Washington University School of Law  
Anheuser-Busch Hall, Room 310  
St. Louis, Missouri 63130

Personal Accounts  
Pages 27-66

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

27

1

2

3

4

DR. DUDLEY: Good morning. We've begun each of our hearings with a kind of a personal account where we've taken an opportunity to hear from individuals who have a very deeply personal experience related to the theme of each hearing. We were going to continue that this time. The four panelists for our personal accounts panel include Mr. Lou West, Reverend Jackie Means, Ms. Asha Bandele, and Ronald Kaschak.

13

Mr. West is a corrections officer, I think as you heard already, in St. Louis Justice Center, who's worked in the field for 25 years. He will describe for us how St. Louis is working in a direct supervision environment and will talk about the positive impact of that as it relates to inmates as well as officer safety.

20

Our second speaker will be the Reverend Jackie Means, who is the director of prison ministry for the Episcopal church. She'll address various issues associated with working in the prisons and her observations in that regard as well as her experiences as a mother of a female corrections officer and

25

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

28

1 balancing those experiences.

2                   Our third speaker and witness will be  
3 Ms. Asha Bandele. She is the author of The Prisoner's  
4 Wife and a staff member of the Drug Policy Alliance.  
5 She'll describe some of the difficulties that she's  
6 encountered in maintaining a relationship with her  
7 husband, who's a New York State prisoner, and the  
8 importance of prison superintendents in trying to  
9 mitigate or making more difficult the challenges of  
10 maintaining a family when one of its members is  
11 incarcerated.

12                   Then our fourth witness, Mr. Ron Kaschak,  
13 is a former deputy sheriff at the Mahoning County Jail  
14 in Youngstown, Ohio, who obeyed a supervisor's orders  
15 to beat an inmate and then cover up the beating. He  
16 later assisted authorities in the prosecution of the  
17 supervisors, and will talk to us about his experience  
18 in that regard. Mr. West.

19                   MR. WEST: Good morning. I'm here today to  
20 shed some perspective and insight on some of the  
21 experiences of working in the jails past and present.  
22 The first experience of working in a linear style  
23 institutions, I was there in the 1980s, and probably  
24 the best description that I can give how the inmates  
25 felt came from a quote from the author George Louis

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

29

1 Jackson, who was a member of the California State  
2 Penitentiary in the seventies who said that, "Try to  
3 think about the worst day of your life. That is how I  
4 feel all the time."

5           The physical structure of the jail set the  
6 tempo and the stage for the aggression and violence  
7 that was always present in this environment. Even  
8 though I grew up in the streets of St. Louis, there  
9 was nothing to prepare me for the graphic violence  
10 that was experienced on an everyday experience.

11           Some days just in taking the count in  
12 coming in to work, you would immediately view inmates  
13 trying to destroy each other with all the might and  
14 aggression that they could muster. The despair and  
15 desperation was increased whenever there was any hint  
16 of injustice or opportunities taken away that always  
17 seemed to increase.

18           In this environment the officer was like a  
19 human buffer for all of the aggression and stress that  
20 the inmates had manufactured by the fact that they  
21 were facing a lot of time. It seemed like everything  
22 was done in intense anger, and it caused a personal  
23 reaction for me also in my home life, outbursts of  
24 anger for no seemingly reason at all.

25           I knew it was a reflection of where I

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

30

1 worked, and many times I found myself being disturbed  
2 in my sleep because I always felt the presence of  
3 something evil coming towards me. So it was always  
4 the escapism of trying to be prepared and fight, and  
5 I've torn up many a stereo equipment and personally  
6 have grabbed my wife on occasion in the early part of  
7 my career.

8                   So this environment dealing with the safety  
9 of the inmates basically was understood that we had to  
10 make periodic tours of the jail. They were -- all the  
11 cells were all lined up side by side. But we were  
12 never required to just stay in front of the cell. So  
13 those inmates who experienced charges dealing with  
14 women and children, which were very hostile in the  
15 jail environment, were the ones that faced probably  
16 the most harm for their safety, and anytime the five  
17 o'clock news came on and their pictures were able to  
18 be flashed across the screen, we had extreme violence.

19                   So the number one instrument of safety that  
20 I employed that I used was a concept called the  
21 interpersonal communications skills. And this meant  
22 your ability to personally relate and communicate to  
23 all those that were involved on your walk. I always  
24 felt that if you know the person there, know what  
25 they're feeling, know some of the problems that they

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

31

1 were going through, you could personally address this  
2 on a human issue, and it will cause you to have a lot  
3 of feedback and cooperation.

4           Now, this concept in turn was frowned upon  
5 back in the early days for fear of becoming too  
6 familiar or being manipulated by persuasive inmates  
7 who had that power and ability. But I always felt  
8 that if you knew what a man was going through, if you  
9 understood that the jail system was probably the worst  
10 place that a human being could ever be in his life, if  
11 you came in there on a positive note and the inmates  
12 knew that you were not there to add to the tension,  
13 add to the chaos, it created an atmosphere of peace.

14           Now, this did not always work because  
15 problems and situations came up all the time that  
16 always seemed to strip a man of his human dignity.  
17 There was always a fight for what was right and what  
18 was belonging to them, and the only line of defense  
19 between the inmates and the staff was the line  
20 officer, the correction officer that worked back there  
21 on the tier.

22           You could stop many a problem or conflict  
23 by just listening to what the problem was, and being  
24 able to articulate it to your supervisors in a  
25 peaceful manner. Because back in those days we did

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

32

1 not have the mace and all the high-powered equipment  
2 that we had, and any time you opened those gates and  
3 went in there and had to deal with them, it was like  
4 hand-to-hand combat.

5           This concept probably resulted in the early  
6 1990s with one of the worst riots we had in county  
7 jail history, where the SWAT team had to actually come  
8 in when we were in stage one of our more fierce  
9 battles at night because of the institution of not  
10 having smoking in the institution. It caused a great  
11 deal of chaos and stress. That night came to a  
12 conclusion with the SWAT team surrounding the  
13 building, and finally the prisoners gave up. And we  
14 believe because of that riot, there was several more  
15 before that, that this is what led to direct  
16 supervision.

17           Now, direct supervision style is a more  
18 humane setting for the prisoners. We do not have any  
19 bars. The inmates are allowed to come and sit in a  
20 day room area, watch television, interact with each  
21 other without that confinement placed upon them. The  
22 safety of the inmates was dramatically increased  
23 because the officer now was inside the pod with them,  
24 whereas in the other style we were allowed to sit on  
25 the outside.

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

33

1                   The problem is the officer was now on  
2 complete display, and we probably like to describe it  
3 as customer service in hell because it seemed like as  
4 soon as you open the gates, 67 men would approach you  
5 at different times, not with the courtesy that you  
6 might have working in a retail store, but with all of  
7 their frustrations and aggravations on front street  
8 irregardless of the man next to them.

9                   So an officer required on a number of  
10 professional roles to be a psychiatrist, trying to  
11 figure out some of the personality disorders that  
12 inmates had. A constant social worker. Have to  
13 constantly provide the needs, the paperwork, the  
14 hygiene items. A role model, a father figure, a  
15 humanitarian, a disciplinarian, an academy award  
16 winning actor, and a fireman because you had to  
17 constantly put out conflicts.

18                   While all this was going on, at the same  
19 time you had to maintain a computer and make sure that  
20 you know where each and every one of these men were at  
21 any given time of the day, and it always seemed like  
22 everything happened at the same time. On any given  
23 day they would call for the courts at the same time,  
24 the clinic people, the GED, and this constant moving,  
25 constant motion always calls the officers to have a

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

34

1 great deal of ability to be an actor.

2                   Now, I use that word actor because if you  
3 can just place yourself in a situation that every  
4 single day that you came to work you were faced with  
5 extreme problems of 67 grown children who wanted you  
6 to be their caretaker and solve everything that they  
7 had. And even though we are not required to be legal  
8 consultants, the inmates never trusted themselves.  
9 They were always asking you or running over their  
10 scenario of their case and how they were innocent just  
11 to see how it sounded even to themselves.

12                   So the opportunity to say that I would  
13 never compare a correction officer's job with the  
14 police officer's, but I do believe that we are the  
15 first cousins of the law enforcement police officers.  
16 This is why a correction officer is really offended by  
17 the media when they refer to us as jail guards because  
18 if all we had to do was sit and watch something, we  
19 would be in very good shape indeed.

20                   A correction officer is required to have a  
21 multi-facet of skills that he must call upon every  
22 single day that he works. And the very same people  
23 that the police officers arrest, have to subdue or  
24 shoot at, we live with them on a daily basis unarmed.  
25 And there's nothing but air and opportunity that will

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

35

1 prevent them or yourself from being taken hostages.

2                   Now, as I mentioned before, the technique  
3 that worked in the linear style jail is the exact  
4 technique that still works to this day, and I know it  
5 to be effective, and that is your ability to relate to  
6 your fellow man and emphasize and put yourself in his  
7 situation. By you being able to do this, you are not  
8 adding to the stress and tension that's always there.

9                   We always said don't never go looking for a  
10 fight in correction. The environment exists. All you  
11 have to do is just be prepared. But it seemed like  
12 when things happened, even though we have a timely  
13 system where officers arrive, it takes only a matter  
14 of seconds before things can become a complete chaos.

15                   Now, I wanted to close in saying that maybe  
16 the general public is not aware, but most of the  
17 members of our society who have committed crimes are  
18 usually in the same category as me and you. Usually  
19 five or ten minutes of anger can change the course of  
20 a person's whole life. And if you're able to  
21 understand that only by the grace of God have you been  
22 blessed to not be in this situation, if you can relate  
23 that to them, this is the number one thing that keeps  
24 your safety intact. Because you are not viewed as a  
25 hostile opponent of the system. You are viewed

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

36

1 exactly what your title says, correctional officer,  
2 which means "to make right."

3 MR. SESSIONS: What's linear style jail?

4 MR. WEST: The linear style jail is the  
5 symbolic that you see on television with the bars and  
6 the locking of the doors and the racking. That is  
7 considered linear. Where direct supervision is in an  
8 open setting, or open seating.

9 DR. DUDLEY: You described the benefits of  
10 this direct supervision model. I was wondering if you  
11 had any thoughts that you wanted to add about how  
12 corrections officers could be trained so they would be  
13 better prepared to handle this sort of model, and/or  
14 any other sorts of things that can be done to make the  
15 direct supervisor model any less stressful for the  
16 officers working there.

17 MR. WEST: We have an excellent training  
18 staff that prepares us on a number of topics and  
19 issues dealing with human behavior and different  
20 dynamics of situations, but there's some -- some  
21 things that cannot be trained. If you know your  
22 personality is not going to deal with a lot of other  
23 people's problems, that you are -- maybe you are  
24 impatient in regards to having a vulnerability to  
25 listening and just hearing complaints all the time, it

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

37

1 makes it somewhat difficult. But you can acquire that  
2 immune system by being able to just kind of relate and  
3 put emphasis on how you would feel in that situation.

4 I said myself if somebody was in my family  
5 that was incarcerated, I would certainly hope that  
6 somebody would take the time out to turn them around  
7 and show them a positive influence in jail. There are  
8 techniques and training measures and classes that you  
9 can take in dealing with the human behavior, but it's  
10 something that has to be inside you as you have to  
11 willingly want to explore because if you don't have  
12 it, the job can be extremely difficult.

13 DR. DUDLEY: Are you saying recruitment and  
14 selection of corrections officers is equally as  
15 important?

16 MR. WEST: Yes, it is. It's hard when  
17 you're interviewing people for the job to really  
18 determine what type of personality they have that can  
19 really endure this because even the most patient of  
20 people have problems in this setting. No matter what  
21 style of management you have, just being in an  
22 environment where you're constantly in demand has its  
23 drawbacks.

24 So it's really to difficult to determine --  
25 and it really has nothing to do with size. Some of

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

38

1 the biggest guys that we ever had, they run clean down  
2 the street dealing with all the personality that we  
3 have. Some of the smallest officers in the building  
4 have a presence and a command that they can convey to  
5 the inmates that lets them know that they're in charge  
6 and they are professional. So it's really difficult  
7 to determine exactly who is fit for the job.

8 DR. DUDLEY: Thank you very much. Reverend  
9 Means?

10 MS. MEANS: I think I want to thank you for  
11 giving me the time this morning to speak to you. I'll  
12 let you know later. As you know, my name is the  
13 Reverend Jackie Means. I'm currently director of  
14 prison ministries for the Episcopal Church in the USA.  
15 I spent the last 35 years ministering prisoners,  
16 staff, correctional officers, and families of both, a  
17 calling that became even more personal when my  
18 daughter made the decision to become a corrections  
19 officer more than twenty years ago.

20 In the early 1970s I was doing a semester  
21 of field work at the Marion County Jail in  
22 Indianapolis, Indiana in the women's section, and  
23 after hearing the stories about the atrocities at the  
24 women's prison, knowing it is indeed the oldest  
25 women's prison in the United States, I decided I'd

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

39

1 take a peek inside and see what it really looked like.  
2 In those days the women were still using slop jars and  
3 were not allowed to use telephones. They had no  
4 privileges.

5                   Knowing that they didn't have a chapel and  
6 they were the only prison in the state of Indiana that  
7 didn't have a chaplain, the first time I went into the  
8 institution I snuck in behind the Catholic chaplain  
9 that was doing mass and his singers. They thought I  
10 was a singer. They didn't check very much in those  
11 days. Of course, they didn't let many people in the  
12 prison system in those days.

13                   I slipped in right through his coattail,  
14 and I felt pretty good about it until I got inside and  
15 realized that all those women looked just like me.  
16 They didn't have uniforms on. And all I could think  
17 was what am I going to do if I don't get out of here  
18 and they do count tonight and they have one extra  
19 person. How do I explain that?

20                   Soon after going in with him I made an  
21 appointment with the warden of the prison, and asked  
22 if I could begin coming in and doing some chaplain  
23 work for the women. And I also went to the Episcopal  
24 church and to my bishop, and soon afterwards I was put  
25 in the budget and I was paid as a full-time chaplain

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

40

1 at the Indiana Women's Prison.

2 I was there for twelve years, and in the  
3 meantime my daughter, as I said before, became  
4 interested in being an officer, and just as I was  
5 leaving my position as the chaplain she began her job  
6 at the prison. For the very first few months she had  
7 a real hard time because our jobs were different.  
8 They knew that she was my daughter.

9 We look almost exactly alike, and the  
10 officers, the staff, would also compare her to me.  
11 But anyway, especially the inmates. And they'd say,  
12 "You're not like your mother." And of course, she --  
13 her job was different than her mother's. My job was  
14 not to make sure they were locked up. My job was  
15 there as a spiritual advisor. And I think that that  
16 bothers her still to this day. She still has that  
17 position.

18 I can't blame her position as an officer  
19 for the drinking problem that she developed. The  
20 stress of the job and the lack of support for the  
21 officers didn't help the situation. There are  
22 statistics that say divorce and alcoholism are the  
23 major problems facing officers. Then when you have  
24 reached the top, whatever that means in corrections,  
25 maybe it's being a warden, this changes to heart

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

41

1 problems.

2                   There's also a study that shows one year --  
3 or one year after retirement, one year before and one  
4 year after retirement, the incidents of death from  
5 heart attacks are very high. As I was talking to a  
6 warden just last week, he told me that he was one year  
7 from retirement, and was also -- always and was that  
8 day becoming anxious about his health and was he going  
9 to survive the retirement. Not the job. The  
10 retirement.

11                   The prison system is like no other in the  
12 world. It is militaristic, and those in charge for  
13 many years kept the secular world out as much as they  
14 could. This frame of mind continued until the  
15 population explosion in the '80s and continues even as  
16 the crime rate has gone down.

17                   As the mother of someone working in the  
18 prison culture, I watched my daughter as time went by  
19 becoming more like an inmate every day. Staff  
20 snitches on staff. Inmates snitch -- snitch on each  
21 other and staff, and it becomes a vicious circle. The  
22 sense of collegiality does not often exist. Then you  
23 add in the families and friends of the inmates and  
24 they too are a source of contention.

25                   They, like the inmates, have their own

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

42

1 issues to deal with: A sense of guilt, anger at the  
2 situation, and the feeling of helplessness. Not  
3 knowing who to believe, they are frustrated at the  
4 system that is not likely to change. Generally  
5 speaking, the officers are not offered any continuing  
6 education, nor do they have any choice in overtime.  
7 It is mandatory. My daughter works twelve-hour  
8 shifts, and for a single parent this is very  
9 difficult.

10 I had a conversation with a female officer  
11 at a male facility who was around fifty years old.  
12 She has a hard time on her third day on rotation. She  
13 says she's completely fatigued and wore completely  
14 out.

15 There are more safety issues. In a  
16 conversation with a superintendent of two prisons in  
17 the Midwest, I learned that his main concern was the  
18 lack of adequate staff. He has dorms of 400 men with  
19 three officers per shift. This is bad enough, but  
20 when these men are a mixture of long-timers, lifers,  
21 child molesters and those with short time, in the  
22 prison culture it is usually the young, short-timers  
23 who cause ninety percent of the problems. The  
24 superintendent is very concerned for the safety of his  
25 officers and the inmates.

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

43

1                   There have been instances where an inmate  
2 has been accused and filed a complaint against an  
3 officer accusing him or her of inappropriate behavior.  
4 There is a hearing and also an investigation done by  
5 staff members that is either done in a hurry and  
6 sometimes not at all.

7                   And the officer's job is on the line. If  
8 an officer does a good job and follows procedures to a  
9 T, inmates are frustrated and often set the officer  
10 up. That is not to say that officers are good or bad  
11 people, but sometimes there is a fine line between the  
12 inmate and the staff.

13                   In most states if the officer is the head  
14 of the house, has a family and is the only one  
15 working, they can and have qualified for welfare.  
16 When I was at the Indiana Women's Prison, because they  
17 were not paying my salary, I was able to do some very  
18 interesting things. I had a friend who was a  
19 prominent wealthy lawyer in Indianapolis who made the  
20 mistake of how he might help me.

21                   So I played on his guilt because he was  
22 very rich and very prominent. He took two cases where  
23 both women were doing life, both black, and both could  
24 not read or write at the time of their crimes. One  
25 women was convicted of shooting her boyfriend, no

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

44

1    weapon was ever found on the scene, and there were no  
2    witnesses. My friend took the case back to court and  
3    she was released immediately. And the judge  
4    apologized to her for the thirteen years she had spent  
5    in prison.

6                    The other woman was sent to prison for  
7    strangling her infant two days after she was released  
8    from a mental hospital for severe postpartum  
9    depression. When my friend took her case, he was very  
10   doubtful that anything could be done because an infant  
11   was involved. He said to me on the way to Evansville,  
12   Indiana, "Baby, I don't think we're going to win this  
13   one."

14                   When doing research on the transcript of  
15   the trial, he discovered that it was the medicine that  
16   was prescribed during her hospitalization that put her  
17   in a psychotic state, and that's when she strangled  
18   her baby. She did fourteen years and was released  
19   immediately by the judge.

20                   Both of these women are still out and doing  
21   well after seventeen years. They could today still be  
22   behind bars if someone had not spoken out on their  
23   behalf. And by the way, they both got the basic  
24   education GED while they were in prison.

25                   Had I been an employee of the Department of

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

45

1 Corrections, I could not have intervened. I spent a  
2 lot of my time talking to the staff being aware that  
3 the women inmates resented the time I spent with them.  
4 It's a lonely profession. Generally speaking they  
5 have very few people to talk to that understand the  
6 stress and pressure of the job. They also have a lack  
7 of trust as to the inmates.

8                   A woman at the Indiana Women's Prison was  
9 doing life. The woman had been on death row. At a  
10 time of high stress in her life many, many years ago  
11 she had shot eight people. The governor commuted her  
12 sentence from execution to life, and she had been in  
13 the Indiana Women's Prison 23 years when I first went  
14 there as chaplain.

15                   Every day as I walked to my office, she was  
16 out in the yard working. This is what she did. She  
17 put flowers and she took care of the yard. I always  
18 greeted her with a big hello and got no response, not  
19 even a nod, for four years. I took her on as a  
20 challenge.

21                   Then one day as I walked in the prison she  
22 looked up at me and said, "Good morning, chaplain." I  
23 almost fainted. I went over to speak with her and  
24 asked why today of all days she finally acknowledged  
25 my presence. She looked me straight in the eye and

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

46

1 told me she finally figured out that I wasn't like all  
2 the do-gooders, that I was what I said and nothing  
3 kept me away. And in other words, I could be trusted.  
4 I want to add a note to that that she had come up for  
5 parole for several times during the time of her  
6 incarceration, and every time she came up was denied.

7                   The women in the prison supported her and  
8 they were -- they were like her children. She was  
9 like a mother to everybody. One evening I was privy  
10 to have dinner with a member of the parole board, told  
11 her about this lady, said, "I wish you would give her  
12 more consideration. I think that she -- I don't think  
13 she would hurt a thing. She's been there forever."  
14 Like how much -- how much time do you spend, how --  
15 how long do we have to pay?

16                   When she finally went up for parole  
17 hearing, all the women in the prison were waiting  
  
18 because they waited for her for so many years and she  
19 came out and she'd been crying. Well, when she came  
20 out this time she was screaming and she was laughing  
21 and she had tears, and all the women in the prison  
22 came out in the yard. I remember at this time we only  
23 had about 120 women, and they were all so joyful. She  
24 was released. And she still is doing well.

25                   The frustration that I felt was a sense of

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

47

1 dealing with a system that was not fair and was most  
2 certainly racist and sexist. Because of its small  
3 size, the Women's Prison then only had three  
4 vocational classes, an ABE and GED. The vocational  
5 classes were such that even if they were completed,  
6 there was not a job that was much better than working  
7 at Wendy's.

8 No. Okay. Now what do I do? What do I  
9 do?

10 DR. DUDLEY: You're almost out of time.

11 MS. MEANS: I know it. I want to say two  
12 things shortly. There are two things of my main  
13 concern. One is the maximum security and super  
14 maximum. One of the projects that I've taken on  
15 recently is having a camp for children who have  
16 parents in prison. And this camp allows each child,  
17 maybe sometimes for the first time in their life, to  
18 be in a place where they're loved and they're special  
19 and they're respected.

20 We're doing these now in ten states, and  
21 it's been very successful. We know that if a child  
22 has someone in prison, their chances of going are  
23 about seven out of ten. If they have both parents,  
24 which is sometimes the case, it's 9.5. So hopefully  
25 we look at maybe breaking the cycle of incarceration

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

48

1 and give these children a better life than their  
2 parents. Thank you and God bless you for what you've  
3 done.

4 DR. DUDLEY: Thank you. Before we let you  
5 go, though, any other thoughts of what might make the  
6 environment or the experience with the corrections  
7 officers --

8 MS. MEANS: I think they're underpaid.  
9 They're not very well respected. I believe that  
10 people, especially when they work in the shoe and  
11 super-max prisons should have more time off and they  
12 should be rotated through. That was my recommendation  
13 when I visited super-max and shoe.

14 And I also really believe that correctional  
15 officers should be encouraged continually to take  
16 credit courses or to take classes that will make their  
17 jobs better and easier. And I think that one of the  
18 problems I'm seeing now is that there are changes  
19 being made to the system. You have some new people  
20 coming in on the scene. It is hard for those that  
21 have worked there for a long time to change. That's  
22 the big challenge today I think for superintendents  
23 and wardens.

24 DR. DUDLEY: Thank you.

25 MR. SESSIONS: Reverend Means, do you have

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

49

1 a -- you're one employee of the church?

2 MS. MEANS: Yes, I am.

3 MR. SESSIONS: Are there others like you?

4 MS. MEANS: In the other denominations?

5 MR. SESSIONS: No, just in the church

6 alone?

7 MS. MEANS: No, I'm it for the Episcopal

8 church.

9 MR. SESSIONS: Are there in every state --

10 DR. DUDLEY: We've got to --

11 MS. MEANS: We can talk later.

12 MR. SESSIONS: Thank you.

13 MS. MEANS: I hope.

14 DR. DUDLEY: Ms. Bandele?

15 MS. BANDELE: Good morning, and thank you

16 for the opportunity to speak with you about my

17 experiences with specifically New York State's

18 Department of Corrections, which I first came in

19 contact with in 1990. I was a student volunteer, a

20 member of a campus club, and we wanted to create

21 relationships with people who would be returning to

22 the neighborhoods in which we lived.

23 In New York State most prisoners come from

24 seven distinct neighborhoods. Most of us at the City

25 University of New York lived in that neighborhood --

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

50

1 lived in those neighborhoods, and it made sense to us  
2 that these men and women who were invested into the  
3 community in which they are returning their  
4 engagement, that it would be quite different than  
5 their previous one. So to that end we visited  
6 regularly, we did poetry reading, we ate, we shared  
7 our living experiences with one another, and it was a  
8 period of tremendous growth for me.

9           No one ushered that period along with more  
10 impact than a man named Rashid. He was serving twenty  
11 years to life for a murder he participated in when he  
12 was seventeen years old. We developed a personal  
13 relationship after two years, and then three years  
14 after that we got married.

15           Let me say this before I go further: I  
16 think it's important to continually recognize that  
17 prisoners are not a monolith any more than all judges  
18 are one thing, all doctors are one thing, all writers  
19 or mothers. And I think that the view of prisoners as  
20 a monolith really tends to dissolve the opportunity to  
21 make the corrections system better. My own husband,  
22 you know -- for example, you know, has a master's  
23 degree in theology.

24           The men who grow through that program at  
25 Sing Sing have a recidivism rate so low it doesn't

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

51

1 even rank. And so that all prisoners do not need to  
2 be infantilized or directed to do every single little  
3 thing. It's just not true, and I really think it's  
4 important to note that.

5                   But in any case, I never thought that  
6 negotiating a relationship with a man in prison would  
7 be easy, but you know, I was 23. I was very young.  
8 Had a lot hope for our future and, you know, realistic  
9 belief that he would be released. And what we didn't  
10 notice was that our relationship was being slowly and  
11 in a very calculated way undermined.

12                   We weren't undermined so much by the fixed  
13 rules of prison life. You know, you read that and you  
14 accept that and behave accordingly. We were  
15 undermined as people, as individuals, as a family by  
16 rules that were selectively enforced by guards, and  
17 they were so selective you either didn't know they  
18 existed, or there would be these sudden capricious new  
19 rulings that would guide, you know, your interaction  
20 with your loved one in the facility.

21                   So one of the ones that we wives and  
22 mothers complained about the most were sudden changes  
23 in dress codes. So what you wore last week, you  
24 know -- literally I had pictures -- I would wear two  
25 weeks later and that now it's unacceptable. In the

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

52

1 manner in which you're told that it's unacceptable is  
2 humiliating and has the collateral consequence of  
3 making a very vulgar sexual implication about you.  
4 You wind up feeling like you're being sexually  
5 harassed. Whether or not that's the intention, that's  
6 what it feels like.

7                   So it was -- hard as this was to take prior  
8 to becoming a mother, it was nearly impossible to take  
9 once I became a mother because I always have to be  
10 aware of what I'm modeling for my daughter, and what  
11 does it mean for her to look at her mother being  
12 humiliated in this particular way and have no  
13 recourse. What is she learning about how to negotiate  
14 her space in the world as a woman and, you know, that  
15 fear began to envelope me and really make me want to  
16 limit my interaction with the facility because, you  
17 know, it wasn't okay to have her mother's private  
18 parts openly discussed and disparaged.

19                   So the most egregious example was this  
20 summer. It was maybe, I don't know, 98 degrees. It's  
21 July in New York. I had on a dress that was down to  
22 my ankles with a collar that was up here, but I had  
23 these very sexy naked arms in this 95 degree weather  
24 and so did my daughter. And they literally ran from  
25 the room where you process in and said, "You can't

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

53

1     come any further" and stopped -- and we were stopped.

2     And, "Look at you, your arms are all out here."

3                     So luckily there were Muslims there who had  
4     seven layers of clothes on. They gave them to us and  
5     we were able to go in. But you know, other than that,  
6     we wouldn't have been allowed. The reason that was  
7     enforced was there was a new deputy superintendent, a  
8     woman, who decided that naked arms would cause the men  
9     to riot, and she walked around the facility that day  
10    in a tank top and shorts.

11                    Incidents like these would send me  
12    spiraling back to the office searches that took place  
13    when I would go on conjugal visits. And when the  
14    guard would sift through my clothes and would often  
15    pull your underwear up and shake it out as though I  
16    could hide something in it. They do it while a  
17    company of men were walking by. I will never be  
18    convinced this made the facility more secure. Indeed,  
19    the treatment of family members has the potential to  
20    make the facility less secure because it can lead to  
21    severe tension between a prisoner and a guard who  
22    humiliated or otherwise violated his wife.

23                    From the time I became a mother,  
24    maltreatment by guards seemed to intensify. Perhaps  
25    this was because it wasn't just me, but my infant



## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

55

1 anymore, and then have that be the reason you would be  
2 paroled. And, you know, just forced us to live with a  
3 certain amount of fear about what was coming next,  
4 what would the next day hold. And I think that, you  
5 know, if you walk away with anything, I really want to  
6 stress that we know intact families are a strong  
7 contributing factor to a prisoner successfully  
8 reentering society. We know that children who were  
9 provided a measure of safety, security, and stability  
10 grow into happy and productive adults. The prison  
11 system, as I experienced it, works completely to  
12 undermine both of these ideals.

13           It's not true of all facilities. I  
14 certainly experienced two in which the leadership, the  
15 superintendent in one case, Robert Kuhlmann, in other  
16 case I have a lot of hope for William Brown, who is  
17 now running Eastern Correctional facility. Their  
18 leadership was one of respect for families of  
19 prisoners and for staff and that flowed. There were  
20 very few instances of violence and the like.

21           So it makes me wonder, you know, why then  
22 when there is actual and anecdotal data to suggest  
23 that respectfully running the facility makes  
24 everyone's lives easier would there be people who  
25 chose to go another route. My conjecture is that they

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

56

1    come into work with sets of prejudices, and those  
2    prejudices are not at regular intervals being trained  
3    out them.

4                    So for example, you see people constantly  
5    in family situations treated really badly.  If you  
6    have a mixed race couple, especially if the man is  
7    white and the partner is black, staffers who leave the  
8    facility because they fall in love with prisoners are  
9    treated very badly, same sex couples.  You know, women  
10   like me who was fairly prominent, you know, an author,  
11   you know, appeared to have some means, you know,  
12   Rashid was told, you know, basically, "She will be  
13   brought down to her level.  She's no better."

14                   One of the guards said something about me  
15   while he was strip searching my husband, you know,  
16   obviously looking to provoke an already tense  
17   situation.  So -- which is a huge problem in that  
18   they -- often the people who are in the visiting room  
19   monitoring us are the most hostile people you can ever  
20   meet.  Which in a place already ripe with emotion, it  
21   seems to confound, you know, me why that's there.

22                   So the confluence of all of these factors  
23   combined with my ineffectiveness when it came to  
24   protecting and advocating for my husband contributed  
25   to the dissolution of my marriage.  Earlier this year,

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

57

1 for example, my husband broke his hand while playing  
2 basketball. It took fully 25 days for him to be  
3 diagnosed, three months to have any kind of real  
4 treatment. No painkillers. And I was helpless. I  
5 couldn't do anything.

6 I couldn't do anything when he was molested  
7 by a guard at Attica who during -- when he was being  
8 pat -- pat-frisked, you know, grabbed his testicles  
9 and penis. It happened on more than one occasion, and  
10 I think that I'll close by saying, you know, something  
11 about being a witness to abuse, especially of someone  
12 you love, when you're helpless. That is deeply  
13 scarring.

14 You know, it's from this place of  
15 depression, of helplessness and hopelessness that I'm  
16 asked to raise a happy and well-adjusted little girl.  
17 And I do my best, but you know, there are no crutches.  
18 There are no processes for families of the  
19 incarcerated, and when the prison population is  
20 hovering at over two million, what does it mean for  
21 our society at large to have so many walking wounded  
22 among us, and what does it mean for our children?  
23 Thank you.

24 DR. DUDLEY: Thank you. I was wondering  
25 before we let you go, you mentioned two places that

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

58

1 you thought maybe things were better, and I was  
2 wondering if you wanted to mention or note anything  
3 specific about those places or any other thoughts that  
4 you've had about ways of doing things differently that  
5 were better.

6 MS. BANDELE: Sullivan Correctional  
7 Facility during the 1990s was run by a man named  
8 Robert Kuhlmann. He was an advocate for prisoner  
9 education and program. He encouraged interaction  
10 between prisoners and outside members of society. He  
11 ran a fair prison, a by-the-book prison in that, you  
12 know, you didn't get special favors or treatment, but  
13 you also didn't have these surprise shocking rules  
14 that didn't, you know, exist before.

15 So it was in that way a stable and  
16 predictable environment, and because it was stable and  
17 predictable everybody had a chance to sort of grow and  
18 mature and do better and think rationally without, you  
19 know, the unpredictable environment you're always  
20 thinking in this fear and defensive mode.

21 DR. DUDLEY: Thank you. Mr. Kaschak?

22 MR. KASCHAK: Good morning. I worked for  
23 Mahoning County Sheriff's Department for six years,  
24 from October of '98 to June of 2004. I held the  
25 position of deputy sheriff. I had several different

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

59

1 responsibilities in the time that I worked for the  
2 sheriff's department. I worked at the correction  
3 division, the records and warrants, and I also worked  
4 patrol division.

5           The incident that I will be sharing with  
6 you happened while I was working in the corrections  
7 division of the MCSO. On December 28th, 2001 there  
8 was an incident that occurred that changed my life  
9 forever. On that Friday afternoon I was assigned to  
10 the float position of the jail. A float position  
11 means that you are there to help other deputies.

12           My shift began at two o'clock that day. At  
13 three o'clock in the afternoon I received a signal  
14 seven on my radio. A signal seven is a fight between  
15 inmates. The call came from the fourth floor housing  
16 unit, which is a felony floor in our facility. The  
17 fourth floor holds the most dangerous and violent  
18 criminals. This is where the rapists, murderers, and  
19 armed robbers are housed.

20           When we arrived on the scene, the fight had  
21 already been broken up and the inmates were going back  
22 to their cells. After the inmates were locked down in  
23 their cells, we then learned that a female deputy had  
24 been assaulted by an inmate. The female deputy had  
25 walked around the pod to point out which inmate had

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

60

1 struck her. It was in P-32, which is where the deputy  
2 pointed out inmate twenty as the inmate who struck  
3 her.

4 At this point my supervisor instructed me  
5 to open his cell door. Two other deputies entered  
6 inmate Easterly's cell and escorted him downstairs.  
7 The two deputies along with five other deputies and a  
8 corporal, who is my supervisor, took the inmate into  
9 the gym. I did not go into the gym at this time  
10 because I did not believe it was inmate Easterly who  
11 had struck the female deputy. I later learned that  
12 the deputies had put a beating on inmate Easterly  
13 while he was in the gym.

14 After they were done in the gym with the  
15 inmate, they took him back into the pod and placed him  
16 into his cell. At this point I shut the inmate's door  
17 and went down to the booking area with the other  
18 deputies. I then went to find the female deputy who  
19 had been assaulted. While I was there, I learned from  
20 other inmates that it was indeed inmate Easterly who  
21 had struck the deputy at the time.

22 At this point I had returned back to the  
23 booking area. While I was in the booking area I was  
24 sitting in the bridge, which is an office in the  
25 booking area. At the time I was speaking with

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

61

1 Sergeant Blue, who told me that Major Bud had called  
2 downstairs and asked him, "Why the fuck is inmate  
3 Easterly not in the hospital?"

4 At this point the phone rang again. It was  
5 Major Orange. When the sergeant hung up the phone he  
6 said Major Bud -- Major Orange wants us to go upstairs  
7 and move inmate Easterly into the hole and take care  
8 of the situation. At this point the other deputies  
9 and myself went to his cell and instructed the deputy  
10 to open inmate Easterly's door. Deputies Yellow and  
11 Green went into the inmate's cell while another deputy  
12 and myself walked behind them.

13 When we left -- we left one pod to go to  
14 the other, it was there in the hallway that Deputies  
15 Yellow and Green took inmate Easterly to the floor  
16 while Deputy Purple and myself each held one of his  
17 legs down. Deputies Yellow and Green started punching  
18 inmate Easterly, and I delivered three knee strikes to  
19 his leg. At that point I stood up. The three other  
20 deputies continued beating inmate Easterly at the  
21 time. This continued going on for another minute.  
22 This is when they stopped.

23 The deputy working the pod came and opened  
24 the door to let us out of the hallway. Deputy Yellow  
25 and Green then stripped him of his clothes and drug

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

62

1 him through the pod to his cell. Deputy Purple and  
2 myself stayed in the hallway. When the other two  
3 deputies placed him in his cell, Deputy Yellow yelled,  
4 "This is what happens when you strike a female  
5 deputy."

6                   The deputies involved and myself went  
7 downstairs, and no reports of this incident were  
8 written until September 2002, almost a year later. In  
9 August of '02 I went for a job interview with  
10 Austintown Police. At this point I was given a  
11 polygraph test. One of the questions was, "Have you  
12 ever struck an inmate while on duty?" I answered,  
13 "Yes, under a direct order."

14                   After the polygraph I went home. I  
15 received a call from Austintown Police and asked me to  
16 come back down. Approximately two hours later I went  
17 back down. They stated everything looked good, and  
18 all I needed to do was come back and clear up this  
19 question. When I went back to the station I told them  
20 about the incident. I never thought twice about it  
21 since the person administering the test I have known  
22 my whole life. My father had worked for the  
23 Austintown Police for nearly 25 years and had retired  
24 from the police department.

25                   After I left the Austintown Police

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

63

1 Department contacted me again stating that they were  
2 going to send a letter to Sheriff Gray stating what I  
3 had told them during the polygraph test. A few weeks  
4 later Major Orange had called me into his office. He  
5 was the one who had ordered -- who ordered the assault  
6 on the prisoner. When I got there he was waving the  
7 letter in his hand. He looked at me and stated, "What  
8 the fuck am I supposed to do now that this is public  
9 record?" He was holding the letter from Austintown  
10 Police Department in his hand.

11 At this point he told me to write a report  
12 on the incident, and after I was done writing it he  
13 was going to arrest me for an assault. I replied that  
14 I would not write anything without my union rep  
15 present. He began yelling, "I am giving a direct  
16 order to write a report." I again told him that I  
17 wouldn't write it without representation.

18 At this point the major called Sergeant  
19 Silver into his office. When he arrived the major  
20 said I was being placed on administrative leave. He  
21 proceeded to take my gun, my badge, my access card,  
22 and my magazines. Sergeant Silver said I had to write  
23 a report or the major could fire me.

24 Major Orange then asked me one more time to  
25 write a report. At this point I agreed to write one.

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

64

1 In the report I falsified it so I would not implicate  
2 the major. I said the inmate became aggressive and we  
3 had to use force to get him under control. I also  
4 never mentioned the major's name in my report.

5           When I got done with the report I took it  
6 over to his office and handed it to him. The major  
7 then wrote a report and handed it back and gave me  
8 back my gun, my badge, my access card, and my  
9 magazines. He then stated not to worry about  
10 anything, that it was over with, and go back to work.

11           In November of 2002 the FBI showed up and  
12 began asking me questions about the incident. Then  
13 almost a year and a half later I got a call from the  
14 U.S. Attorney General's office asking me to come in  
15 and talk. My attorney and myself met with them on  
16 several occasions. We did a proffer.

17           In March 2004 I made the toughest decision  
18 I ever had to make. I made a plea agreement with the  
19 government. I agreed to cross the blue line and  
20 testify against other cops. They were more to me than  
21 just my co-workers. They were also my friends. Many  
22 of them were at my wedding. I worked with them every  
23 day, and they were the people I trusted who had my  
24 back if I was ever in trouble.

25           Now I was about to send these people that I

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

65

1 called my friends to prison. For me it came down to  
2 two reasons: Number one is my wife and daughter, and  
3 number two was it was the right thing to tell the  
4 truth. It was one of the toughest decisions, but also  
5 one of the easiest.

6 In June of '04 I resigned the Mahoning  
7 County Sheriff's Department after six years on the  
8 force. My whole life I wanted to be a police officer  
9 like my father. Because of me not thinking for myself  
10 I lost my career and my job. It's hard to explain to  
11 people everything I lost. I lost my career, my house,  
12 and a lot of my friends because I agreed to become a  
13 government witness and testify against other police  
14 officers.

15 One thing, I have become a parent, though,  
16 and those are the people who truly do care about you,  
17 my parents, my brother, my in-laws, and my wife. I  
18 also believe that even though this incident was a  
19 tragedy it made me a better person, a better husband,  
20 and more importantly, a better father.

21 I hope that my story can help other people  
22 or other police officers that are put in situations  
23 like I was. When a supervisor gives you a direct  
24 order, you either obey or you get fired. I hope this  
25 doesn't happen to anybody, but if it does, remember

## Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons: Hearing 3

### Personal Accounts

66

1 you do have a choice and you can just walk away.

2 I hope you never have to be in a situation  
3 where supervisor has lost perspective about why they  
4 are a police officer and gives a command that abuses  
5 their power. Remember, you still have a choice,  
6 though, so please don't make the same mistakes I made.  
7 You have too much to lose. Thank you for your time.

8 DR. DUDLEY: Thank you. I guess the  
9 question is, you know, in retrospect, is there  
10 anything that can be done with regard to being in a  
11 situation such as this?

12 MR. KASCHAK: It's the people in charge. I  
13 don't know, you know, like because the sheriff's  
14 department, you know, we change hands every four years  
15 and you never know who's going to be in charge. It's  
16 people that abuse the power. I don't really know what  
17 can be done with that to make that incident not  
18 happen.

19 DR. DUDLEY: Okay. I'd like to thank each  
20 of you for giving up your time to be with us this  
21 morning, and particularly for sharing such personal  
22 experiences with us. So please know that we are very  
23 grateful for your contribution to our work. Thank  
24 you.

25 MR. SESSIONS: Thank you.