

The Washington Post

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2004

Ms. M. M.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Protecting D.C. Inmates

The Jan. 1 editorial "In Danger in the D.C. Jail" was right when it said:

■ "[I]nmates [are] forced to live under ... dangerous and unsafe conditions."

■ "To be in the D.C. Jail is to be unguarded and unprotected."

■ The jail "is a very dangerous place for inmates and staff alike."

Ten days before the Dec. 20 shootings of four inmates, I filed a wrongful-death lawsuit against the District on behalf of Pearl Beale, the mother and administrator of the estate of Givon Pendleton, a pretrial detainee who was killed at the D.C. jail in December 2002. Mr. Pendleton was attacked in an overcrowded and understaffed cellblock, and his slaying was not witnessed or deterred by prison guards.

The D.C. Department of Corrections has remained recklessly and deliberately indifferent to protecting its prisoners from predators. I know, because I have represented the families of other inmates who have been killed while in the District's custody and many more inmates who were fortunate to survive multiple stab wounds.

The editorial asked: "What will it take for the mayor and council to take charge of this frightful mess? Public outrage? The courts? Congress?"

I submit that it will take all three. Even then, we still will see more inmate assaults, stabbings and deaths—until the District musters the will to change the way it runs its jail.

I hope that The Post and others of integrity and good conscience will continue to spotlight these conditions so the public will know how these inmates live and die.

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