

# Guard breaks the arms of two teenage boys: Abuse continues within the Kentucky juvenile justice system

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On October 12, 2024, Tyler Grant Lynn, a 30-year-old juvenile justice guard, broke the left arms of two teenage boys held in the McCracken Regional Juvenile Detention Center in Paducah, Kentucky. The first incident began at 6:11 p.m. Less than four hours later, at 9:48 p.m., the second incident occurred. In the second incident, the fracturing of the boy's left humerus bone was picked up on the built-in microphone of a security camera mounted 40 feet away.

Lynn, who has worked at the facility for five years, is 5 feet 11 inches tall with a muscular build and weighs around 350 pounds. Both teens stand below the height of 5 foot 5 inches, with a combined weight that is 140 pounds lighter than Lynn's body weight.

In both cases, the use of physical restraint was recently determined to be in violation of the Department of Juvenile Justice Policy and Procedures manual and illegal. The first teen's alleged non-compliance and the second teen's "fist bump" on the window of a "friend's cell" did not present "an imminent risk of physical harm to self, staff, or peers, or significant damage to state property," it was found.

This recent revelation follows another abuse case in September in which an asthmatic boy at the Warren Regional Juvenile Detention Center in Bowling Green, Kentucky was pepper-sprayed for passively standing with his hands at his sides, refusing to enter his cell. He was then left inside his cell with no medical attention. This resulted in the firing of one correctional officer and nurse Sara Dobbins, who sought to treat the boy with a shower to flush the spray out of his eye, only exacerbating the burning, as it spread down to the boy's genitals. Steven Hollifield, the guard who

sprayed the boy, received a mere five-day suspension.

The Juvenile Justice System in Kentucky has been under a civil rights investigation that was launched last May due to widespread abuse and neglect, revealed through various lawsuits and state audits.

Tyler Grant Lynn is well known among the youth at the facility for his provocative and aggressive behavior. One youth inmate reported that he would routinely make statements such as, "I'm 350 pounds of terror. Nobody is going to mess with me."

The guard's brutal behavior was on full display in the first incident. He openly taunted the boy, demonstrating intent to escalate a verbal conflict. Lynn mocked the teen as his cell was opening before putting him in a restraint for allegedly refusing to comply with verbal commands.

Neither teen was given proper medical care despite their cries of pain. The nurse on shift at the facility failed to conduct a full examination of each boy, despite her claims that she did. In each case, the boys only received an over-the-counter pain reliever for their broken limbs. It took three days before the boys received treatment at the Paducah hospital. The second boy, who was more severely injured, required surgery to put metal plates in his arm.

What was the response of Lynn's fellow correctional guards? Lynn and the other guards present during the first incident, including Lynn's wife, a captain at the facility, are seen speaking in whispered tones on security cameras, leading investigators to write that "it appears staff likely was aware of [the boy's] injury."

Eric Lewis, the deputy facility manager, told investigators that he had seen the second boy's arm hanging awkwardly and at an unusual angle. However,

he said, he “just thought some kids were double-jointed.” Lewis would go on to make the false claim that the second boy was seen playing basketball with other teens the day after the restraint. Security footage showed that the boy stood on the sidelines in the shade away from others playing basketball.

Kentucky Juvenile Justice Commissioner Randy White, a former prison warden appointed by Democratic Governor Andy Beshear, fired Lynn. The detention center’s superintendent, Felicia Weatherspoon-Howe, and Eric Lewis were also fired as a result of Lynn’s actions and the attempt to cover up the violent acts.

White would go on to make several statements regarding the need for training and equipping of the staff and the importance of reentry services for those released. One statement sticks out among the rest: “If our employees choose to do the wrong thing, they will consistently be held accountable, with discipline up to and including dismissal.”

This statement places the focus upon the wrongs of an individual. Is it really that simple? Just fire the bad people within the system and replace them with new-hires who are trained. If it is just a matter of “bad eggs,” why has systemic abuse continued in the juvenile justice system in Kentucky? Why has it spanned decades in nearly every US state?

Reports by government officials and researchers spanning half a century have concluded that the imprisonment of youth results in lower graduation rates, worse employment outcomes, increased rates of repeat offenses and greater risk of being incarcerated as an adult. White’s statement and the countless investigations, calls for reform and policy proposals made by state and federal agencies obscure the social conditions underlying the mass incarceration of young people and the rampant abuse in juvenile detention facilities.

Generations of young people have been raised in an age of continuous war, unprecedented levels of inequality, police violence, mass shootings, the degrading of public schools and the gutting of other vital social infrastructure. The Democrats and Republicans demonstrate the indifference of the capitalist class toward young people and the working class. They offer no solutions, just empty rhetoric about wanting young people to be “productive members of

society.”

Poor youth are expected to enlist in the military or condemn themselves to working for low wages at corporations owned by billionaire oligarchs such as Jeff Bezos of Amazon.

Meanwhile, as part of his attacks on the democratic and social rights of working people, Trump has already alluded to the prospect of deporting US citizens who have criminal backgrounds and are designated as “violent repeat offenders.”



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