**  
Cyryna Pasion’s Story**

Cyryna Pasion is an 18 year old transgender girl who was sexually harassed, assaulted and threatened with rape by other youth while incarcerated at the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility (HYCF). The Youth Corrections Officers, or YCOs, were aware that this abuse was occurring, and even contributed to it by calling her derogatory names, but did nothing to protect her. She says:

*“We all have the right to be free from sexual violence and sexual harassment. We are in these youth facilities to help rehabilitate us so we can be law abiding adults. It should not matter whether we are small in stature, with brown or black skin, or if we have a different gender identity or sexual orientation. I accept that my GI [gender identity] is different but I affirm my humanity by being here and my right to have the YCOs responsible for protecting me do their jobs, rather than abusing me and refusing to stop others from abusing me”*

Cyryna began dressing as a girl, wearing her hair long and taking hormones when she was 15. She identified as transgender and got medical treatment that helped her body better match her female identity. She began having trouble at home and stayed out late to avoid going home. She eventually had run-ins with the law and one day her mother reported her as a runaway and the police arrested her.

For the first seven months, she was housed at HYCF with the girls. She said that YCOs would threaten to send her to the boys section if she acted up. They told her she would get it much worse over there. She said they also would call her derogatory names.

In September of 2004, all of the girls were temporarily transferred to Utah. Cyryna was not allowed to go with them. She was transferred to the boys section. She describes her experience in this way:

*“I was terrified. A number of the medical staff and counselors spoke out against me being placed with the boys, but the director of the facility ignored them. It was very clear I would be targeted for abuse; the director even ordered the staff not to allow me to interact with the male wards for this reason. I was told not to sit close to them or even look at them. I had to sit one or two chairs away from the nearest boy even during free time and meals, which was very isolating and felt like I was segregated. I had my own cell, whereas the boys slept together in a dormitory-style unit. However, this did not protect me from daily sexual harassment and abuse. The boys began to sexually harass me immediately and would say awful things. I endured this verbal harassment nearly every day.”*

She said that when they were watching television the boys would touch her, and they would pull out their private parts and show her. They came up behind her and grab her and rubbed against her. She said that staff were always present and sometimes laughed or encouraged the boys’ conduct. Cyryna says:

*“When I told one of the guards I trusted how tired I was of putting up with the abuse, he told me to “just ignore it.” I eventually tried to talk to several other staff members about what was happening but the sexual harassment, unwanted touching, taunting, and threats of violence continued. I felt tortured and alone. The boys threatened to beat me up if I wrote a complaint, and because the YCOs never did anything to help, I did not file an official grievance regarding the sexual abuse. I had become extremely depressed as a result of the sexual abuse and being so isolated. I felt miserable. I couldn’t sleep, couldn’t eat, and felt anxious and sick most of the time. The whole time I was on the boys’ side at HYCF I was threatened with violence and rape, touched sexually on various parts of my body, and experienced constant sexual harassment. Except for isolating me, which made my pain and loneliness worse, nobody helped me. It is quite painful having to relive the memories of what happened at HYCF – my time there was a living hell.”*

\*Cyryna is part of Just Detention International’s (JDI’s) Survivor Council. She has agreed to allow her story to be used for education and to improve conditions in facilities. Thanks to Cyryna and to JDI.