

# Equal Justice Initiative

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://eji.org/news/first-conviction-obtained-federal-investigation-elmore-beatings>

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The first of a group of officers who beat handcuffed inmates at Elmore Correctional Facility in Elmore, Alabama, has pleaded guilty in federal court and is now facing sentencing to up to 10 years in prison.

In 2013, EJI conducted an investigation into allegations of abusive officers and prison supervisors at [Elmore Correctional Facility](#). After conducting more than 50 interviews, EJI found that a group of officers were taking inmates into isolated areas of the prison where they were handcuffed and stripped naked and then beaten. Several inmates were beaten so severely that they required hospitalization and suffered permanent injuries. The warden and other high-ranking prison officials were implicated in some of the beatings and misconduct. Several officers involved in beatings at Elmore reportedly were previously accused of sexual abuse of women at [Tutwiler Prison for Women](#) in Wetumpka, Alabama, or physical abuse of male prisoners at other Alabama prisons.

Alabama Department of Corrections officials were notified about criminal misconduct but failed to hold institutional officers and leadership accountable. EJI subsequently filed an official complaint with the Department of Justice, asking it to intervene. DOJ launched a criminal investigation at the facility in 2014. The first officer convicted is Jeremy Walker, who pleaded guilty in May 2017 to assaulting a handcuffed inmate.

Officer Walker was a cadet in training at the time of the assault. The incident occurred on July 3, 2014. After a confrontation between Officer Walker and a prisoner, C.C., the prisoner was ordered to lay on the ground. As he lay on the ground surrounded by a group of officers, Officer Walker kicked him. C.C. was then handcuffed and taken to a holding cell in an isolated area of the administrative building. Once he was placed in the cell, Officer Walker and his brother, who is also a correctional officer, continued to threaten the inmate. A supervising officer was present but did not remove Officer Walker or his brother from the area. Officer Walker entered the holding cage and punched the handcuffed inmate repeatedly in the face before other officers escorted Walker out of the cell.

The conviction is a long-awaited response to widespread abuse of inmates by some correctional staff at Elmore Correctional. The conviction of Officer Walker is believed to be the first in an ongoing investigation by the Justice Department.

When correctional authorities do not vigorously and consistently eliminate officer-on-inmate abuse, violence within institutions escalates and public safety is threatened. It's extremely important that the DOC be persistent and vigilant at investigating and preventing officer abuse of incarcerated prisoners, said EJI Director Bryan Stevenson. We have a lot of good correctional officers in Alabama but we also have too many that have engaged in excessively violent behavior with impunity.

DOJ's intervention at Elmore is the second time the department has initiated a criminal investigation in response to a complaint that EJI filed after Alabama corrections officials refused to cooperate. In 2011, EJI filed a complaint with the Justice Department about the fatal beating of 24-year-old [Rocrast Mack](#) by correctional officers at Ventress Correctional Facility in Clayton, Alabama, and called for state and federal prosecution of those officers. Federal prosecutors eventually charged four former prison employees in Mr. Mack's murder. Matthew Davidson and Scottie Glenn pleaded guilty to civil rights violations and conspiring to cover up the crime, former corrections Lt. Michael Smith was convicted in federal court in Montgomery, and former correctional officer Joseph Sanders entered a guilty plea in 2015.

Officer who beat handcuffed inmates at Elmore Correctional Facility has pleaded guilty and is facing up to 10 years.

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122 Commerce Street Montgomery, AL 36104 [\(334\) 269-1803](tel:(334)269-1803) [\[emailprotected\]](#)

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