

The New York Times

EDITORIALS/LETTERS MONDAY, AUGUST 31, 2009

Reforming New York's Juvenile Prisons

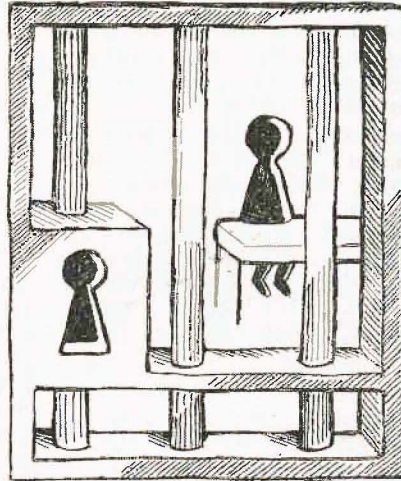
To the Editor:

Re "4 Youth Prisons in New York Used Excessive Force" (front page, Aug. 25):

The report by the United States Department of Justice that the constitutional rights of youth incarcerated in New York State's institutional facilities have been violated places an intensive spotlight on the serious deficiencies of our state's juvenile justice system.

The members of the Task Force on Transforming New York's Juvenile Justice System, appointed by Gov. David A. Paterson, recognize the significant progress made in the last two years under the leadership of Gladys Carrión, commissioner of the Office of Children and Family Services, but much still needs to be done.

Our report, due by the end of the year, will look at conditions of confinement — the topic of the Justice Department investigation — but will also examine ways to expand alternatives to institutional placement, ensure that confined youth transition successfully to their communities upon release, and reduce the disproportionate incarceration of youth of color.



As the Justice Department report confirms, the current system needs a complete overhaul — it does not serve youth well, does not provide a safe workplace for its staff, and does little to promote public safety. JEREMY TRAVIS

New York, Aug. 26, 2009

The writer, chairman of the Governor's Task Force on Transforming New York's Juvenile Justice System, is president of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY.