

Woman forced to give birth on floor of Macomb County, Michigan jail cell

By Nick Rodriguez
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An incident that took place last year, only recently made public, in the Macomb County Jail in Mount Clemens, Michigan is the latest in a string of events that has shed light on some of the harsh realities of life for the working class in suburban Detroit and similar communities throughout the US.

Jessica Preston was forced to give birth to her son on the dirty floor of a jail cell on March 20, 2016 after being denied proper medical attention by the detention facility's nurse.

Jessica, who was eight months pregnant, had been pulled over the previous week on a street in Warren, Michigan for a rosary hanging from her car's rear-view mirror--a supposed obstruction of vision. This tactic of making traffic stops for minor infractions is used by police as an arbitrary means to fish for more significant charges in order to collect money from fines and fees.

In this case the police tactic worked. Preston was driving on a suspended license for failure to pay a speeding ticket. She was arrested and sent before Judge Suzanne L. Faunce who set her bond at a staggering \$10,000. Unable to pay, Jessica was sent to jail for 14 days to await her court hearing.

On her fifth day in jail, she complained of labor pains and requested medical attention. She was escorted to see the nurse on duty around 7:30 am. The nurse did not believe her and sent her back to the cell block where she was assigned.

Later around 11:30 am she made a second request for medical attention. After being escorted to the nurse she was called a liar, threatened with additional charges and sent back to her cell.

By around 1 pm Jessica was in great pain with blood dripping down her leg. Despite clearly being in desperate need of medical attention she was forced to collect her things and carry them down to a cell near

the medical area.

After laying down for a short time she screamed in pain for the nurse. When the nurse arrived the baby was crowning. The thin mattress was pulled off the cot and placed on the floor where she gave birth at 2:41pm.

While surveillance video from the jail has corroborated every detail of Preston's horrifying ordeal, Macomb County Sheriff Tony Wikersham has acknowledged no wrongdoing, stating, "Everything that my staff did and that the medical staff did was within procedures."

Preston and her newborn son, Elijah, were then transported to the McLaren Macomb hospital, a mere three minutes' drive away. Elijah was 17 inches long and weighed less than five pounds.

Despite having just given birth under the worst circumstances, Preston remained in police custody, the father and other family members not allowed to see her or Elijah until the following day.

After two more days in the hospital, Judge Matthew P. Sabaugh sent Jessica back to the Macomb County Jail to continue waiting on her court hearing. Elijah was sent home with the father.

When the time came for the court hearing, the judge released Preston on time served.

This disturbing incident comes after two deaths at the same jail in recent years due to lack of medical care.

David Stojcevski died on June 27, 2014 due to complications from a 17-day withdrawal from a doctor-prescribed medication. He was serving a 30-day sentence for failure to pay traffic tickets.

Jennifer Meyers died about one year before that on July 7, 2013 from a virus that turned into sepsis. She was serving a 30-day sentence for failure to pay child support.

In all three cases minor fines led to incarceration in

substandard conditions with grossly inadequate medical care.

This jail is not a CIA torture chamber or a black site in the Middle East, but sits in a predominantly white, working-class community on the northeast border of Detroit.

Macomb County received much attention nationally during the 2016 presidential election and its immediate aftermath as a bellwether for white, working-class voters having gone to then Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump.

Following the election, Macomb County was in the news again as a collapsed sewer line caused a sinkhole on December 24, 2016 leading to the evacuation of dozens of homes.

As is the case throughout the US, the conditions facing this working-class community are not those of prosperity and privilege, but oppression and decay.

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