

Workshop on Organizing State Campaigns on Solitary Confinement

Presentation created by:

Laurie Jo Reynolds, Tamms Year Ten (TY10)

Natalie Holbrook, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

Heather Rice, National Religious Campaign Against Torture
(NRCAT)

- **B. FIRST STEPS + RESEARCH—40 minutes (Natalie Holbrook)**

FIRST STEPS

- *To start a campaign in your state, you have to have a certain threshold of knowledge about how solitary is being used. But, you don't have to know everything. A lot can be discovered in the course of the campaign and that can be the first goal of your campaign.*

1. Organizations

- If you are lucky, there is already an organization in your state gathering information about solitary—and willing to share it with you or willing to help invest in research.

Such organizations could include:

- Prison reform organizations/prison monitors
- American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) branches that have a prison project
- ACLU or other rights-based organizations like MacArthur Justice
- Mental health or disability advocates
- Organizations that provide legal aid to prisoners or poor people
- Organizations that collect correspondence with prisoners because of medical cases, etc.
- Re-entry organizations or prison ministries
- Better government associations
- Prisoner family member organizations are a huge source of information

TRADE SECRETS:

- 1) Many organizations will find a way to make this part of their mission if you can convince them at a gut level that isolation is wrong or convince them that it really does affect them.

TRADE SECRETS:

- 2) Some mental health advocates won't support this issue because their members work in the prisons or because their focus is people on the outside, not people in prison.

TRADE SECRETS:

- 3) Unfortunately, some of the public will not be persuaded by human rights or moral arguments. That's why it's essential to also highlight the practical arguments against solitary confinement: the cost, recidivism rates, etc. If you can get "unlikely" voices to say these points (groups that typically lobby for efficiency or people working within the prison system) that can be even more persuasive.

2. Litigation

There may be lawsuits already filed on some aspect of the issue. Litigation has benefits and limitations:

- There will be research behind litigation.
- Lawsuits usually cover such a narrow issue that even winning can bring very limited gains.
- A lawsuit could be amplified by a legislative campaign that covers all the issues.
- Winning takes years, even a decade. Losing can set bad precedent (ie, finding supermax confinement constitutional). And, “winning” is nuanced. If it is a settlement, who enforces, for how long, etc? Examples: A lawsuit was the impetus for the incentives in segregation program in MI. In Illinois, there was a successful lawsuit on due process, but not on the criteria by which someone is sent to Tamms Supermax.

TRADE SECRET:

- 1) Some attorneys do want to work with grassroots campaigns and other advocates. Many don't. Some will not support you or share information.

ELEMENTS OF RESEARCH

- *If there is no organization in your state, then you can do your own research.*

1. Picking your purview

Selecting a target population in solitary (vs. general policies) may be a strategic decision in your state based on:

- a) what resources and access you have
- b) what the people doing the work feel most passionately about
- c) what the political or social climate demands (i.e, if there is a proposed closure of a supermax, then that would be a great place to put your energy!)

- 
-
- There may be an organization focusing on one aspect of the problem, but you are drawn to another. (E.g., There may be someone advocating to keep youth out of solitary, but they aren't looking at the special housing units inside the maximum security prisons.)

TRADE SECRETS:

- If you do select one group of people or one angle for strategic reasons, it is important not to advance your issue by diminishing the humanity or suffering of another group. Instead, open the door. Make it clear why solitary is wrong for everyone. If another group is doing this to you, talk to them about it. For some advocates, doing this is second nature and they may not realize it.

DISCUSSION:

Reasons for picking Tamms Supermax in our Illinois campaign:

- We described it as a symbol of what is wrong with the entire system. We chose to spend 79 million dollars to build an isolation chamber.
- Very discrete population—warehoused for a decade.
- It was conceptually clear to the public and the policies were unique to that group.



2. Finding out who is in isolation (& why they are there)

- a. Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA) requests

SAMPLE FOIA request from MI

**American Friends
Service Committee**

Quaker values in action

November 24, 2008

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

PROGRAM:

1414 HILL STREET

ANN ARBOR, MI 48104

PHONE: (734) 761-8183

FAX: (734) 761-6022

PRISONER PHONE:

(734) 761-9796

PENNY RYDER

DIRECTOR

PRYDER@AFSC.ORG

NATALIE HOLBROOK

PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

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WWW.PRISONERADVOCACY.ORG

WWW.AFSC.ORG

REGIONAL OFFICE:

637 DEARBORN ST.

3RD FLOOR

CHICAGO, IL 60605

Records
Industrial Park Drive
P. O. Box 600
Munising, MI 49862

RE: FOIA REQUEST

To Whom It May Concern:

Pursuant to the Michigan Freedom of Information Act, MCLA 15.231 et. seq., I am requesting copies of the following public records:
Copies of critical incident reports from November 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 2008 involving [REDACTED]

Please contact me with cost of processing the above request and forward records to the above address.

Peace With Justice,



Natalie Holbrook, Co-Director
Criminal Justice Program

PR/

file

SAMPLE Michigan Critical Incident Report—obtained via FOIA

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

4835-0571 7/91

CRITICAL INCIDENT PARTICIPANT REPORT

CAJ-571

Name of Reporting Employee (print or type) Last, First, Middle ██████████ II			Incident Number EMF 048-12
Clock Number 1070904	Date of Report 7/19/12	Date of Incident 7/19/12	Job Title C/O E-9
Time of Incident (Military) 1815	Location of Incident 200 Building Chow Hall	Role in Incident Transportation Officer	

INCIDENT DESCRIPTION – Briefly describe what you saw, heard, said, and did during the incident:

On 7/19/12, at approximately 1820 hours, I reported to Control Center and was assigned to a transportation detail. This transportation detail consisted of Officer ██████████, Officer ██████████, and myself. Prisoner ██████████ was to be transported to Munising Memorial Hospital (MMH) for treatment of seizure and chest pain. I arrived on the northside of the 200 building where I conducted a search of prisoner ██████████ and applied transportation restraints. The restraints consisted of handcuff restraints with black box and chain and leg iron restraints. Alger county EMS arrived at gate 3 where EMS staff placed prisoner ██████████ on a gurney and placed him in the back of the ambulance. Officer ██████████ was in the rear of the ambulance with me in the front. Officer ██████████ provided chase vehicle escort. We departed the facility and arrived at MMH. Prisoner ██████████ was escorted in to the emergency room where treatment began immediately. Emergency Room staff removed on Taser probe which was secured in a contain while the other Taser probe remained in the facial tissue. It was determined by medical staff that prisoner ██████████ would require additional treatment at Marquette General Hospital (MGH). Alger County EMS arrived at MMH to transporst prisoner ██████████ to MGH. At 2133 hours, I was relieved by Officer Albright and I returned to the facility.

Water restriction request and approval—obtained via FOIA

WATER MANAGEMENT CELL PLACEMENT REQUEST FORM

Prisoner Name [REDACTED] Number [REDACTED] Lock 5-245

Description of Incident:

Prisoner [REDACTED] plugged his toilet and then repeatedly flushed it causing water to over flow out of the toilet, into his cell, and then out into the hallway of 5-B Upper.

Requesting supervisory staff member name and signature Sgt. Bush

Date: 9-27-07

RUM/ARUS/SHIFT COMMAND APPROVAL YES X NO _____

SIGNATURE [Signature] DATE _____

ADW HOUSING NOTIFIED ADW PRATT via email _____ DATE 9-27-07

DEPUTY WARDEN NOTIFIED via phone and email _____ DATE 9-27-07

REVIEW DATE _____

cc: Wardens Office
Deputy Wardens Office (via e-mail)
ADW'S (via e-mail)
Housing Unit
Health Care
Control Center

Mouth restraint approval— obtained via MI FOIA

SUBJECT: MOUTH RESTRAINT RESTRICTION

Prisoner's Name: _____ 4-213
Number: _____ Lock: _____

On 10-24-07, the above named prisoner was involved in the following behavior:
(NOTE: Check as appropriate):

_____ Biting (_____)
Name of Victim(s)

X Spitting (RUO _____ and C/O _____) _____ at 1433 hrs.
_____ at 1443 hrs.
Name of Victim(s)

A misconduct report specifically relating to the conduct indicated above has been written. This Prisoner has demonstrated biting and/or spitting behavior toward staff. Therefore, I recommend this prisoner be required to wear a face mask during out-of-cell movement per the provisions of PD-04.05.112 "Managing Disruptive Prisoners". Approval for use of a mouth restraint shall be effective only for up to a maximum of 24 hours at a time.

Approved Denied _____ Expiration Date: 10/31/07

Deputy Warden's Signature: _____ Today's Date: 10/29/07

Review/Documentation of 24 hour approval:

RACE BREAKDOWN AS OF MAY 31, 2011

	TOTAL	WHITE		BLACK		INDIAN		MEXICAN		ORIENTAL		OTHER		NO-INFO
ALGER CORR FACILITY	845	215	25.4	609	72.0	4	.4	14	1.6	2	.2	1	.1	
BARAGA MAX FACILITY	846	227	26.8	608	71.8	6	.7	4	.4	1	.1			
BELLAMY CREEK CORR	1837	795	43.2	1000	54.4	20	1.0	9	.4	5	.2	8	.4	
BROOKS CORR FACILIT	1229	521	42.3	680	55.3	8	.6	9	.7	4	.3	5	.4	
CARSON CITY COR FAC	2504	1213	48.4	1229	49.0	20	.8	34	1.3	3	.1	3	.1	
CHAS. EGLER REC CTR	1288	619	48.0	638	49.5	12	.9	4	.3	4	.3	5	.3	
CHIPPEWA CORR FACIL	2234	817	36.5	1365	61.1	25	1.1	22	.9	2		3	.1	
COOPER ST. CORR FAC	1740	873	50.1	825	47.4	21	1.2	17	.9	2	.1	2	.1	
COTTON CORR. FACIL.	1874	893	47.6	927	49.4	18	.9	17	.9	6	.3	11	.5	
FEMALE CAMPS														
FEMALE CORR CENTERS														
FEMALE ELEC MONITOR														
FLORENCE CRANE CORR														
FORENSIC CENTER														
GUS HARRISON COR FA	2307	1258	54.5	996	43.1	23	1.0	16	.6	10	.4	4	.1	
HIAWATHA CORR FACIL														
HURON VALLEY MEN														
HURON VALLEY WOMEN	1851	996	53.8	805	43.4	27	1.4	7	.3	6	.3	6	.3	
INTENSE REENTRY FEM	4	1	25.0	3	75.0									
INTENSE REENTRY MEN	210	79	37.6	125	59.5	1	.4					3	1.4	
IONIA MAX. CORR.	660	212	32.1	428	64.8	6	.9	10	1.5	2	.3	2	.3	
KINROSS CORR FAC	1867	849	45.4	965	51.6	16	.8	19	1.0	10	.5	6	.3	
LAKELAND CORR FAC	1368	641	46.8	692	50.5	10	.7	17	1.2	4	.2	4	.2	
MACOMB CORR FACILIT	1247	526	42.1	694	55.6	7	.5	6	.4	6	.4	6	.4	
MALE CAMPS	1			1	100.0									
MALE CORR CENTERS														
MALE ELEC MONITOR														
MARQUETTE BRANCH PR	1139	501	43.9	608	53.3	13	1.1	8	.7	3	.2	6	.5	
MAXEY	134	73	54.4	58	43.2	1	.7	1	.7	1	.7			
MICH TRAINING UNIT	1218	552	45.3	639	52.4	6	.4	15	1.2	3	.2	3	.2	
CENTRAL MICH CORR.	2468	1144	46.3	1270	51.4	32	1.3	11	.4	6	.2	5	.2	
MOUND CORR FACILITY	1018	294	28.8	712	69.9	1	.1	6	.5	4	.3	1	.1	
MUSKEGON CORR FAC														
NEWBERRY CORR FACIL	1063	313	29.4	710	66.7	10	.9	20	1.8	6	.5	4	.3	
NON-DEPT. PRISONS														
OAKS CORR FACILITY	1088	417	38.3	642	59.0	11	1.0	11	1.0	3	.2	4	.3	
OJIBWAY CORR FACIL	1063	449	42.2	592	55.6	8	.7	8	.7	2	.1	4	.3	
PARNALL CORR FACIL	1638	912	55.6	700	42.7	13	.7	8	.4			5	.3	
PINE RIVER CORR FAC														
PUGSLEY CORR FACIL	1333	749	56.1	545	40.8	22	1.6	12	.9	3	.2	2	.1	
REFORMATORY	1282	460	35.8	794	61.9	7	.5	15	1.1	4	.3	2	.1	
RYAN CORR FACILITY	1030	316	30.6	701	68.0			6	.5	2	.1	1	.1	
SAGINAW CORR FACILI	1452	594	40.9	820	56.4	15	1.0	11	.7	5	.3	7	.4	
SAI FEMALE PROGRAM	30	21	70.0	7	23.3	2	6.6							
SAI MALE INTAKE	166	118	71.0	46	27.7							2	1.2	
ST. LOUIS CORR FAC	1140	321	28.1	798	70.0	7	.6	7	.6	2	.1	5	.4	
THUMB CORR. FACIL.	955	331	34.6	587	61.4	10	1.0	16	1.6	4	.4	5	.5	
W. SHORELINE CORR FA	1272	680	53.4	568	44.6	11	.8	10	.7			3	.2	

INST-TOTAL

43401

18980

43.7

23387

53.8

393

.9

370

.8

115

.2

128

.2

PAROLE-TOTALS

19464

9793

50.3

9214

47.3

149

.7

194

1.0

51

.2

63

.3

REPORT-TOTALS

62865

28773

45.7

22591

51.8

542

.8

564

.8

166

.4

191

.5



2. Finding out who is in isolation

- a. FOIA requests
- b. Surveys to people in prison

Section of filled out survey from person in segregation in MI

Name (Last, First, M.I.):	[REDACTED]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Prisoner#:	[REDACTED]	Age: 49
Religion	<input type="checkbox"/> Nation of Islam <input type="checkbox"/> Moorish Science Temple <input type="checkbox"/> Christian <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____				
Ethnicity:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> African American <input type="checkbox"/> Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian <input type="checkbox"/> Asian American <input type="checkbox"/> Native American <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____				
What happened that facilitated your placement into segregation?					
Provide a brief description and timeline of the event/s surrounding your departure to segregation. <i>I am doing detention segregation for 2033 and I have done 20 years in segregation. I was at LMP before racist officers still harassing me, trying to murder me, in segregation on detention</i>					
Does your version of the reason for placement into segregation differ from the MDOC's reasons for placement into segregation? <i>no reasons or justification to punish me and discriminated against me to continual me on detention until I die, racist cover up, mental ill / prisoners</i>					
How long have you been in segregation? <i>20 years, straight</i>					
Were you given a notice of intent (NOI) before being placed in segregation? <i>The hearing conduct was false to justify why don't I get a chance</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No					
If yes, please send us a copy of the NOI.					
Have you ever been diagnosed with a mental illness? <i>W</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No					
If so, what mental illness? <i>mental ill / mental disorder / mental anger distress</i>					
<i>Bipolar disorder / panic disorder / learning disability (ADA)</i>					
Where did you receive the diagnosis? <i>I was gas by chemical agent at Baraga prison illegal, family members officers work here at LMP teaming up on me again trying to gas me again bad sinus diagnosis, injury in my nose always bloody!</i>					
Please list any known medications that you have taken in the past or that you are currently taking. <i>sinus pills</i>					

2. Finding out who is in isolation

- a. FOIA requests
- b. Surveys to people in prison
- c. Hold hearings in the legislature (these can be subject-matter hearings)

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- d. Ask legislators to submit information requests or request tours of segregation units in state prisons or jails
- e. Interview family members and people who were formerly incarcerated

2. Cataloging and organizing prisoner correspondence

- Look for trends in the data you collect. What is the average length of time people spend in segregation? Is a history of mental illness common? What offenses were the most common justifications for placing people in segregation?

TRADE SECRETS:

- ① 1) Have a processing form that matches your database so entering data is easy.
- ② 2) Sometimes you have to revisit because new data develops the more information you collect.

Michigan database screen shot

Preview File Edit View Go Tools Bookmarks Window Help

Correspondence (AFSC Database Server)

49 / 27714 Found (Unsorted)

Records Show All New Record Delete Record Find Sort

Layout: Data Entry page 2 View As: Preview

Response Codes -starting 2012

<input type="checkbox"/> HC = Health Care	<input type="checkbox"/> D = Work	<input type="checkbox"/> K = Security Class.	<input type="checkbox"/> TY = Thank You
<input type="checkbox"/> MH = Mental Health	<input type="checkbox"/> E = Education	<input type="checkbox"/> L = Legal	<input type="checkbox"/> Z = Other
<input type="checkbox"/> ADP = Assaultive Offender Program	<input type="checkbox"/> F = Property	<input type="checkbox"/> M = Mail	<input type="checkbox"/> PRO = Procedure
<input type="checkbox"/> SOP = Sex Offender Program	<input type="checkbox"/> G = Grievances	<input type="checkbox"/> P = Phones	
<input type="checkbox"/> A = Parole	<input type="checkbox"/> H = Misconduct	<input type="checkbox"/> T = Transfer	
<input type="checkbox"/> B = Programming	<input type="checkbox"/> I = Info Request	<input type="checkbox"/> V = Visitations	
<input type="checkbox"/> C = Misconduct	<input type="checkbox"/> J = Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> SEG = SEG	

Key Word

Response Codes -pre 2012

<input type="checkbox"/> A = Assault	<input type="checkbox"/> J=Me
<input type="checkbox"/> C = Conds. of Confinement	<input type="checkbox"/> L = I
<input type="checkbox"/> E = Education/Therapy	<input type="checkbox"/> M = f
<input type="checkbox"/> G = Goodtime/Time Calc.	<input type="checkbox"/> P = P
<input type="checkbox"/> H = Health	<input type="checkbox"/> R =
<input type="checkbox"/> I = Info Request	

Key Word

Print Notes & Memo Go To Page 1

NOTES

Status:

Print Memo Print Envelope Go To Page 1

Resp. Date: 5/22/2012

memo subject: Seg issues

From: Stephanie Garbano, Intern

Response

Mr. Mays,

I recently received your letters regarding your problems filing grievances on staff and your problems within the segregation environment (specifically the [ISP] program). These are two issues that we've received a lot of complaints about within our office, and are trying to do the best we can to compile data on both, and create a case for their improvement within MDQC. If you can, please fill out both questionnaires and send them back to us... we would be most appreciative of your feedback and input. Include the stuff about you not being able to exhaust your grievances within the grievance

100 Browse

DISCUSSION:

- The goal is to learn both the facts and the narratives about how people got there. Most campaigns will want to tell stories about the people affected.

3. Learning the policies.

- *Obtaining the laws, administrative rules, administrative/policy directives, and warden's bulletins.*



④ **4. Meeting with department about their policies, procedures and philosophy**

- ④ **In some states, officials in the Department of Corrections will be willing to hear your concerns about the use of solitary confinement. If this is the case in your state, you should use the opportunity to build rapport with the Department. The relationship may allow you to avoid the long and difficult process of utilizing legislation, litigation, etc. Further, if you make progress with officials, they can implement new policies immediately.**



TRADE SECRETS:

- 1) Come prepared – demonstrate your concerns are based on evidence you have collected through FOIA, surveys, interviews, etc.
- 2) Consider who in your coalition will make the best messenger to meet with corrections officials – for example, sending a group that has or regularly sues the Department may result in a less open dialogue than sending members of the religious community.
- 3) Consider your language. For example, using “segregation” instead of “solitary confinement” with corrections officials has pros and cons: Using “solitary confinement” may send a message of disrespect to officials and/or may result in a semantics debate that may or may not be the best use of your time.

-
- **C. ELEMENTS OF LEGISLATIVE CAMPAIGN—30 minutes (Laurie Jo Reynolds)**

-
- ① **1. Identifying legislators to educate/working with legislators**













Right Side of History

Choose Your Year Sponsors
Rep. Jolie Hamos

Thank you for your principled and courageous actions against the far-right agenda in Florida at Florida Legislative Council.

And thank you for a great night of conversation and inspiration. There is a lot of work to be done. Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to Florida's future.

Respectfully,
[Signature]

[Name]
[Title]

-
- ① **1. Identifying legislators to educate/working with legislators**
 - ② **2. Holding hearings**







-
- ① **1. Identifying legislators to educate/working with legislators**
 - ② **2. Holding hearings**
 - ③ **3. Introducing legislation**

JUST IN: PLEASE ATTEND!

**PRESS CONFERENCE
ANNOUNCING
BILL HB 6651**

*SPONSORED BY REPRESENTATIVES
JULIE HAMOS, KAREN A. YARBROUGH,
EDDIE WASHINGTON, ELGA L. JEFFERIES,
ARTHUR L. TURNER*

**SUNDAY, MAY 25, 2008
JAMES R. THOMPSON CENTER**

Blue Room, 15th floor, 100 W. Randolph, Chicago IL 60601

NOON

After months of hard work, we now have a bill that will help the prisoners at TAMMS. This is very exciting development and it just happened this week! It is crucial to have as many people as possible come to the press conference. It should last about an hour. Come show your support. Tell your friends and family. Wear red! This will be your last great act of support this session! We promise! www.yearten.org

TAMMS
YEAR TEN 



-
- ① **1. Identifying legislators to educate/working with legislators**
 - ② **2. Holding hearings**
 - ③ **3. Introducing legislation**
 - ④ **4. Holding policy summits with legislators and Department**



-
- ① **1. Identifying legislators to educate/working with legislators**
 - ② **2. Holding hearings**
 - ③ **3. Introducing legislation**
 - ④ **4. Holding policy summits with legislators and Department**
 - ⑤ **5. Engaging press**

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NEWS & COMMENTARY » FEATURE

April 24, 2008

Hell in a Cell

Tamms supermax prison was built to punish disruptive inmates with temporary solitary confinement. Yet Reginald Berry spent the better part of eight years there—and he was luckier than many.

By [Jeffrey Felsman](#)

[Feature archives »](#)

THERE WERE 460 DIME-SIZE HOLES IN THE DOOR OF

Reginald Berry's cell at Tamms Correctional Center. He knows because he counted them over and over. The door also had a slot for his meals to travel through, but other than that it was solid steel, and the view through the holes was of a concrete wall. Between 4 and 4:30 AM the electronic door to his pod would whir and clang, signaling that breakfast was on the way—boiled eggs on Monday, farina on Tuesday, cold cereal on Wednesday, etc. Breakfast was followed by a sea of time. He had no job, no phone calls, and no visual contact with other prisoners. But perhaps worst of all, he had no idea how long it would all last.

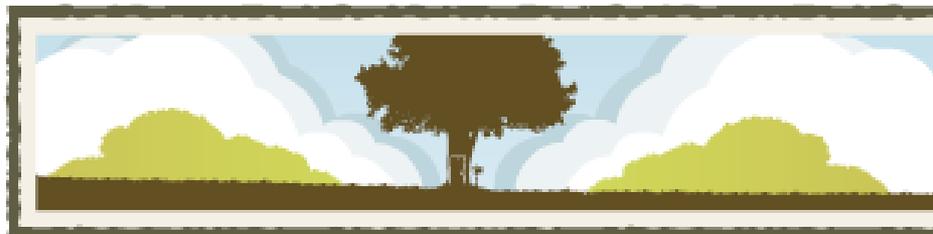
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- Putting
- Taking
- Out of
- Land
- Letter



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StopMax: The Fight Against Supermax Prisons Heats Up

By [Jessica Pupovac](#), [AlterNet](#). Posted August 11, 2008.

With former prisoners and their families at the helm, the movement to abolish supermax prisons and end solitary confinement is gaining ground.

Tools

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"When I left Angola," says Robert King Wilkerson, who spent 29 years in solitary confinement in Louisiana's notorious Angola State Penitentiary for a crime he was later found innocent of, "I said, 'I may be free of Angola, but Angola will never be free of me.'" Since his release seven years ago, the vow has taken him to rallies, churches and talk shows across the globe. Earlier this summer, it brought him to Philadelphia for the first-ever StopMax Conference, where he told stories, analyzed the state of the American prison

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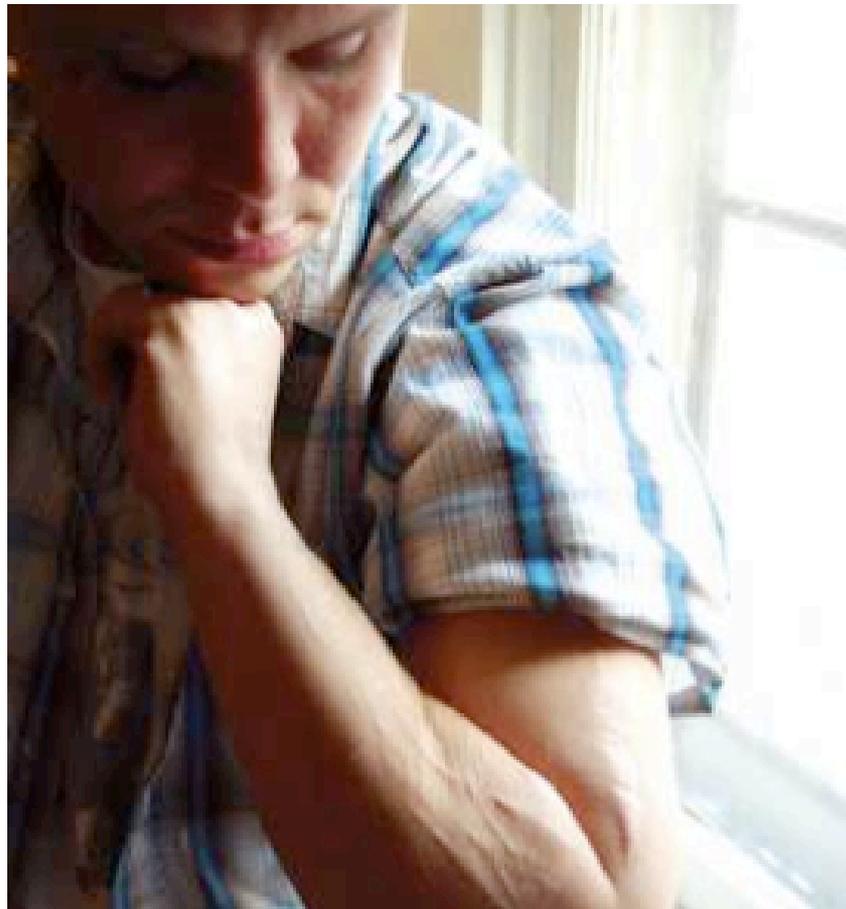


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Investigative Series on Tamms

**by George Pawlaczyk
and Beth Hundsdorfer**

Belleville News-Democrat



Trapped in Tamms: In Illinois' only supermax facility, inmates are in cells 23 hours a day

Faygle Fields' escape from years of solitary confinement on the toughest wing of Illinois' only state-run supermax prison began with food. He claimed there were rat droppings in his rice, bugs in his beans and poison in his Tylenol.

Guards at the supermax Tamms Correctional Center in the southern tip of Illinois told Fields to cut it out. He wasn't going to fake his way to the easier prison mental health unit. It was all an act, they said. He had tried it before.

-  **STORY:** [Trapped in Tamms: Inmates in Illinois' only supermax prison face battle proving mistreatment](#)
-  **STORY:** [View from the top: Fixing Tamms supermax](#)
-  **STORY:** [Tamms inmate: Dangerous gang member, or a man who is mentally ill?](#)
-  **STORY:** [Plaintiff's plight -- 'almost impossible for judicial system to untangle these things'](#)
-  **STORY:** [A tale of two prisons: Tamms vs. Alcatraz](#)



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OPINION

Sunday, Aug. 02, 2009 | [Comments \(44\)](#) | [Recommend \(7\)](#)

Why Tamms matters to all

Many people who read today's front-page story about the Tamms supermax prison won't have much empathy for Faygie Fields, Chris Marcum and the other inmates. So what if murderers and violent criminals are kept in solitary confinement for life? But Illinois residents should care -- if not for the inmates, then for themselves.

We're a nation that disavows cruel and unusual punishment of criminals, and m

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Belleville, IL



Cloudy

Low: 51°
 Now: 64°F High: 71°
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ONLINE CONTENT - ONLINE EXTRAS

Sunday, Aug. 02, 2009 | [Comments \(8\)](#) | [Recommend \(7\)](#)

Tamms inmate: Dangerous gang member, or a man who is mentally ill?

BY GEORGE PAWLACZYK AND BETH HUNSDORFER - News-Democrat

Joseph Herman wore his black hair to his shoulders and dark beard down to his chest when he was led, handcuffed and shackled, into court within a ring of six deputies.

Observers said he certainly looked like what prison and police investigators called him -- a dangerous gang member.

At a sentencing on July 19, 2007, in Livingston County Circuit Court, the prosecutor said Herman's crimes of threatening public officials by letter, including the governor and his family and a judge, were carried out in "allegiance" to The Aryan Brotherhood, considered by experts to be one of the most-dangerous of prison gangs. Police reports show Herman told the Illinois State Police he was a member of the gang.

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[NEWS - TRAPPED IN TAMMS](#)Sunday, Sep. 13, 2009 | [Comments \(20\)](#) | [Recommend \(6\)](#)

Complaint: Tamms kept medications from inmate

Two weeks later, he died of blood ailment

BY GEORGE PAWLACZYK AND BETH HUNDSORFER - News-Democrat

Shortly before he died at the supermax Tamms Correctional Center, prisoner Robert [redacted] filed an official grievance complaining that his medications for mental illness were withheld as punishment for bad behavior.

But Illinois Department of Corrections spokeswoman Januari Smith denied that any medications would be withheld as punishment.

"Absolutely not," she said.

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NEWS - TRAPPED IN TAMMS

Sunday, Sep. 13, 2009 | [Comments \(20\)](#) | [Recommend \(6\)](#)

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Two weeks later, he died of blood ailment

BY GEORGE PAWLACZYK AND BETH HUNSDORFER - News-Democrat

Shortly before he died at the supermax Tamms Correctional Center, prisoner Robert... filed an official grievance complaining that his medications for mental illness were...

Tuesday, Sep. 15, 2009 | [Comments \(4\)](#) | [Recommend \(2\)](#)

Senate panel to probe conditions at Tamms prison

Durbin leads subcommittee looking into mental illness

BY BETH HUNSDORFER AND GEORGE PAWLACZYK - News-Democrat

The U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law will begin... into a domestic human rights issue today with a hearing on mental illness... prompted in part by a News-Democrat series on the supermax Tamms...

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- ① **1. Identifying legislators to educate/working with legislators**
 - ② **2. Holding hearings**
 - ③ **3. Introducing legislation**
 - ④ **4. Holding policy summits with legislators and Department**
 - ⑤ **5. Engaging press**
 - ⑥ **6. Engaging other advocates--mental health, faith, reentry, prison reform, disability**



TAMMS:
What do we
get for the

interaction
no security
BAD
PUBLIC
POLICY

Pray for
Safety
of Prisoners

thank you
GOV. QUINN
for good faith
efforts to
REFORM TAMMS

A New
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HEALTH SU
mental health, treatment

TREATMENT
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- ⑦ **7. Meeting with Department about their policies, procedures and philosophy....**

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 - ⑧ **8. Arts and culture projects**
 - ⑨ *Working with letters, testimony, poetry, photography, music and performance!*

-
- **7. Meeting with Department about their policies, procedures and philosophy....**
 - **DISCUSSION:** Case study in Maryland.
 - **8. Arts and culture projects**
 - *Working with letters, testimony, poetry, photography, music and performance!*
 - **9. Working with attorneys and/or litigation**

TRADE SECRETS:

- 1) Use the testimony of those most directly affected. They can undo the myth of the “worst of the worst.” Once there is testimony, everyone can share.
- 2) Any art event can be made into a event on isolation. It is a universal subject.
- 3) No message should go into the ether. Always ask for follow up action.
- 4) Think strategically about how different representatives in your coalition can be used most effectively.

D. RESOURCES + PUBLIC EDUCATION— 10 minutes (Heather Rice)

- *If your state isn't lined up for a legislative campaign, then you can do public education to generate interest. Target your public education to groups or people who may be natural candidates for working on this issue.*

① 1. NRCAT

- Petition – www.nrcat.org/solitary
- *Torture in Your Backyard* – film screening and faith-based discussion guides available at www.nrcat.org/backyard
- Prison visits with clergy or congregation members

● 2. Solitary Watch –

www.solitarywatch.com

- **A web-based project aimed at bringing the widespread use of long-term solitary confinement out of the shadows and into the public square. Solitary Watch provides a centralized source of unfolding news, original reporting, firsthand accounts, and background research on solitary confinement in the United States.**

-
- **3. Photo Requests from Solitary**
 - **Tamms Year Ten (TY10), a Chicago-based activist group campaigning to close Tamms Supermax in Illinois asked scores of men in solitary, “If you could have one picture, what would it be?” The requests can be anything real or imagined and once made (photos taken by pro-bono photographers) the images are opportunities for prisoners to see what they want to, what they used to, or perhaps what they may never see again.**
 - **www.prisonphotography.org**

TRADE SECRETS:

- 1) Get people who don't know as much in touch with prisoners and their family members and then they will have someone to fight for. We all want to be part of a cause where we are helping real individuals. This gives tired people a reason to keep fighting.
- 2) Collecting testimony is a great start to building a campaign.
- 3) Writing letters is a great start to future advocacy.

DISCUSSION:

- In Illinois, we didn't have enough resources or will to start a campaign for years. We started the Tamms Poetry Committee to develop a constituency for this issue.

GOALS:

- 1. Discovering what stage people in the room are at and how states could move forward
- 2. Discussing potential roles for the diverse advocates in the room

STARTER QUESTIONS:

- ① 1. What organizations in my state are working on this?
- ② 2. Who is missing who could be working on this?
- ③ 3. What shared knowledge and interests do we have right now?
- ④ 4. What is a good plan for next steps?

QUESTIONS TO BRING BACK TO THE CONVENING:

- ① 1. How have we defined the problem?
- ② 2. What is our vision for an alternative?
- ③ 3. How can we work with the other groups?