

**National Religious Campaign Against Torture,
Solitary Watch and Tamms Year Ten** present

**A PRIMER ON
SOLITARY CONFINEMENT
IN THE UNITED STATES**

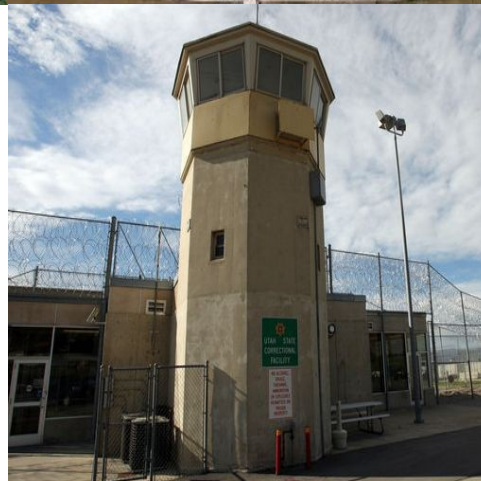
WHAT IS
SOLITARY CONFINEMENT?

WHAT IS **SOLITARY CONFINEMENT?**

A form of imprisonment
that **DEPRIVES PEOPLE
OF HUMAN CONTACT**



People are held in solitary confinement in **NEARLY EVERY PRISON** in the United States



And in supermax prisons
**DESIGNED FOR
ISOLATION**



Tamms supermax, Illinois. Photo: Chicago Tribune

People are **ALONE** in small concrete cells

People are **ALONE** in small concrete cells

FOR 22 TO 24 HOURS A DAY

There is **NO COMMUNAL ACTIVITY**

NO CLASSES

NO GROUP YARD

NO RELIGIOUS SERVICES

NO CONTACT VISITS

There is **NO COMMUNAL ACTIVITY**

NO CLASSES

NO GROUP YARD

NO RELIGIOUS SERVICES

NO CONTACT VISITS

Often **NO PHONE CALLS**



Food is **PUSHED THROUGH**
A SLOT in the door

Typically, someone in solitary only leaves the cell to shower



Photo: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Typically, someone in solitary
only leaves the cell to shower

Or **EXERCISE ALONE**
in a concrete pen



Photo: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

or a **CAGE**



Sometimes
there are **NO WINDOWS**



Sometimes
there are **NO WINDOWS**

Sometimes
there are **WINDOW SLITS**

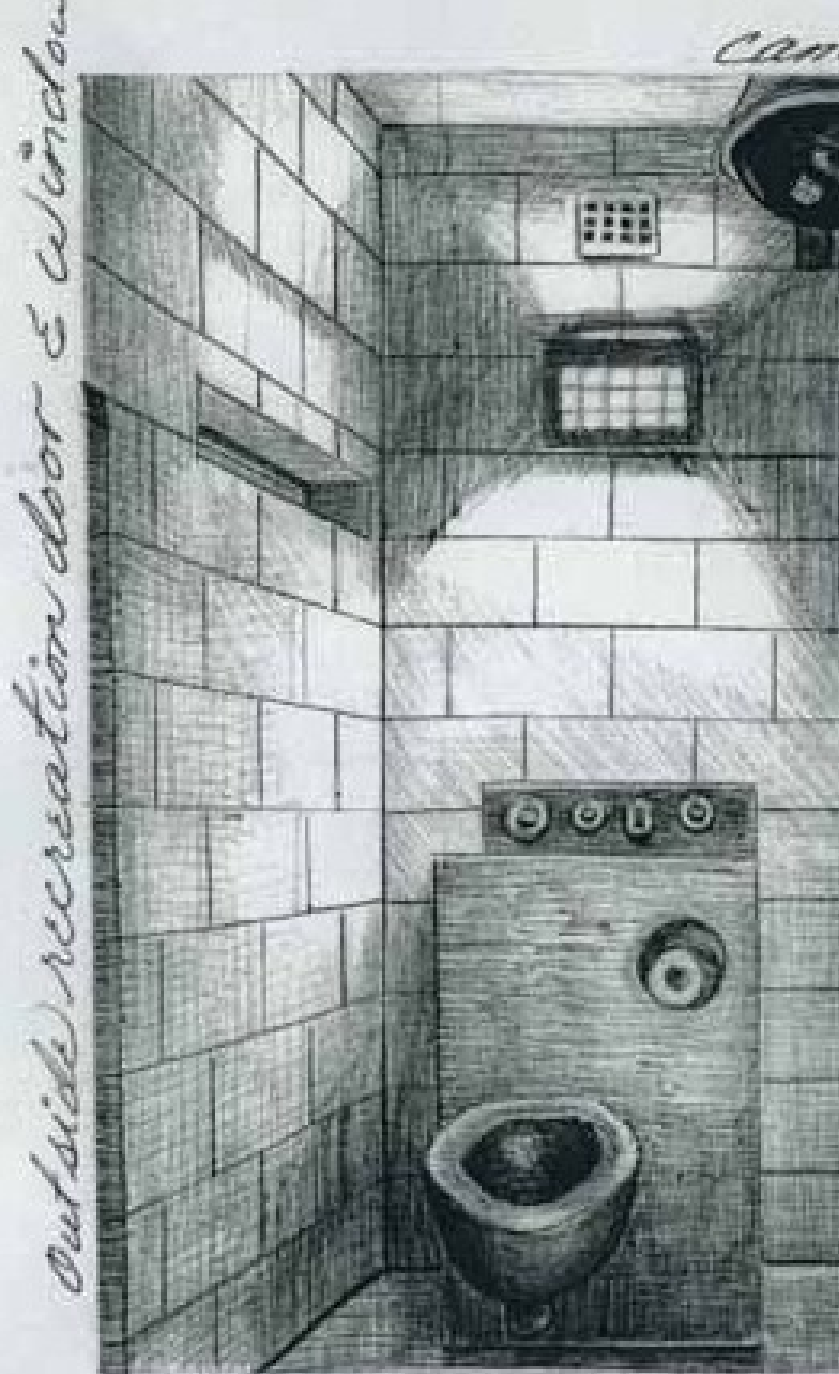


WHO

ENDS UP IN SOLITARY?



A SMALL NUMBER of people in solitary have committed violent acts in prison



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Some of them may require separation from the general population, and greater security measures, though **NOT ISOLATION**, which only worsens behavior and causes mental damage



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Some of them may require separation from the general population, and greater security measures, though **NOT ISOLATION** which only worsens behavior and causes mental damage

Most people are put in solitary for **NON-VIOLENT MISBEHAVIOR**, or because they are considered **“HIGH RISK PRISONERS”**

outside recreation door & window

camera

NO JUDGE OR JURY sentences people to solitary confinement

Drawing: Thomas Silverstein, held in solitary confinement for 31 years

Thomas Silverstein

outside recreation door & window

camera

NO JUDGE OR JURY sentences people to solitary confinement

The decision to put someone in solitary is made **SOLELY BY PRISON OFFICIALS**

Thomas Silverstein



COMMON REASONS
for placement in solitary confinement





Failure to obey
an order promptly

(New York)



Refusing to return
a **food tray**

(New York)



Testing positive
for **marijuana**

(New York)



Possession of an
excess quantity of
postage stamps

(New York)

Gang “validation”
based on **tattoos**
or **reading materials**

(California)



Failure to obey
an order promptly

(New York)



Possession of **five**
dollars or more
without authorization

(California)

Refusing to return
a **food tray**

(New York)



Testing positive
for **marijuana**

(New York)

Self-mutilation
or attempted
suicide for the
purpose of
manipulation

(California)



Possession of an
excess quantity of
postage stamps

(New York)



It's often the
MOST VULNERABLE
people who end up in solitary:

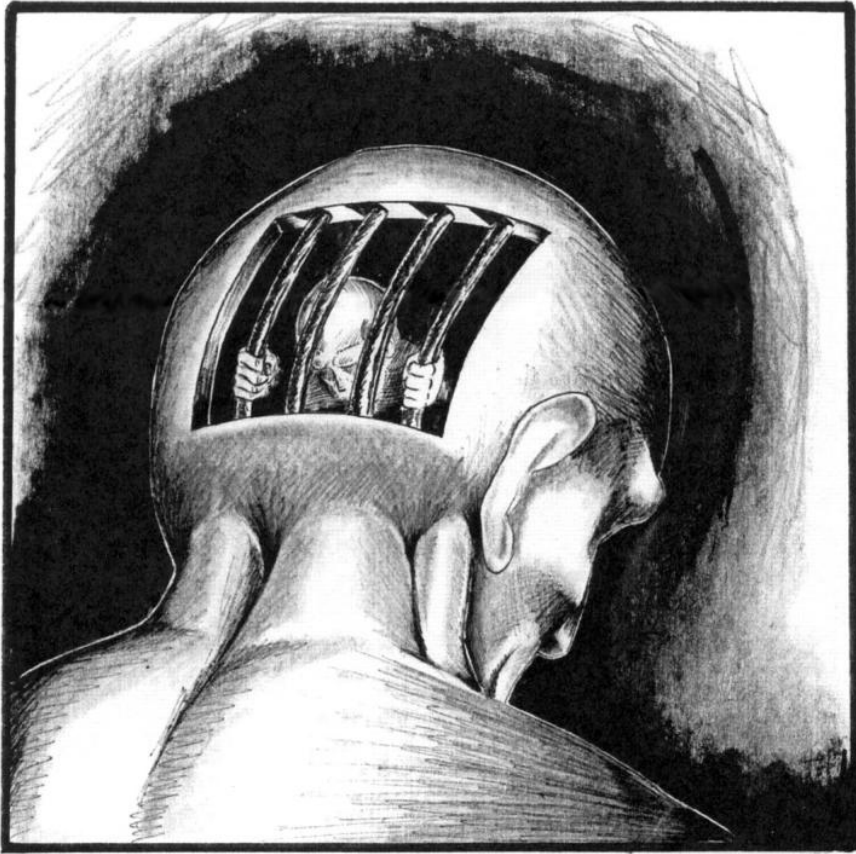


It's often the

MOST VULNERABLE

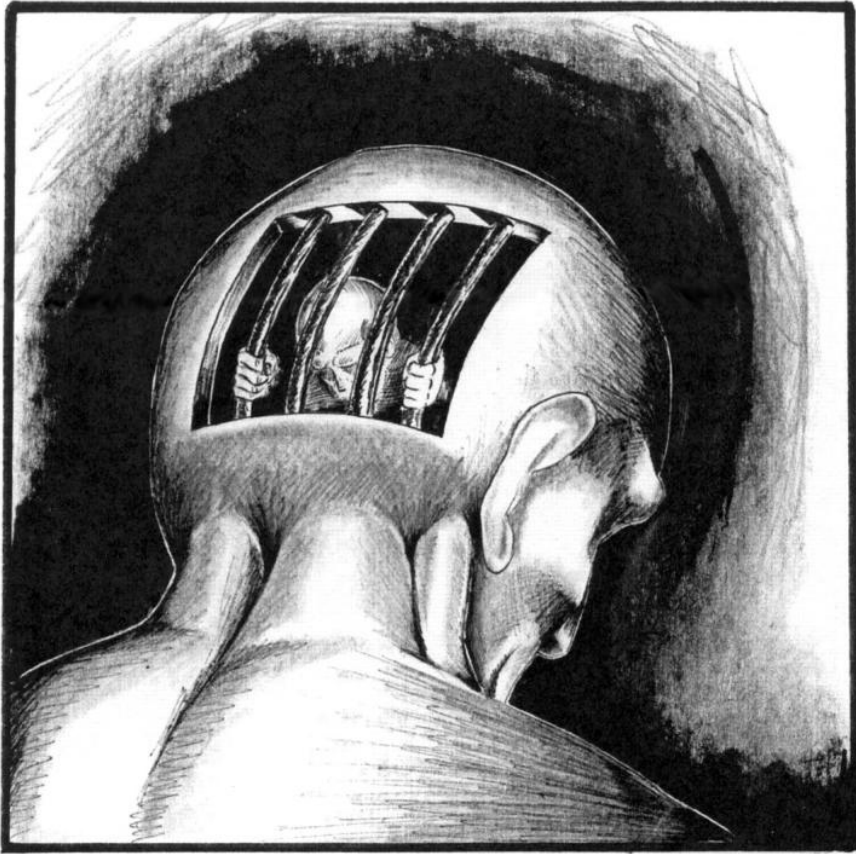
people who end up in solitary:

- **People with mental illness or developmental disabilities**
- **Children and youth**
- **LGBTQ individuals**
- **Non-English speakers**
- **Women who have been sexually assaulted by corrections officers**
- **Anyone who complains of abuse**



At least **ONE IN FOUR**
individuals in solitary has an
underlying **MENTAL ILLNESS**

Drawing: Todd (Hyung-Rae) Tarselli



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At least **ONE IN FOUR**
individuals in solitary has an
underlying **MENTAL ILLNESS**

In isolation,
most break down further

Treatment, if any, usually consists of **THERAPY CONDUCTED THROUGH FEEDING SLOTS**

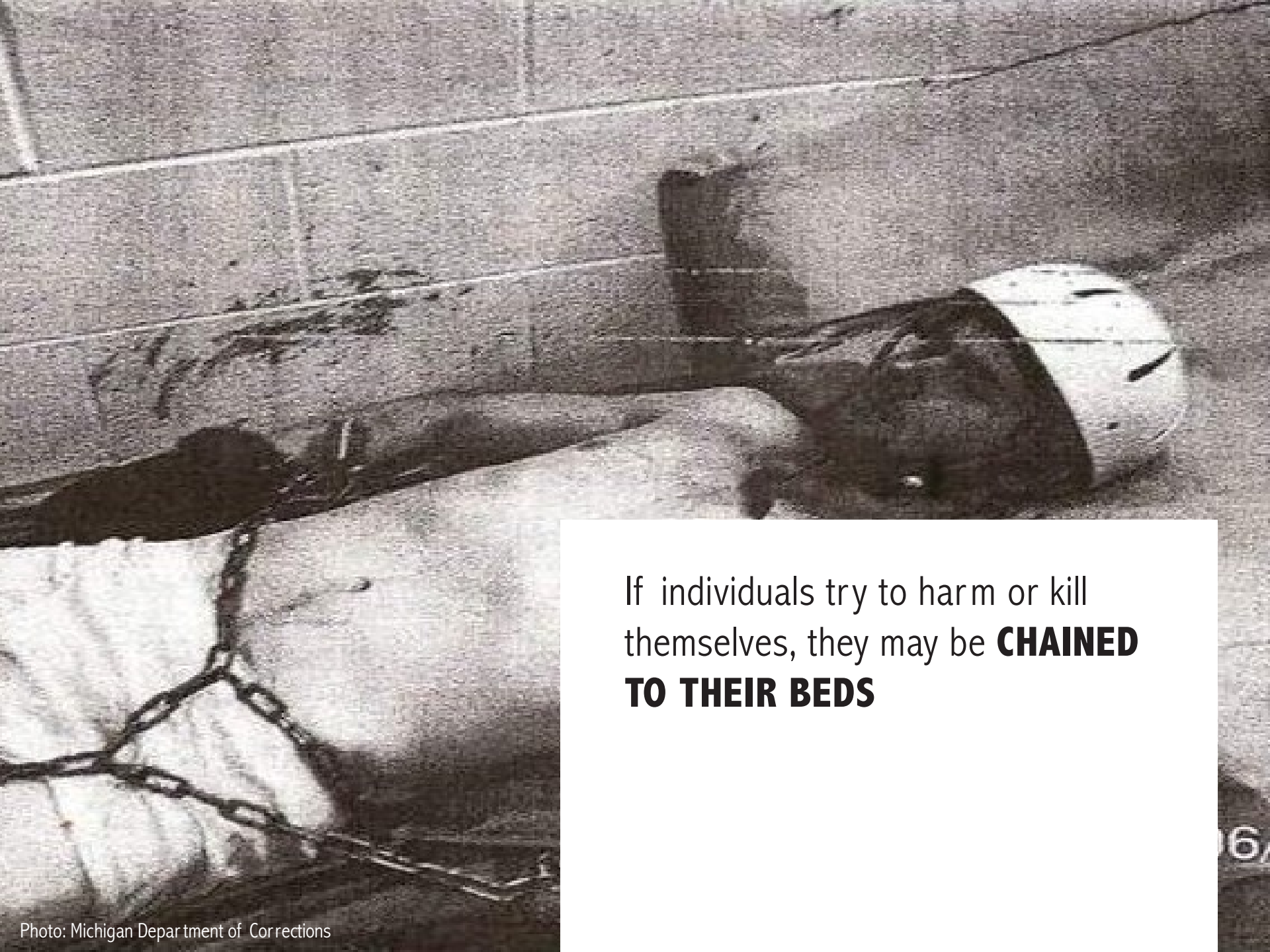


Drawing: Martin Vargas

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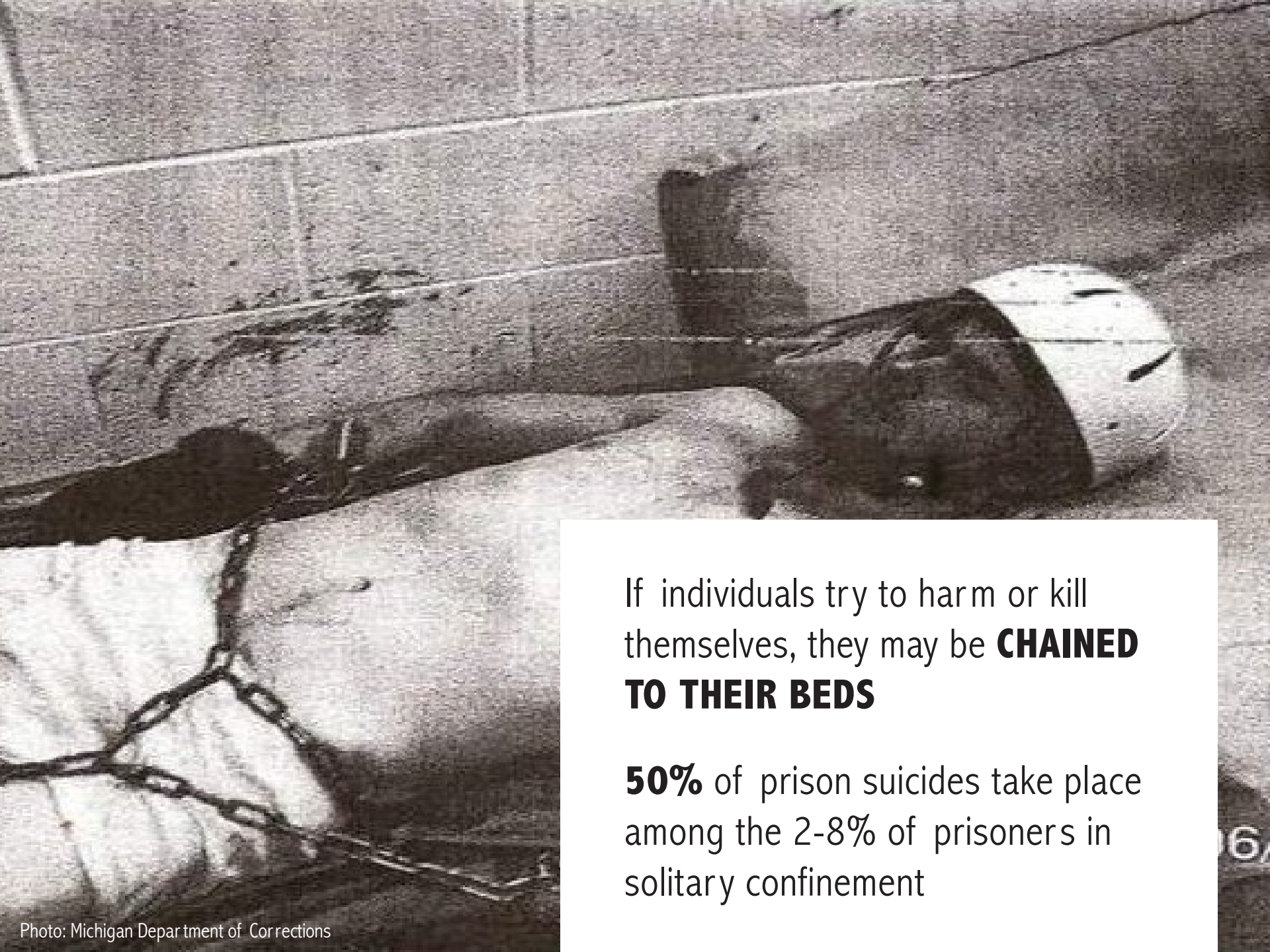
Or **“GROUP THERAPY”** sessions held in adjoining cages





If individuals try to harm or kill themselves, they may be **CHAINED TO THEIR BEDS**

6/



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50% of prison suicides take place among the 2-8% of prisoners in solitary confinement

6/

PEOPLE OF COLOR GET SENT TO SOLITARY IN
DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBERS

THOUSANDS OF KIDS UNDER 18

are held in solitary confinement



Photo: Richard Ross

THOUSANDS OF KIDS UNDER 18

are held in solitary confinement

They are put there as punishment or
“FOR THEIR OWN PROTECTION”



Photo: Richard Ross

At last count, there were **81,622**
PEOPLE in isolation in U.S. prisons
and jails



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AT LEAST 25,000 are in long-term solitary confinement in supermax prisons



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AT LEAST 25,000 are in long-term solitary confinement in super max prisons



In other democratic countries, the practice is rarely used

IS SOLITARY CONFINEMENT
TORTURE?

Our **SENSE OF SELF** is built and rebuilt **EVERY DAY**

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Our **IDENTITY** is built and rebuilt **EVERY DAY**

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Our **IDENTITY** is built and rebuilt **EVERY DAY**

Our **MENTAL HEALTH** is built and rebuilt

EVERY DAY

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Our **IDENTITY** is built and rebuilt **EVERY DAY**

Our **MENTAL HEALTH** is built and rebuilt

EVERY DAY

Largely from the
INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS

Our **SENSE OF SELF** is built and rebuilt **EVERY DAY**

Our **IDENTITY** is built and rebuilt **EVERY DAY**

Our **MENTAL HEALTH** is built and rebuilt

EVERY DAY

COMMUNICATION and **SENSORY STIMULATION** are psychological and physiological needs

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Largely from the
INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS

They are **FUNDAMENTAL**

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Our **MENTAL HEALTH** is built and rebuilt

EVERY DAY

COMMUNICATION and **SENSORY STIMULATION** are psychological and physiological needs

Largely from the
INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS

They are **FUNDAMENTAL**

We need them to create a
SENSE OF OURSELVES
in community with others

Our **SENSE OF SELF** is built and rebuilt **EVERY DAY**

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Our **MENTAL HEALTH** is built and rebuilt

EVERY DAY

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They are **FUNDAMENTAL**

We need them to create a
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in community with others

And **RECREATE** it!

Our **SENSE OF SELF** is built and rebuilt **EVERY DAY**

Our **IDENTITY** is built and rebuilt **EVERY DAY**

Our **MENTAL HEALTH** is built and rebuilt

EVERY DAY

COMMUNICATION and **SENSORY STIMULATION** are psychological and physiological needs

Largely from the
INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS

They are **FUNDAMENTAL**

They provide the **REFERENCE POINTS** we use to orient and **CALIBRATE** our senses and perceptions

We need them to create a
SENSE OF OURSELVES
in community with others

and **RECREATE** it!

Without these reference points, **OUR BRAINS GO INTO CRISIS**

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Which explains why people in solitary confinement experience:

Hallucinations

Paranoia

Despair

Panic

Psychosis

**Self-Mutilation and
Compulsion to suicide**

These are **EXPECTED
CONSEQUENCES** of isolation

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Paranoia
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Psychosis
Self-Mutilation and
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These are **EXPECTED CONSEQUENCES** of isolation

When people break down in solitary, it's **NOT** because they are **WEAK**

It's because they are

**SOCIAL
BEINGS**

It's because they are

SOCIAL BEINGS

Animals are **relational creatures**, who need contact to **maintain a sense of ourselves** and to **establish a sense of reality around us**





In 2011, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture called for a **GLOBAL BAN** on the use of solitary confinement in **EXCESS OF 15 DAYS** and a **COMPLETE BAN ON INDEFINITE ISOLATION**



United Nations **Human Rights**
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights



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He also called for a **BAN** on the **ISOLATION OF YOUTH** and all people with **SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESSES**





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He also called for a **BAN** on the **ISOLATION OF YOUTH** and all people with **SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESSES**

He said this treatment constitutes **CRUEL, DEGRADING** and **INHUMAN TREATMENT**, and often **OUTRIGHT TORTURE**



JOIN THE MOVEMENT TO STOP
TORTURE IN YOUR STATE!

Campaigns to end solitary confinement have sprung up in many states, and on the national level

To find out about **EVENTS, ACTIONS
AND ORGANIZATIONS**, visit:
www.solitarywatch.com/action/



PEOPLE OF FAITH AND CLERGY have played a **CRITICAL PART** in the movement to end solitary confinement

They believe that

“TORTURE IS A MORAL ISSUE”

To join the **NATIONAL RELIGIOUS CAMPAIGN
AGAINST TORTURE**, visit:

nrcat.org/torture-in-us-prisons

**THE CAMPAIGN TO END
SOLITARY CONFINEMENT
IN NEW YORK**

In New York, where **NEARLY 4,000 PEOPLE** are in solitary, activists are fighting to end isolation in both state prisons and city jails



Photo: NYS DOCCS



THE MOVEMENT includes:

- Religious congregations
- Students
- Lawyers
- Mental health practitioners
- Civil liberties and human rights groups
- Family members of people in solitary
- Survivors of solitary confinement

Like the U.N. Special Rapporteur on torture, they want to **LIMIT SOLITARY TO 15 DAYS**

They are **PURSuing REGULATION, LITIGATION, LEGISLATION, AND EDUCATION**



Photo: Francisco Quinones

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In response to this pressure, the rules governing solitary in New York have begun to change



Photo: Francisco Quinones

JOIN THE FIGHT TO END TORTURE IN NEW YORK:

NEW YORK CAMPAIGN
FOR **ALTERNATIVES** TO
ISOLATED CONFINEMENT

nycaic.org

NEW YORK CITY JAILS
ACTION COALITION

nycjac.org

**THE CAMPAIGN TO END
SOLITARY CONFINEMENT
IN CALIFORNIA**



In California, where more than **10,000 PEOPLE** are in solitary confinement, the movement started within the supermax prisons themselves



In 2011 and again in 2013, men in solitary confinement in Pelican Bay State Prison organized a **HUNGER STRIKE TO PROTEST CONDITIONS**



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Individuals accused of being gang members had been placed in solitary **INDEFINITELY**



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Individuals accused of being gang members had been placed in solitary **INDEFINITELY**

Some had been in isolation in **SMALL, WINDOWLESS CELLS** for as long as **20 YEARS**

At the height of the strike,
30,000 PEOPLE in California's
prisons were **REFUSING FOOD**



At the height of the strike,
30,000 PEOPLE in California's
prisons were **REFUSING FOOD**

Some remained on hunger strike
for nearly **TWO MONTHS**





SUPPORT PELICAN BAY
PRISONERS' HUNGER STRIKE
PRISONERS' HUMAN BEING

UN PRISONER
The future
of the world

Budget
HON
TURE
PRICES?

PEOPLE
are
STARVING

M
DEN

EL VERDADERO INTERNO
DE LA PRISION PELICAN BAY



Short Denial Cell
SOLITARY
= TORTURE

LIKE FIRE DUN
RAGE MUST
SPREAD!

The strikers won **FEW CONCESSIONS** from the state



The strikers won **FEW CONCESSIONS** from the state.

But they helped **RAISE CONSCIOUSNESS AND SPUR** on the movement against solitary confinement



TO JOIN THE FIGHT TO END TORTURE

in California:

PRISONER **HUNGER STRIKE** SOLIDARITY

www.prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com

CALIFORNIA FAMILIES TO ABOLISH SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

www.abolishsolitary.com

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CAMPAIGN AGAINST
TORTURE**

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- The Van Abbemuseum

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