

For planning purposes: Special Media Tours Wednesday, 9/13, 4 pm – 7 pm
Exhibit open 9/14 – 9/17 and 9/21 – 9/24, 12 pm – 10 pm

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“PHOTO REQUESTS FROM SOLITARY” EXHIBIT DEBUTS AT PHOTOVILLE IN BROOKLYN

Powerful Creative Collaboration Between People in Solitary Confinement in NY State Prisons and Artists on the Outside Will Be Used to Educate Public and Support Passage of #HALTsolitary Act

WHAT: As part of the ongoing [PHOTO REQUESTS FROM SOLITARY](#) project, men and women held in long-term solitary confinement in New York’s state prisons were invited to request a photograph of anything at all, real or imagined. Volunteer artists then created the photos for them. The resulting images provide an archive of the dreams, memories, and interests of individuals who live locked down 23 hours a day in small cells for months, years, and even decades. More than a dozen images from the New York phase of the project, along with original request forms, will be shown to the public for the first time at [PHOTOVILLE](#), a unique annual pop-up exhibit space under the Brooklyn Bridge that turns shipping containers into galleries.

In addition to providing the images to people living in extreme isolation and sensory deprivation, Photo Requests from Solitary is partnering with local advocates to end the torture of prolonged solitary confinement. Members of the [NEW YORK CAMPAIGN FOR ALTERNATIVES TO ISOLATED CONFINEMENT](#) (CAIC), including survivors of solitary, will be on hand at the exhibit to help visitors learn about the issue and garner support for passage of the [HUMANE ALTERNATIVES TO LONG TERM \(HALT\) SOLITARY CONFINEMENT ACT](#) (A.3080 / S.4784). With enough committed votes to pass the bill in the New York State Assembly, advocates are now looking to Governor Cuomo, and visitors to Photoville will have the opportunity to take actions urging the Governor to support the #HALTsolitary Act.

WHERE/WHEN:

Container #2, Photoville, Brooklyn Bridge Plaza (corner of Water Street and New Dock Street), DUMBO, Brooklyn. Directions: <http://photoville.com/directions/>

Special Media Tours: Wednesday, September 13, from 4 pm – 7 pm.

Exhibit Also Open to the Public: Wednesday, September 13, from 7 – 10 pm and on Thursday, September 14 – Sunday, September 17 and Thursday, September 21 – Sunday, September 24, from 12 noon to 10 pm.

WHO:

Curators of the Photo Requests from Solitary project, along with survivors of solitary confinement in New York State and other advocates, will be on hand for interviews during the special Media Tour hours on September 13, and available by phone at any time during the two weeks of the exhibit. The Photoville exhibit is sponsored by CAIC and Solitary Watch, in collaboration with Parsons The New School for Design and Tamms Year Ten.

The Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (CAIC) brings together advocates, formerly incarcerated persons, family members of currently incarcerated people, concerned community members, lawyers, and individuals in the human rights, health, and faith communities throughout New York State. Through statewide actions, petitioning legislators to support the HALT Solitary Confinement Act, and educating their communities about the torture of solitary confinement, CAIC members advocate for sweeping reform of New York's use of solitary confinement and other forms of extreme isolation in state prisons and local jails. Learn more at <http://nycaic.org/>.

Solitary Watch is a nonprofit national watchdog group that investigates, documents, and disseminates information on the widespread use of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons and jails. Its mission is to catalyze discussion, debate, and change on a vital domestic human rights issue by providing the first centralized source of unfolding news, original reporting, firsthand accounts, and background research on solitary confinement in the United States. Learn more at <http://solitarywatch.com/>.

Photo Requests from Solitary was initiated in 2009 by Tamms Year Ten, a grass-roots coalition of artists, advocates, family members and men formerly incarcerated in Tamms Correctional Center in southern Illinois, which was shuttered in 2013 after years of opposition. In 2013, in collaboration with Solitary Watch and Parsons The New School for Design, the project expanded to New York and California. To date, Photo Requests from Solitary has filled more than 100 requests from these states, and is using the project to support local campaigns to end the use of long-term solitary confinement. The project is curated by artists Laurie Jo Reynolds and Jeanine Oleson and journalist Jean Casella, and relies on the creative visions of men and women in solitary and the collaboration of dozens of volunteer artists.

VISUALS:

More than a dozen photographs, along with original requests filled out by men and women in solitary in New York, will be on display at the exhibit, which will be mounted within a shipping container measuring 7 x 20 feet (exactly twice the size of the average 7 x 10-foot solitary confinement cell). A complete set of exhibited photographs and requests can be found on the following Google drive, or requested by emailing jcasella@solitarywatch.com.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0BwfH0mxLwxNEZ21qSFhBYl1DZ28>

Views of the Photoville exhibition space under the Brooklyn Bridge can be provided by Photoville's media contact: blake@blakezidell.com.

BACKGROUND:

According to [the Association of State Correctional Administrators](#), the percentage of New York's state prison population that is in solitary is approximately **double the national average**. While the United Nations adopted the "Mandela Rules" prohibiting solitary confinement exceeding 15 days, New York State places no limit on the total time a person may spend in isolation, and most spend months or years there, while others have spent decades. Individuals in solitary confinement spend 23 hours or more a day locked in a cell the size of an elevator. The sensory deprivation, lack of normal interaction, and extreme idleness of solitary can lead to intense suffering and severe psychological and physical damage. Despite this, on any given day, as many as 5,000 people are locked in isolated confinement in New York's prisons and jails. These individuals are disproportionately people of color, young people, gender non-conforming people, and people with mental illness. CAIC is calling for NYS Legislators and Governor Cuomo to pass the #HALTsolitary Act, which would end the torture of solitary confinement and create more humane and effective rehabilitative alternatives.



DOE AND TWIN FAWNS
Emma McCann for Hershel

People who live their lives inside closed cells often ask for views of the outdoors. Hershel's request was for "a wooded scene, with maybe a Doe and Twin Fawns." He added, "Anything would be appreciated. I have been locked away since 1983."



SUNSET OVER WATER
Jessica Posner for Geri

Geri is a transgender woman who is serving her sentence in men's prisons, and spent years in solitary after she was sexually assaulted. She requested "An (early) sunset over water, the kind with lots of red and purple in the sky/clouds, ideally with a lone buoy in the distance."



WHITE WOLF
Casey Dorobek for Bob

Bob asked for "a winter night scene, with a full moon shining off the snow. Trees in the back ground. A pack of gray wolves standing just outside the trees in the snow, and their pack leader, AN ALL WHITE WOLF, on a plateau, howling at the full moon." He explained, "To me, wolves represent FREEDOM and so does the wilderness."



CROSSROADS
Alyssa Romano for Ramon

Some people's requests seemed to be visions of their own futures. Ramon asked for a photo of "a man getting released from prison with \$40 in his pocket, with no family and no support after doing so many years...confused with himself and don't know which road to choose to survive out there in the world." In New York, individuals are generally released from upstate prisons with \$40 and a bus ticket.