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# STATEVILLE

## SPEAKS

APRIL 2008

# THE TAMMS YEAR TEN CAMPAIGN

The Tamms Poetry Committee

Tamms C-Max, located in the southern tip of Illinois, 360 miles from Chicago, received its first prisoners in March of 1998. Modeled after the supermaximum prison at Pelican Bay, California, the partially underground facility was designed to hold 500 men in solitary confinement. There is no physical contact, no phone calls, no communal activities, no classes, no jobs and no rehabilitation programs. The idea was to restrict or eliminate privileges permitted at other general population facilities.

Originally, the IDOC indicated that inmates sent to Tamms for administrative detention could complete all three levels of the behavioral level system in one year. Inmates who were in disciplinary segregation would remain until their terms expired and then be eligible for transfer, or be placed in

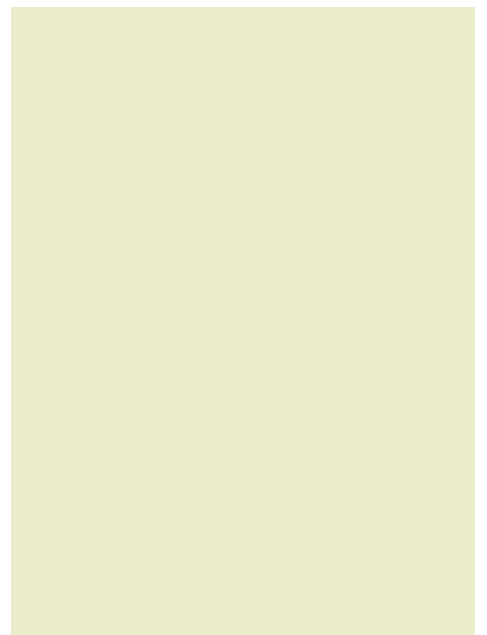
administrative detention and thus have the chance to work their way through the behavioral levels. The "extra punishment" at Tamms was meant to be a temporary measure. However, as we write, there are prisoners who have been there since the year it opened. Those men have endured a decade of uninterrupted solitary confinement. And most other men have been there for years and years. We believe that even one year is too much.

Solitary confinement for any substantial length of time has serious effects. Numerous studies have documented the effects of solitary confinement on prisoners—visual and auditory hallucinations, hypersensitivity to noise and touch, insomnia and paranoia, uncontrollable feelings of rage and fear, distortions of time and perception,

*hope / change / redemption*

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INMATES IN EACH DOC PRISON CAN SUBMIT ARTICLES TO  
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Stateville Speaks can only continue toward positive reform with your support.

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IS ONLY \$10**

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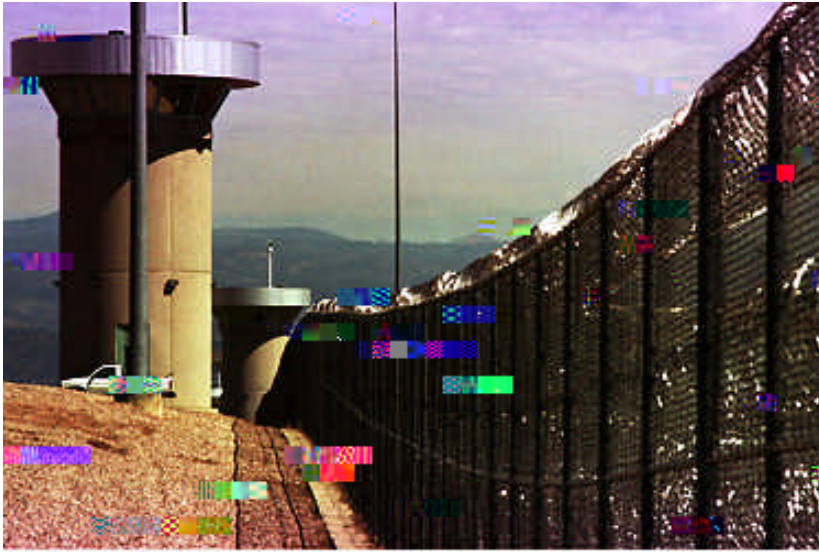
**to become part of a force that can  
influence legislators.**

**No fees. No obligations.  
Urge voting-citizen family and friends  
to sign up and become a part of a  
force to improve legislation.**

**\*\*N.I.V. needs VOTING CITIZEN members to be  
the most effective\*\***

**N.I.V. has over 700+ members**

**The N.I.V. Mission Statement** is to better society  
by assisting to reduce overcrowding of prisons,  
reduce recidivism and improve societal productivity  
by strengthening rehabilitation, reforming sentencing



*Tamms Year Ten Campaign Cont.*

how important it is—and tell them that the time to do something is now. For those on the outside, news and information about Year Ten events is available online at [www.YearTen.org](http://www.YearTen.org) or by calling 773-596-1950. Tamms Year Ten has at least a dozen ways to volunteer your time and expertise. Please organize your own events in the rest of Chicago and the rest of the state! You can also donate to the campaign with a check to "Year Ten" or on the website—every dollar is well-spent and we have many expenses coming up that we can't cover.

This special issue of *Stateville Speaks* is devoted to Tamms on the occasion of this anniversary. However, please understand that Tamms Year Ten considers Tamms to be a symbol—not an exception—for what is wrong with the Illinois prison system. Other prisons also have dehumanizing conditions and equally destructive methods of solitary confinement and human warehousing. Concerned citizens, family members, and prisoners have to work in solidarity across these issues to promote rehabilitation and reduce recidivism. Together, we can create the wave of reform needed for a humane and effective criminal justice system in Illinois.

**TAMMS YEAR TEN CONTACT**

Go to [www.YearTen.org](http://www.YearTen.org) for more information.  
Contact us at [YearTen@riseup.net](mailto:YearTen@riseup.net) or 773-596-1950.

Write us at Tamms Poetry Committee, PO BOX 47750, Chicago IL 60647.

**TAMMS YEAR TEN CAMPAIGN ENDORSERS**

8th Day Center for Justice  
American Friends Service Committee—Chicago  
Black People Against Police Torture Campaign to End the Death Penalty  
Chicago Anarchist Black Cross  
Chicago County Fair  
Chicagoland Coalition for Civil Liberties and Rights  
Citizens For Earned Release  
Coalition to Reduce Recidivism  
Critical Resistance Chicago  
Education Justice Project, Urbana-Champaign  
Illinois Institute for Community Law  
Justice Coalition of Greater Chicago  
Midwest Books to Prisoners  
National Alliance Against Racist & Political Repression—Chicago  
National Lawyers Guild-Chicago  
Progressive Community Center, The People's Church, Rev. B. Herbert Martin  
Saving Our Sons Ministries  
*Stateville Speaks*  
STOPMAX/American Friends

Service Committee  
Raising Awareness to Inspire Others  
Tamms Committee  
Tamms Poetry Committee  
Temporary Services  
Urbana-Champaign Books to Prisoners  
Voices for Creative Non-Violence!

# Lost?

*Wanna Help But Don't Know Where to Begin?*



Here are some ways you can help the many organizations committed to positive reform

**1.**

**Subscribe to Stateville Speaks**  
\$10.00 keeps you informed and us going. Inmates, encourage family members to subscribe

**2.**

**Join the N.I.V. Mission**  
The N.I.V. is a lobbying force. With a large number of voting members, N.I.V. can help influence legislators

**3.**

**Get on the Web**  
[www.ILCER.org](http://www.ILCER.org) ? [www.LT3P.org](http://www.LT3P.org)  
[www.IllinoisPrisonTalk.com](http://www.IllinoisPrisonTalk.com)

**4.**

**VOTE**

Get Registered TODAY. Call 312.603.0906

**5.**

**SHOW UP**

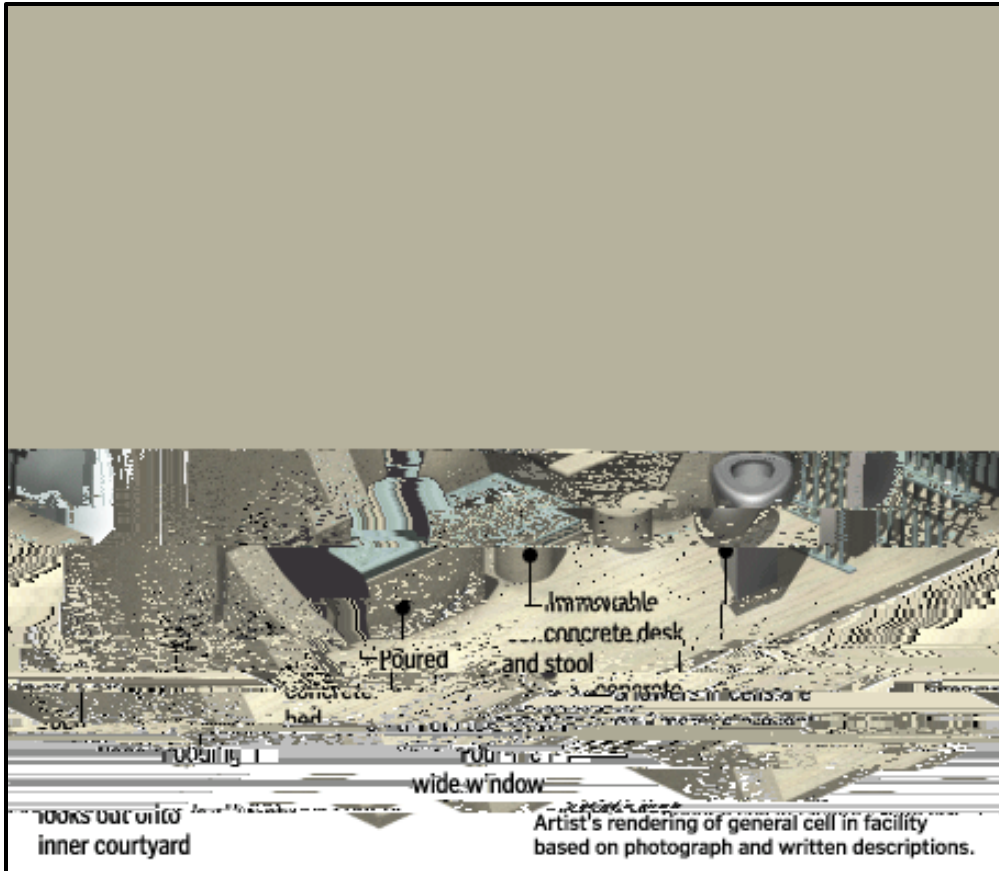
Attend announced HJR80 meetings, CER meetings and TAMMS Events.  
Not getting an invitation? Join the mailing list by subscribing to Stateville Speaks!

# Essays, Letters and Insight

PROPOSALS AND PERSUASIVE EDITORIALS

## Students Visit Tamms

Brianna Bedard and Patrick Moore



*Typical Maximum Security Holding Cell*

Over the past summer a youth group from the Universalist Unitarian Church of Elgin visited Tamms Supermax Correctional Facility. We consist mainly of high school and college students. Nancy, a friend of mine, had been visiting the prison for two years, and our group decided that it would be an interesting experience to visit a few of the prisoners at Tamms. The visit turned out to be much more than we expected.

After seemingly endless forms and hassles, seven of us were finally on our way early in the morning last July. We were all fairly excited and somewhat

nervous during the long car ride to the prison. When we arrived, our vehicle was promptly searched. We were then brought into the facility where we filled out another form. After that we passed through a metal detector, and we were each taken to a separate room to be physically searched for weapons or drugs.

After this, our group split off to visit two different prisoners. I and three others visited a middle-aged man for two hours, but it felt like it was not more than twenty minutes. This new friend of ours had not had a visitor in

almost seven years. His excitement and nervousness to see us was very apparent and touching.

After the visit, a member of our group said, "The prisoner I visited acted completely unlike any of the prisoners portrayed in the media. He is smart, compassionate, and completely remorseful. Listening to his story made you think about the situation he is in and his options. He does not have many options and he is now paying for a crime he committed years ago with the rest of his life. The tactics used to keep him under control seemed dehumanizing and unnecessary. It makes you wonder who, if anyone, should be subjected to such punishment. I am amazed he is not insane."

Dave, another member of the group, visited a different prisoner but had a similar reaction. "The man I visited is intelligent and compassionate. I would feel comfortable having him as a neighbor."

We were all moved by the remorse and regard that the prisoners had. It made us wonder about the necessity of such an extreme program as a supermax facility. While people argue and protest about the treatment of animals, some of those same people choose not to see the treatment of people in these prisons as unethical. I leave you with a thought: If people are considered evolved enough to be held accountable for their actions, then aren't they evolved enough to be reformed in the consequence of their mistakes? |



# Creative Corner

WHEN INSPIRATION HITS...POEMS WRITINGS CONNOTATIONS...



## [untitled]

I see myself within myself within  
myself within myself  
I see what appears to be a reflection  
of my soul  
I scream for this tortured battered soul  
but nobody seems to hear.

Stone walls, steel doors, the  
solitude. I search for their  
meaning. Does it always have to be so  
hard? Must I die  
feeling alone? Within myself within  
myself within myself

Each day passes, tick tock, I look in  
the mirror I see  
an old man I do not know, this is what  
time has done to me  
Old and faded like my memories of  
times past. Tick tock. The  
moment is now past within myself  
within myself within myself

Never truly understanding the evil  
inside me, never truly  
understanding why I've done what

I've done. It's a constant battle—  
am I sane, only time will be the  
judge. Does it matter anymore?

A tear escapes and I wipe it away before  
anyone sees  
Remaining years, have mercy and pass  
by quickly  
Another tear escapes and I don't care  
anymore  
Tears on my pillow not a smile on my  
face  
And I see myself within myself within  
myself within myself.!

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## to live without life

as i sit down and speak to neighbors,  
their echo answers me;  
as i speak, i visualize the gestures

