



Critical Anthologies in Art and Culture

WE ARE
the
PEOPLE

PUBLIC SERVANTS

ART AND THE CRISIS OF THE COMMON GOOD

EDITED BY JOHANNA BURTON, SHANNON JACKSON,
AND DOMINIC WILLSDON

109 DEPARTMENT OF SECURITY

- 111 The Fire This Time:
Black Youth and the Spectacle of Postracial Violence
HENRY A. GIROUX

- 131 Photo Requests from Solitary
JEAN CASELLA, JEANINE OLESON, LAURIE JO REYNOLDS,
SOLITARY WATCH, AND TAMMS YEAR TEN, WITH STEVEN
COROTAN, DARRIUS "D-MAN" FIELDS, ROBERT FRAZIER,
RACHEL HERMAN, CHRIS MURPHY, FRANK REYNA, ROBERT
SAUSEDA JR., WILLIE STERLING, KIJANA TASHIRI ASKARI,
AND ROBERT TIMM

- 141 Can This Machine Kill Mass Incarceration?
JOSHUA DUBLER

- 159 Squeaky Dolphin to Normcore:
Anxiety in a Big-Data Era
KATE CRAWFORD

173 DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND ECONOMY

- 175 Biopolitics, Identity, and the Public Sphere in the 1970s:
Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge
DEVIN FORE

- 191 W.A.G.E.N.C.Y.
W.A.G.E. (WORKING ARTISTS AND THE GREATER ECONOMY)

- 197 Indent (to Serve the Debt)
FRED MOTEN AND STEFANO HARNEY

- 207 In Service:
Art, Value, Merit, and the Making of Publics
ANDREA PHILLIPS

PHOTO REQUESTS FROM SOLITARY

Photo Requests from Solitary (PRFS) invites men and women in solitary confinement to request a photograph of anything at all, real or imagined, and promises to find an artist to make the image. The astonishing requests have ranged from “a picture of my family in St. Louis” to “a gray and white ‘warmblood’ horse rearing in weather cold enough to see its breath” to “the place where the Robert Taylor Homes used to be.”

The pictures offer a new way to think about the experience of solitary confinement. Viewers are able to see not what the prisoners see, but what they envision. Taken together, these requests provide an archive of the hopes, interests, and memories of people in isolation.

Though foremost a form of support to people in isolation, the project has also helped to publicize the harm of solitary confinement. PRFS was started in 2009 by Tamms Year Ten, a grassroots coalition advocating for the reform or closure of Tamms Correctional Center, a supermax prison in Illinois. A year after the campaign was launched, Governor Pat Quinn introduced a reform plan, and in 2012, he proposed closing the prison outright. In spite of tremendous opposition from the guards’ union and downstate legislators, Quinn succeeded in closing Tamms in January 2013.

The project is now a partnership between Solitary Watch, Parsons School of Design at the New School, and Tamms Year Ten, which together have expanded the scope of the project to include prisoners in California and New York, two states with high rates of people in solitary confinement. PRFS is housed at solitarywatch.org.

Photo Requests from Solitary is currently organized by Jean Casella/Solitary Watch; Jeanine Oleson/Parsons School of Design at the New School; and Laurie Jo Reynolds/Tamms Year Ten. Lauren Denitzio provides administrative support.

When PRFS was housed at Tamms Year Ten, it was organized by Laurie Jo Reynolds, Jeanine Oleson, Rachel Herman, Laura Hsieh, Scott McFarland, Sarah Jane Rhee, and Sarah Ross.

Photo Requests from Solitary, a project started in 2009 by Tamms Year Ten, has been covered by *Vice* (October 2015), the *Daily Mail* (October 2015), *BuzzFeed* (November 2013), and the *Daily Beast* (May 2013), among others. A selection of the photographs was shown in 2013 at Photoville, New York, in an exhibition curated by Jean Casella/Solitary Watch, Jeanine Oleson/Parsons School of Design at the New School, and Laurie Jo Reynolds/Tamms Year Ten.

Following 4 pages:

Photo request form completed by Steven Corotan,
July 17, 2013

Photo request form submitted by Robert Frazier,
August 13, 2013

Photo request form submitted by Kijana Tashiri
Askari, July 22, 2013

Photo request form submitted by Frank Reyna,
August 7, 2013

**WE WILL MAKE A
PHOTOGRAPH FOR YOU**

Name: STEVEN COROTAN
Date: JULY 17, 2013

PELHAM BAY STATE PRISON
SECURITY HOUSING UNIT

Would you like to request one?

If so, fill out this form and describe a photograph you personally would like to receive. A volunteer will make a photograph based on your description below.

You may request a photograph of anything (that is not prohibited by prison rules, of course). In the space below, please describe what you would like to see in your photograph. (You could describe a person, place, object, scene or idea.)

BEING IN SOLITARY FOR SO MANY YEARS I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE GREAT TO HAVE A
PICTURE OF "A CROWD OF PEOPLE". ANY CROWD WILL DO BUT SOME IDEAS COULD BE:
A CROWD OF PEOPLE AT A CONCERT, SPORTING EVENT, A WEDDING, THE BEACH, ETC.
A CROWDED STREET SUCH AS N.Y. TIMES SQUARE.

Do you have any specific instructions for the photographer?

THE MORE PEOPLE THE BETTER. ALSO I LIKE TO SEE DETAIL. FOR EXAMPLE PEOPLES
FAICAL EXPRESSIONS, WHAT KIND OF CLOTHES THEY'RE WEARING, ETC.

Organizations working to end the use of solitary confinement may use your photograph or request for purposes of public education, media use or fundraising. If so, we could use your name or you could remain anonymous.

If you would like us to use your name, what name should we use?

STEVEN COROTAN

SEND YOUR RESPONSES TO: Photo Requests from Solitary
172 5th Avenue, #16
Brooklyn, NY 11217

PARSONS THE NEW SCHOOL FOR DESIGN • SOLITARY WATCH
TAMMS YEAR TEN • NATIONAL RELIGIOUS CAMPAIGN AGAINST TORTURE

ROBERT FRAZIER

**WE WILL MAKE A
PHOTOGRAPH FOR YOU**

Name: _____

Date: AUGUST 13, 2013

Would you like to request one?

If so, fill out this form and describe a photograph you personally would like to receive. A volunteer will make a photograph based on your description below.

You may request a photograph of anything (that is not prohibited by prison rules, of course). In the space below, please describe what you would like to see in your photograph. (You could describe a person, place, object, scene or idea.)

A BLUE ROSE - CUT WITH ALL ITS LEAVES REMAINING -
HELD IN A CRYSTAL/CLEAR VASE OR A HAND AND IF
POSSIBLE, THE PERSEIDS METEOR SHOWER AS A BACKGROUND.

Do you have any specific instructions for the photographer?

IF THE BLUE ROSE WILL BE HELD IN A HAND PLEASE HAVE THAT HAND
BE A YOUNG PERSON'S AND SHOW ONLY UP TO MID FOREARM

Organizations working to end the use of solitary confinement may use your photograph or request for purposes of public education, media use or fundraising. If so, we could use your name or you could remain anonymous.

If you would like us to use your name, what name should we use?

(SEE TOP RIGHT OF THIS PAGE)

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**WE WILL MAKE A
PHOTOGRAPH FOR YOU**

KIJANA TASHIRI ASKARI
Name: S/N • MARCUS HARRISON
Date: JULY 22, 2013

Would you like to request one?

If so, fill out this form and describe a photograph you personally would like to receive. A volunteer will make a photograph based on your description below.

You may request a photograph of anything (that is not prohibited by prison rules, of course). In the space below, please describe what you would like to see in your photograph. (You could describe a person, place, object, scene or idea.)

I WOULD LIKE A PHOTOGRAPH OF "LIBERATION". DESCRIPTION:

ME BEING RELEASED FROM PRISON (e.g. "THE S.H.U.") AFTER 20 YEARS (e.g. "1994 TO 2013") BEING ABLE TO HOLD/TOUCH ANOTHER HUMAN BEING, WHILE GOING TO WORK IN SERVING THE PEOPLE TO END POVERTY, JOBLESSNESS, HOMELESSNESS, CORPORATE CRIME, MASS INCARCERATION, & THE MANY OTHER SOCIAL & ECONOMICAL INJUSTICES OF THE WORLD.* I'M ENCLOSING A DRAWING OF ME TO HELP WITH THE VISUAL PROCESS*

Do you have any specific instructions for the photographer?

KEEP THE PHOTO AUTHENTIC, BY HAVING IT RESONATE FEELINGS OF LOVE & HUMAN COMPASSION FOR ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE AND DISDAIN FOR CAPITALISM, GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION, etc..

Organizations working to end the use of solitary confinement may use your photograph or request for purposes of public education, media use or fundraising. If so, we could use your name or you could remain anonymous. **NO PLEASE PUBLISH/PRINT my NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION.**

If you would like us to use your name, what name should we use?

KIJANA TASHIRI ASKARI
S/N • MARCUS HARRISON • # H54077

P.O. BOX • 7500/D3-122/SHU
CRESCENT CITY, CA. 95532

SEND YOUR RESPONSES TO: Photo Requests from Solitary
172 5th Avenue, #16
Brooklyn, NY 11217

PARSONS THE NEW SCHOOL FOR DESIGN • SOLITARY WATCH
TAMMS YEAR TEN • NATIONAL RELIGIOUS CAMPAIGN AGAINST TORTURE

**WE WILL MAKE A
PHOTOGRAPH FOR YOU**

Name: FRANK REYNA

Date: 8/7/13

**PELICAN BAY STATE PRISON
SECURITY HOUSING UNIT**

UNIT D-8

Would you like to request one?

If so, fill out this form and describe a photograph you personally would like to receive. A volunteer will make a photograph based on your description below.

You may request a photograph of anything (that is not prohibited by prison rules, of course). In the space below, please describe what you would like to see in your photograph. (You could describe a person, place, object, scene or idea.)

I would like a photograph of "Temple of the Sun" Teotihuacan. Its in Mexico.

I would love to see a beautiful sun-set over looking the "Temple of the Sun"

Also sending a photo of my daughter.

Do you have any specific instructions for the photographer?

Can you add my daughters picture to the "Temple of the Sun" and

the sun-set? Make in the background some how blend it all together.

I always wanted to sit on top of this temple with my daughter and talk and look at the sunset together.

Organizations working to end the use of solitary confinement may use your photograph or request for purposes of public education, media use or fundraising. If so, we could use your name or you could remain anonymous.

If you would like us to use your name, what name should we use?

FRANK REYNA

SEND YOUR RESPONSES TO: Photo Requests from Solitary
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Brooklyn, NY 11217

"THANK YOU"
VERY MUCH.
I DO APPRECIATE IT.

PARSONS THE NEW SCHOOL FOR DESIGN • SOLITARY WATCH
TAMMS YEAR TEN • NATIONAL RELIGIOUS CAMPAIGN AGAINST TORTURE



MY AUNTIE'S HOUSE ON THE BLOCK: DARRIUS

Darius requested “a photo of the whole block of 63rd and Marshfield on the South Side in the Englewood Community” including his aunt’s house, “the only green and white house on the block,” taken between 2 and 4 p.m. “I want the picture taken from the sidewalk,” he wrote, “in front of the alley, facing slightly towards 64th and Marshfield.” He added, “Let the people outside know that the picture is for ‘D-man.’” Photo: Chris Murphy, 2012



BALD KNOB CROSS: WILLIE

Willie requested a picture of a vigil at Bald Knob Cross, on top of a mountain in southern Illinois, with people praying for his deliverance from Tamms and his being granted parole from prison. In order to take this photograph, Tamms Year Ten caravanned down to the cross, held a litany of song and prayer, and celebrated with a dinner. The next day, members of Tamms Year Ten drove family members to visit loved ones at the prison. Willie was transferred from Tamms, and on July 27, 2012, he was paroled after thirty-six years. Tamms Year Ten and Photo Requests from Solitary had a welcome home party for him the week of his return. The vigil was organized by Janice Burnom, Laura Hsieh, Nadya Pittendrigh, Laurie Jo Reynolds, Darby Tillis, and Jacque Sterling. Photo: Rachel Herman, May 6, 2011



MOM, MONEY, AND MANSION: ROBERT T.

Robert, a man with a serious mental illness, sent Tamms Year Ten a photo of his mother, who had died the previous year. Because he had no family and no visitors, he was desolate. He asked for an image of "my mother standing in front of a mansion, or Big Castle, with a bunch of money on the ground. OR if you can't do that, THEN a substitution is a big mansion or castle with a bunch of money in front of it and a black hummer parked in front of it. I truly appreciate this a lot. ... Now I know somebody out there in the world cares about us in here." Photo: Jeanine Oleson, 2013



MYSELF WITH A BLUE SKY: ROBERT S.

Several men asked for photos of themselves, taken from their online Department of Corrections photos, to give to their families. Robert wanted his picture matched with an alternate background. He wrote, "If you can place my picture on another background, nothing too much please. Something simple like a blue sky with clouds or a sunset in the distance would be fine." Robert also said, "I want to extend my love to you, for you, as you have already done for me. Because genuine, authentic true love is when you do for others just because you can, and you hold no preconceived notion that you will be getting anything in return."

Photo: Laurie Jo Reynolds, 2011

"*Public Servants* boldly reaffirms the necessity of talking about art and politics together. In it, everything we thought we knew about both becomes questionable. This bracing, passionate, thrilling collection shakes it all up and goes after the clichés and the taboos with unrelenting fervor. It doesn't tell us what to do, but it will certainly help us to figure that out for ourselves."

—THOMAS KEENAN, Director, Human Rights Project, Bard College

"Extraordinary in its range and depth, *Public Servants* is an essential volume. It rigorously unpacks the intersectional, aesthetic, and real possibilities for art and culture to confront the social, economic, and environmental challenges of a globalized world."

—LAURA RAICOVICH, President and Director, Queens Museum

"Encompassing sections on labor, the economy, biopolitics, education, and security, this anthology tackles urgent topics like the effectiveness of socially engaged art and offers readers an in-depth and critical understanding around artwork and ways of thinking too often simplified as 'social practice.'"

—SASKIA BOS, curator, art historian, and former Dean of The School of Art at The Cooper Union, New York

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