

Inside Civil Commitment

An archive to preserve & amplify stories of civilly committed people in Illinois

Michael is one of 559 residents at the Rushville Treatment and Detention Facility.

Illinois is one of 20 states with laws that permit continued detainment beyond criminal incarceration of certain persons who have been deemed sex offenders.

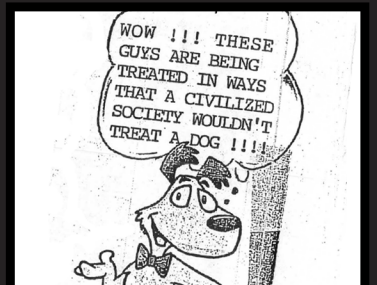
This practice of incarceration without an end date is known as civil commitment.

Over the past several years, the Black and Pink Chicago Civil Commitment Working Group has received many alarming testimonials about conditions within Rushville.

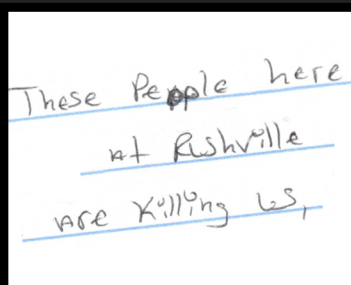
Black men and queer identities are vastly over-represented.

Very few are able to complete the treatment necessary for release.

Residents describe the treatment as ineffective, re-traumatizing, punitive, and arbitrary.



Some residents have been committed for over 20 years.



76 residents have died in the past 15 years.

Their words paint a picture of little hope for growth, change or justice.

Today's Perpetrators Are Yesterdays Victims - IGNORED



Deliverables:

- Digitized 95 items including letters, newsletters and other mail from residents of Rushville.
- Established a Dublin Core based metadata schema and user-friendly guidelines for project continuance.
- Populated an Omeka site, creating engaging exhibits while centering the emotionality of the work.

The archive and accompanying report are guided by community based action research grounded in abolition. Incarceration does not solve root causes of sexual violence. People require support regardless of the abuse they have caused.



Impact:

The archive is a tool for:

- Educating the public.
- Demystifying civil commitment.
- Rehumanizing those inside.
- Sharing knowledge with other researchers, activists and abolitionists.
- Advocating for measurable changes.
- Working to rectify abuses and end our reliance on the prison industrial complex.