

NJPC Watchmen – A Community Talk

May Edition



On Tuesday April 5, 2022, DM, a NJPC Youth Caucus Member who is housed at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility, was placed on Temporary Administration Housing (TAH) status for impregnating two co-inmates. All three inmates were placed in solitary confinement.

There are several concerns since this Youth Caucus Member is a part of a vulnerable population (VP). As such, mental health should have interviewed and cleared DM. She states this did not happen. DM, who is transgender and suffers from depression, has been placed in RHU, which is for inmates with behavior issues. All night long she listens to inmates scream and threaten officers.

Subjecting her to these punitive conditions is a direct violation of the New Jersey Isolated Confinement Restriction Act. Below you will find a written statement from Demi Minor describing the current condition she is in:

“For years as an advocate I have been obligated to maintain honesty and transparency; well today in a time of struggle and pure sadness I must deliver the shocking news about myself. I am going to be a mother and have been advised that my partner is 3 months pregnant. This news is rough and going to be tough because as a incarcerated transgender woman, I suppose to live up to societies stigma of what it means to be a transgender, so things like this are frowned upon and scrutinized. The worst part is, I feel like I have done my community a huge disservice because I know there are plenty of transphobic people who will attempt to use this situation as a reason to deny transgender women the opportunity to come to a women's prison. I remain so hurt and saddened by the backlash that is surely to come. To make matters worse, another incident where a resident slept in my cell several times, is brewing and a pregnancy is also likely. I cannot hold

back the depression I have had or the substance abuse that I have engaged in for the past 6 months. I tried to hide the fact that I was in a sexually charged environment where the focus was sex and drugs, almost half the unit was engaged in it and even now with camera evidence the administration is aware of the numerous inmates who go in and out of each other's rooms and some who spend nights in the wrong rooms. I won't make excuses, but I asked 36 times in the past 6 months to be moved and to go to the substance use disorder program. This is facts!

I am going to be placed on Friday 4-8-22 in solitary for breaking the rules and I take full responsibility for my actions, the next several weeks will of course be rough and I will more than likely be absent due to the loss of privileges sanction. I don't want anyone to feel bad for me, instead I want to acknowledge the conditions that caused this, I want to acknowledge the fact that I messed up. It's hard for me to forgive myself and of course it's hard for me to look past the pain that I have cause. More than anything I urge the advocates to make sure that the conditions within EMCF improve. I urge others to take note that the conditions within Edna have been deplorable, and if something like this has happened than please open your eyes to what else is going on. I know this incident will cause people to stop supporting me, yet I remain committed to being honest.

Because I am a woman who is transgender, people are going to blame me for this and use NJDOC's transfer process for transgenders as a point for this problem; So I want to be clear, I did not RAPE anyone and above all, this disciplinary violation will be my first in two years. The truth remains that Trans women like me are not safe in male facilities. The truth remains that I am a woman who now has a responsibility to do better and be a good mother to my child. No words can explain the feelings I have right now, each day I am trying not to hurt myself.

I refuse to sugar coat how I feel, each day I want to quit life and just be forgotten. The pressure is surely on me. I hate myself for allowing this to happen. Yet, I can't allow this system to break me, nor can I allow this system to harm my child. So, I know I have to find the strength to push on and get through this mess. Everybody wants to whisper and hide, well let me be the first to say that, yes, I found someone who understood my plights in life and was willing to take the time to get me, I never felt so loved before. Yet I felt it, and even at my very worst this person took the time to still see the beauty in me. She never allowed my gender identity to change how she saw me, and I admired this, yet I was still broken. Yet to love in prison is forbidden, its forbidden for us to love and to be in love. The abuse and trauma that I suffered as a child has never been healed, I still have my weak days when I hate my body and the things that happened to me. I sought to find comfort and someone to confide in. The truth is when we transition we face depression and for the last few months I have hid my depression from the world, it is the fact that I cut myself and have even attempted to end my life, the only person who helped me was my partner who is now the mother of my child.

I remain hurt, because I know that people trusted that I would never break the rules here, they trusted that I would never abuse my privileges, but I did and each day I am reminded of just how much I lost. Yet, I must acknowledge the beauty which nevertheless is this child I have to acknowledge that life is being brought into this world and I have the responsibility to make sure I am there for this child. I have heard all the transphobic comments from staff who have stated that I am a faggot and a man. I won't allow this harassment to break me any further than what I am.

I am praying that this child comes into a world that will accept it and understand that it has two mothers that love and have gone through a lot. I want my child to have the support of my community and family. Each morning I wake up I am trying to look forward to the positive and not the negativity that I am surrounded by. Finally I do intend to get married and move forward with advocating, yet I want to take time to heal from the depression and substance abuse that I have engage in.

Everyone keeps asking what will happen with me and the truth is, I don't know, I do know that I am going to be issued charges, and the other inmate involved is not, I do know that EMCF staff already view me as problem, they view me as someone who does not belong here. I know that it's probably easier to run from the humiliation and pain. Yet I am facing it every day, I remain sorry towards all those who I have hurt.”