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IT WENT TO THE DOGS

HOW MICHAEL VICK'S DOGFIGHTING COMPOUND BECAME A HAVEN FOR RESCUE PUPS

By Tamira Thayne

What could possibly go wrong when a dog activist buys Michael Vick's dogfighting compound? As it turns out...everything.

The house sat empty, an eerie white sentinel against the flat winter landscape, now guarding only whispers of the past. A six-foot white metal fence with coded entry gate lined the country road, abandoning its purpose at the property line and allowing passage to all with the temerity and curiosity to walk around.

The bullet hole in the front window went unnoticed...

The decision Tamira would make that fateful day in February 2011 would lead not only to a home for her nonprofit's rescue dogs, but also to the most turbulent four years of her life: she faced down allegations of racism, community harassment, poisoning, and, ultimately, false charges aimed at driving her and Dogs Deserve Better from the county.

There was a reason Michael Vick felt he could get away with dogfighting in Surry County, Virginia—and why he got away with it for as long as he did...

With over 200 bw photos and documents.

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ASK ABOUT SPECIAL EVENT OR PERSONALIZED PRICING**

Tamira Thayne pioneered the anti-tethering movement in America, forming and leading the nonprofit Dogs Deserve Better for 13 years.

During her time on the front lines of animal activism and rescue she took on plenty of bad guys (often failing miserably); her swan song culminated in the purchase and transformation of Michael Vick's dogfighting compound to a chained-dog rescue and rehabilitation center. She's spent 878 hours chained to a doghouse on behalf of the voiceless in front of state capitol buildings nationwide.

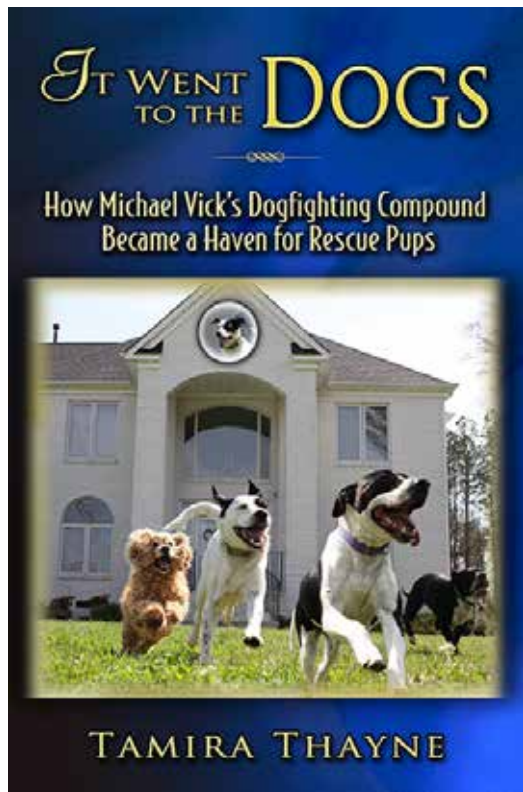
Tamira is the author of *It Went to the Dogs: How Michael Vick's Dogfighting Compound Became a Haven for Rescue Pups*, the *Chained Gods Series*, the *Animal Protectors Series*, *Foster Doggie Insanity*, and *Capitol in Chains*. She's the editor of *More Rescue Smiles*, and the co-editor of *Unchain My Heart* and *Rescue Smiles*. In 2016 she founded *Who Chains You*, publishing books by and for animal activists and rescuers.

Tamira is an Air Force veteran who lives by a river in the woods of northern Virginia, with her husband, daughter, one dog, six cats, and hundreds of outside birds and critters she adores from afar.

NEW BOOK SHOWCASES WHAT BECAME OF MICHAEL VICK'S DOGFIGHTING COMPOUND

Author Tamira Thayne's "It Went to the Dogs:
How Michael Vick's Dogfighting Compound Became a Haven for Rescue Pups"

Dec. 4, 2019 • Amissville VA



When chained-dog activist Tamira Thayne and her non-profit Dogs Deserve Better purchased Michael Vick's dogfighting compound and set about transforming it to a rescue facility, she had no idea what she was walking into.

The decision would lead not only to a home for her nonprofit's rescue dogs, but also to the most turbulent four years of her life: she faced down allegations of racism, community harassment, poisoning, and, ultimately, false charges aimed at driving her and Dogs Deserve Better from the county.

The four black sheds where Michael Vick's dogs trained and ultimately lost their lives still stand today, serving as a stark and brutal reminder of the world of dogfighting.

What Thayne remembers about her first experience with the house and grounds of 1915 Moonlight Road was "a stillness, a loneliness, an oppressive feel; yet underneath there was a yearning for more—a wish to be seen, to be heard. Did the land, the souls who remained on the property seek redemption for the blood spilled in their name? Perhaps."

Thayne believed then, and still believes today, that giving the property where dogs were the victims back to the dogs is a nod toward the just recompense "Man's Best Friend" deserves.

The book highlights the steps taken by the group as they moved toward their goal of a haven for rescued chained dogs, including obstacles and happy ending rescue stories. It includes over 200 black and white photos and documents from the author's four years on the ground at the Good Newz Rehab Center for Chained and Pinned Dogs in Smithfield, Virginia.

Said staffer Julie Sayre, "It's not often that a job can change your entire life. I've never had a more meaningful, life-changing opportunity. The work I accomplished at DDB is truly something I will cherish for the rest of my life."

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Tamira Thayne is the founder and former CEO of Dogs Deserve Better. She's the author or editor of 14 books, including *It Went to the Dogs: How Michael Vick's Dogfighting Compound Became a Haven for Rescue Pups*. She is currently the publisher and founder of Who Chains You Books, whochainsyou.com.

ABOUT AUTHOR TAMIRA THAYNE

Author of “It Went to the Dogs: How Michael Vick’s Dogfighting Compound Became a Haven for Rescue Pups”



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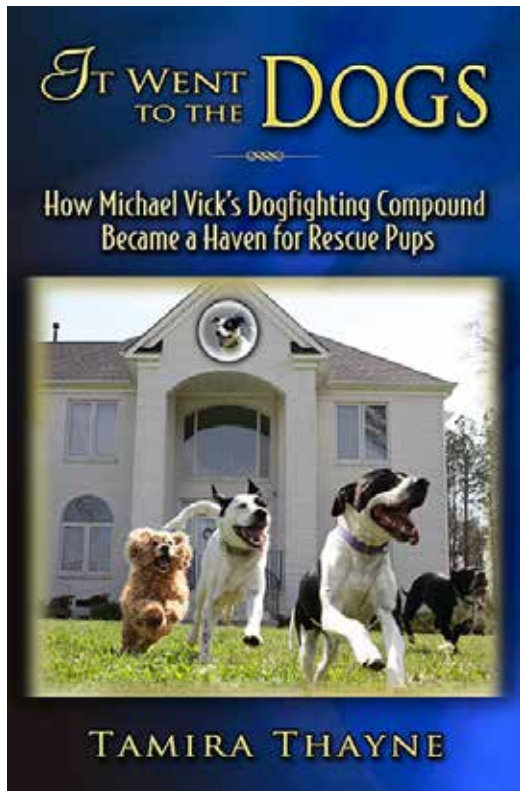
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TESTIMONIALS FOR THE CENTER AND AUTHOR

“It Went to the Dogs: How Michael Vick’s Dogfighting Compound Became a Haven for Rescue Pups”



“It’s not often that a job can change your entire life. I never considered myself an activist for animals as I was looking for employment. That all changed when I read about the job opening as an office manager for Dogs Deserve Better. I’ve never had a more meaningful, life-changing opportunity. The work I accomplished at DDB is truly something I will cherish for the rest of my life. I thank Tamira for the opportunity she gave me, and for everything she taught me.”—Julie Sayre, DDB former facility manager



“Because of Tamira’s dedication, devotion, and strong convictions toward the plight of chained dogs, her dream of all dogs living free from chains has become a national and international movement. Her legacy continues through many who supported and were mentored by her, and were inspired to carry on her important work with or through their own anti-chaining organizations.”—Melody Whitworth, former DDB Rep and founder, Unchained Melodies Dog Rescue

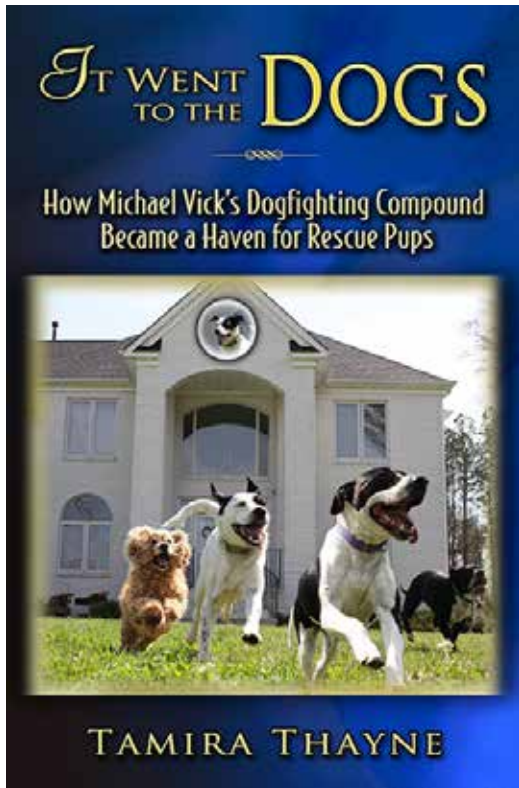


“What a wonderful day I spent at the Good Newz Rehab Center in Smithfield, Virginia, founded by my friend Tamira Thayne. Her love for dogs and passionate fight for their rights moved me on a very deep level.

“Since I was there soon after the foundation took over, I was able to view and photograph the actual buildings Michael Vick had used for his dog-fighting ring. The photos portray a dark and frightening place marked by chains, blood, and a horrible cycle of life and death for so many pups. Being there in that space made me feel exactly the same way I did when I photographed Dachau concentration camp so many years before.”—Rita Fillinger, photographer

BOOK EXCERPT FOR

“It Went to the Dogs: How Michael Vick’s Dogfighting Compound Became a Haven for Rescue Pups”



INTRODUCTION

“Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable . . . Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.” —Martin Luther King, Jr.

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The bullet hole in the front window went unnoticed.



I was alone, parked across the street, and early for my appointment with the Hampton Roads, Virginia realtor. Today was the day I’d tour Michael Vick’s former dogfighting compound, something I’d never imagined nor particularly wanted to do.

Seemed pretty creepy to me.

I felt the whispers surround me, reaching out. The rescuer in me wanted to rescue the ghosts, too; embrace the broken dogs who lay undiscovered and probably buried on the property, assure them they weren’t forgotten. I shuddered, pulling myself together.

“That’s stupid, Tami,” I told myself. “There’s nothing here but you and this house of torture; I’m sure there’s no actual ghosts.” Maybe I smirked, but was there anything really funny about it? Doubtful.

Maybe talking to yourself is just a recipe for amusement—or disaster, depending on your perspective.



It was the 1st of February, 2011, and I would be exploring Vick’s former dogfighting compound for a surprising reason: the nonprofit organization I’d founded, Dogs Deserve Better, was considering buying the 15-acre property in Surry County, Virginia, and creating a haven for our rescued, formerly chained dogs there.

I fidgeted as I waited, equal parts trepidation and excitement. Would we, could we, should we buy a place not only with a history, but THIS KIND of HISTORY?

There was a lot to ponder. First on the agenda, however, was to ascertain if it was workable for our needs and worth the purchase price.

Soon the realtor, along with Dogs Deserve Better supporter Monica S., a Virginia-based business owner—arrived and I would step onto the property where dogs had lived chained, were forced to fight, and then were brutally murdered for failing to impress Vick and his cohorts.

Was I up for the challenge?

And, more importantly, would I live to regret the decision I would ultimately make that chilly winter’s day?

Maybe. It would all remain to be seen.

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