

# STATEVILLE

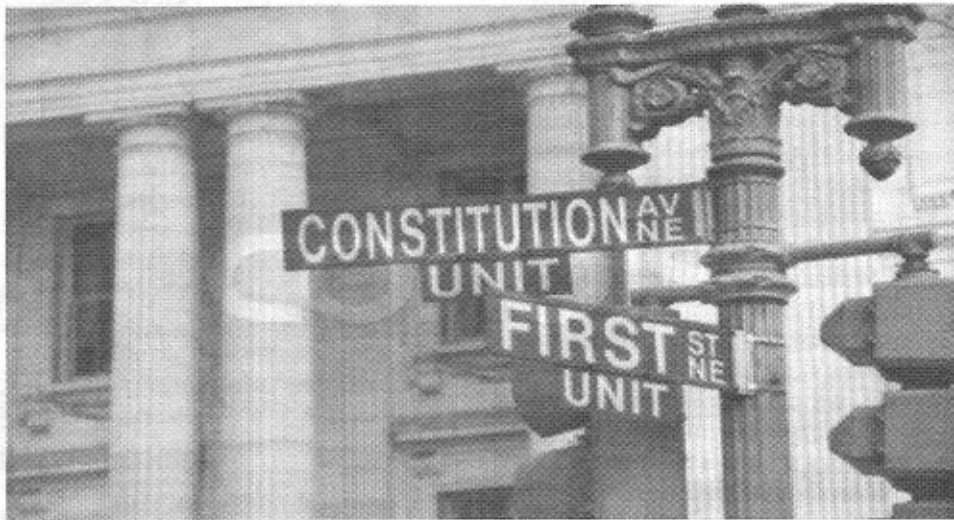
## SPEAKS

VOICES FROM INSIDE... A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2006

# HJR80 Passes House!

Bill Ryan



emphasized that public safety would be a top priority to the Commission. Compelling testimony was provided by men who had served long prison terms and are now contributing members of society.

Research was submitted to the Committee on the fiscal impact new guidelines would have. Supporters provided current costs per person and the total cost for the fiscal year. The research documented costs for each of the prisons with specific attention called to the four maximum security prisons where most lifers/long-termers are incarcerated.

Research indicates that on average Illinois taxpayers pay \$34,000 to incarcerate each person and \$42 million for each institution. If 10% of the 4,500 long-termers currently serving 30-year sentences were paroled, it would mean a reduction in expenditures of at least \$21 million annually.

If you assume this same 10% would serve 60 years under the current system, the savings is \$630 million dollars without considering inflation increases. The HJR 80-supporters strongly urged the Commission to examine the fiscal impact and current policies to determine if savings can be realized without

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Stateville Speaks is sponsored, in part, by **N.I.V.**

On February 23, HJR 80 passed unanimously out of the full house and now will be submitted for Senate Judiciary Committee and full body approval before going to the Governor for signature into law. This legislative process will occur in the next six weeks.

At the House Judiciary Committee hearing, HJR 80-supporters argued that passage of this law is needed for several reasons, including low recidivism rates for long-termers released from prison; an Illinois Constitutional mandate to restore incarcerated people to "useful citizenship"; the fact that Illinois is one of a handful of states that does not have parole, and one of only six states in which all sentences of life mean life without possibility of parole. It was

*hope / change / redemption*

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# Coverage

WHEN YOU NEED IT

INMATES IN EACH DOC PRISON CAN SUBMIT ARTICLES TO  
STATEVILLE SPEAKS

## When Enough is Never Enough

Cole, N.I.V.

On ABC's new series "InJustice" an inmate makes the statement: "What can you do for me? A group of lawyers came to see a man in here. They said, 'Don't worry. We're working for you. We're on your side. We'll get you out.' Years he waited for their answer, till one day the lawyers came back and said. 'Sorry. There's nothing more we can do. The judge says 'no.' Two days later, that man threw himself from the gallery. So, you see...my enemy in here is not the other inmates. It's not the guards, the alienation, the threats or even the judge. My enemy in here is hope."

While watching "inJustice," I stumbled upon the question: Despite the *intentions* of countless organizations seeking to offer assistance to inmates within the DOC, which would be more damaging: Failure to succeed at their efforts or the failure to try at all?

There's no question that the U.S. judicial system is in great need of improvement. Yet, no matter the case, inmates grow consistently impatient and angry with what they *consider* "do-nothing" institutions claiming to offer assistance. Some inmates claim: "They start off active, they engage you, they tell you what they want to do, what they can do and maybe they succeed in the beginning, but after a while, after they have received attention for their efforts, they begin to seek government funding for their goals. But the funding becomes a double edged sword. The need for assistance leads them to jump into bed with the very legislatures they sought to lobby."

Incidentally, a paradoxical conflict of interest arises. Some organizations that *began* as advocates of the people, somehow end up as puppets of the political parties they sought to, initially, sway. They become slaves to their own goals, budgets and grantors.

In addition, many inmates feel individually insulted by any organization that cannot work on their cases *personally*. One publicized success story could send an organization spiraling into a state of overwhelming chaos. Law firms, student groups, advocacy programs are swarmed with thousands upon thousands of letters and requests. No organization can deliver everything that people expect or want from it. The criticisms and disbeliefs, then, take flight. Some even stick.

The John Howard Association has been a victim of such **criticism**. Working for reform since 1901, The John Howard association has tackled and reigned victorious over countless cases for justice. However, they have faced a myriad of criticisms from inmates, inmate family members and legislators for their inability to help any and every case that comes across their desks. Despite their efforts, those unaided by The John Howard Association claim the organization doesn't do *enough*.

"There is so much to fix and everyone wants so much. So, then, what happens

*Continued on Page 3...*

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jeopardizing public safety.

Art Turner, the Democrat representative from North Lawndale, is the primary sponsor for HJR 80, and he provided needed legislative direction. Shaena Fazal gave oral and written testimony on behalf of the John Howard Association and the Long-Term Prison Policy Project. Cynthia Kobel prepared fiscal analysis. Aviva Futorian developed a fact sheet. As a member of the staff of the Wrongly Convicted Program at Northwestern law School, Sage Smith provided the Committee with written testimony about his experience as a prisoner in Illinois and his successful reentry in his community. Lionel Muhammad provided oral testimony about his 22 years of incarceration and his reentry into the world as a successful entrepreneur in a printing business.

State Representative Jim Durkin, a Republican from the Western suburbs, offered an amendment to HJR 80 to include C# issues in the research to be conducted by the Commission. This should enable the Commission to have access to additional dollars to study and research issues related to both lifers/long-termers and C# prisoners with indeterminate sentences.

Stateville Speaks urges passage of HJR 80 and again urges supporters to continue with the phone calls to the following:

- Governor Blagojevich 312.814.2121
- Speaker of the House Mike Madigan 773.581.8000
- House Minority Leader Tom Cross 217.782.1331
- Senate President Emil Jones.773.995.7748
- Senate Minority Leader Frank Watson.217.782.5755

For additional information and/or to help, please call Shaena Fazal 312. 782.1901 [Shaena.Fazal@gmail.com](mailto:Shaena.Fazal@gmail.com); or Bill Ryan at 708.531.9923 [nanatoad@comcast.net](mailto:nanatoad@comcast.net). Shaena is the project director of Long-Term Prison Project (LT3P), now affiliated with the John Howard Association, which is taking the lead in supporting HJR 80.

*When Enough is Never Enough ...*

when the Law firms catch on [to our efforts] ... and begin sending menial donations to accompany large boxes filled with hundreds of letters from inmates and inmate families wanting assistance?" During a meeting with Malcolm C. Young, the new Executive Director of the John Howard Association, this was a concern of Aviva Futorian, Board member of the Long Term Prisoner Policy Project – an advocacy group for the issues of inmates sentenced 30 or more years.

When every letter, every request, every need can't be answered, should that discredit so much success? And if that organization cannot do it all, are inmates better off without them? I think not.

Still, inmates feel let down so often, that they are almost habitually slow to cooperate with any organization offering assistance. Some inmates feel that certain organizations are simply exploiting the current state of IDOC in order to launder funds and line their pockets. But, one official argues. "They send letters questioning our efforts. They want us to send them proof of anything and everything that we're doing; every bill; every motion. But they don't realize that we don't have the resources to respond to all the letters.

As much as we would like to oblige, we simply can't. We're trying to concentrate what little money we have on attacking the issues. Isn't it sufficient that we're trying to do something rather than nothing?"

When asked what factors repeatedly prevent organizations from completing their tasks, the common answers are: Time, resources, manpower, legislative opposition and the mother of them all: **MONEY**. Frequently, there is the matter of pure exhaustion. The judicial situation of a particular inmate may seem very simple and hopeful, initially, but once started down the legal path, its endlessness and inequity can overwhelm even the most energetic

of advocates. So, would it be completely fair to say the goals and efforts of advocacy groups are simply smoke and mirrors that inadvertently taunt inmates with false hope?

It seems to me that the combined efforts of existing organizations, no matter how small or no matter how *seeming* unsuccessful, DO play a part in rustling the feathers of legislature; notifying the public of important issues and spreading knowledge in the realization that a problem truly exists within the judicial system. It is these consistent tiny measures that continue to inch and push toward change. The business of advocacy, as is true of ANY business, is not immune to fraud. However, I have always believed it better to support something that might fail rather than support nothing that WILL fail. And whereas I completely understand the heartache of constant rejection, disappointment and failure, some of the greatest philosophers have said: "Cast your nets;" "Open your Tents," It is only through these efforts that anything can happen. So, as for me, I plan to cast and open until I leave this earth. There is no shame in trying.

## What Can You Do?

### Help pass Bill HJR80 with ONE phone call.

1. Find your state representative.
2. Call and say: "I would like to ask my representative to support Bill HJR80 & support the New IDOC Budget"

**\*\*Don't know who your representative is? Call 217-782-4141 to find out.\*\***

Inmates, encourage family and friends to call and support Bill HJR80.

# Essays, Letters and Insight

PROPOSALS AND PERSUASIVE EDITORIALS

## Soldiers of Misfortune

A.D. Patterson, N.I.V.

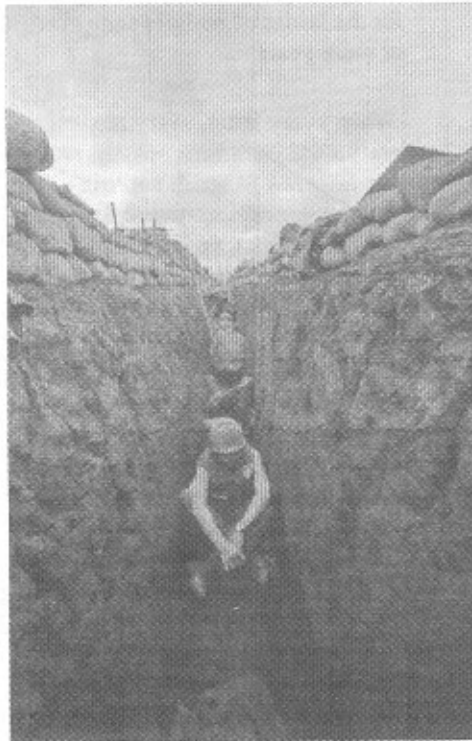
What do you think about when you hear the words redemption or atonement? Does your mind elevate you to a spiritual level? Do you envision Christ being nailed to the cross; sacrificing himself in atonement for the sins of the world; saving us from ourselves and our sinful existence?

What do you see when you look in the mirror? Do you reflect on your life; mulling over detrimental decisions that not only caused damage to yourself, but to others? Do you feel remorse or sorrow for the effects of your decisions?

It's my hope for us... incarcerated; fathers, husbands, brothers and sons to embrace a realization that would ignite a spark in our hearts; illuminating and heating a part of us that has been cold and dark for so long. It is my hope for that realization to become a catalytic driving force which pushes us toward atoning action.

I'm not trying to promote my own ideologies. I'm just trying to provoke thoughtful examination for both myself and for those around me. I'm aiming toward a point of self-examination and when we arrive at the destination of the deepest recess of our souls; there waiting for us is truth; the harsh, painful, self-accountable truth.

Truth has a way of clinging to you like a parasite; sucking from you every excuse you've ever contrived to justify your actions; every lie you bought into that sent you further into oblivion. Once you've faced the truth, you can't objectively blame others for your decisions. Once we face the truth, we realize that it wasn't *entirely* our mother's addiction or our father's absence or emotional detachment that made us who we are. It wasn't *entirely* the environmental degradation or the "system's calculated plan" to bring about our destruction. We look in the



mirror and we see only ourselves.

It's important that we face what is real. It's important that we inmates; we lovers; we brothers consider where our true intentions lie with appeals, with court proceedings; with movements, advocacy groups and "fighting for justice." What are we really fighting for? When I look in the mirror, I have to consider whether or not I am fighting for the truth or if I'm fighting to cover up my past mistakes. I have to consider whether or not I'm truly innocent, or honestly sorry or am I just sorry for getting caught in the consequences my actions have bestowed upon me; my family... my wife. If I don't address that now, then, no matter where I am I will never be truly free. I will, forever, be a prisoner.

It's only once I sincerely examine my intentions that I can march forward into

a proud conquest. It's only once my intentions are pure that I can begin to heal and begin to live the life of integrity that God desires for all of his children.

Some might read this and say. "So what?"... "Integrity is what?" I say it is the building up of character and self-confidence in the place of lives that were torn down. I believe it is spiritual cultivation; learning to persevere and overcome adversity. I believe it is carrying the responsibility of your mistakes forward. And rather than seek to erase those mistakes, seek to correct them, learn from them and make better a future from what is in the past.

The truth in your heart has no where to hide on the judgment day. And forgiveness isn't free, not even from God. So, I march forward seeking penance and atonement. Tell me... who will march with me?

## Soldier of Misfortune

He marches onto the battlefield of life to the beat of calamity; besieged by affliction, catastrophe and woe.

A dark cloud hangs over his head; raining distress. The rain drops stream down his face, mingling with the tears of frustration falling to the ground; creating mud puddles of stagnation; causing each step to be more drudging than the last.

As he gazes toward the journey ahead; vision darkened by despair, he thinks to himself, "Yes, life, you are a formidable adversary." And he smiles. It's a grin of desperate

Continued on page 10...

## Victor Woods: "A Breed Apart"

Vincent "Legg's" Galloway

On December 14, 2005, Victor Woods, a convicted drug dealer and forger who spent time in state and federal prisons, spoke to prisoners in Stateville. Mr. Woods came because he has turned his life around and is now an author and motivational speaker.

He was accompanied by two friends who had been incarcerated and now are free and entrepreneurs. Woods thanked Assistant Director Roberta Fews, Warden Dee Battaglia and Assistant Warden J. Dominquez for inviting him in to speak. Woods presented his program twice so the maximum numbers of guys could attend.

Woods mentioned some of the smartest people he ever met were in jail and prison. He asked us to read, study, and to hold on to our dreams. He said he often reflected on the words written over the chapel at the old Joliet prison: "Don't serve time, let time serve you."

Both the Christian Bible (Ecclesiastes) and the Quran speak about a time for everything. The Quran has a sura called "Asr (103)" which says, "man is in a great state of loss, except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds and join together in the mutual enjoining of truth, and of patience and constancy." The Bible and Quran speak about time and how we use it. Woods spoke about time and how we use it. We can make a change in our life now, even if we never get out of prison.

Toward the conclusion of his talk, Woods spoke about Stan "Tookie" Williams who wrote childrens books and the bad consequences of gang life. Williams was nominated five times for the Nobel Peace Prize and the Nobel Prize for literature before being executed by the state of California.

This program was very motivational and should have been taped so the men in Segregation and in C-grade could have heard the presentation.

Woods responded to questions and when told about *Stateville Speaks* he said that he would help in any way that he could and would leave his number with the Warden.

When I listened to Woods, I kept thinking of a saying I have heard that seems very appropriate, "Keep the faith. If we make it through the night, it'll be a better day. Remember it was dark before it was light."

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## Education NOW

Brother Kaashif Musheer

In everyday life, education is important for one's growth and development, especially since we as a Black people are often judged by our level of knowledge and way of thinking. A lack of knowledge of self and discipline can be overcome if we choose EDUCATION!!

One of the first steps toward change and self-improvement is the education of self. One good look into these prison warehouses and you'll see that there is very little actual thinking going on in our prison environment as well as in the streets. The real thinkers are few and that is what makes them noticeable. These are the Brothers and Sisters who take full advantage of the educational and vocational opportunities as well as put forth the effort to study, search and research the right books.

In doing time in these isolated, segregated and separated prisons, time is an essential factor. We should begin to become time conscious. In this way we can utilize our time to educate ourselves to the best of our ability. Valuable hours of each day are being wasted senselessly in useless pursuits. There is no harm in recreation but when entire days are spent playing board games, sports or watching television, then the perception and priorities have to be questioned.

*Continued on Page 7...*

# Foot Notes

## C NUMBER WEBSITE

"C Number" Web Site Tells the Whole Story

As you may or may not know, there remain about 290 prisoners in Illinois prisons who were sentenced before 1978 to indeterminate sentences (5-10, 10-25, 25-50 years, etc.) for the crimes they committed. When they reached the first possible out date, a parole board would then decide when the person was ready for release, somewhere within that sentencing range. Many of these 290 people have already served more time than people convicted of similar crimes after the sentencing law was changed.

There is a strong movement to rectify this unjust situation. Please visit the web site: [www.cnumber74.com](http://www.cnumber74.com). There you will be introduced to the complete "C Number" story that begs to be told, and heard, and changed.

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## What Can You Do?

Don't be helpless.  
Don't lie down to whatever  
displeases you.

## VOTE

Your vote is the most powerful tool in making change. Effect lawmakers to change laws by effecting their ability be elected.

Call: (312) 603-0906 to get registered

APRIL 2006

# From Prison to Paycheck

Richard Dyches

The belly of the beast is filled with people lacking the skills and education for a prosperous future in the economic arena. Little is being done within the bowels of the "correctional" process to ensure that those devoured by the fangs of this monstrosity are discharged into society with marketable abilities that will keep them from returning to a life of crime.

Those in the free world are often told that prisoners are given the knowledge and skills that will allow them to become law-abiding members of society upon release. This rhetoric does not do justice to the reality of the situation, but neither does it excuse prisoners from trying to find the means to better their lot in life. Prison labor does not provide the resources to prepare prisoners to join the workforce: this is a socio-economic issue which will affect the unemployment and crime rates if not dealt with effectively. With current fiscal cuts in much needed areas throughout the state, many of the programs which can make a difference on both sides of the prison walls are being eliminated.

Prison labor is a form of slave labor where the average prisoner has been earning 17 cents an hour for over 20 years. If a prison is fortunate enough to offer programs for prisoners, then the materials and vocational training are out-of-date, thereby not affording prisoners the ability to compete in the job market after release. In this day and age people are considered handicapped if they do not possess the basic knowledge of computer skills.

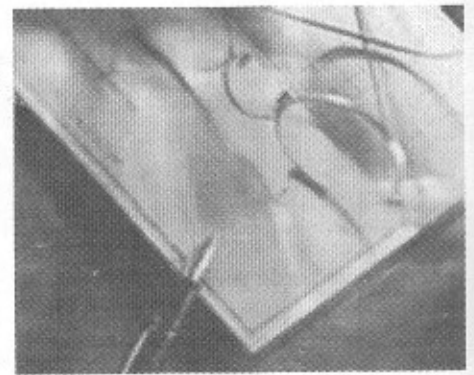
Ninety percent of prisoners will be released back into society some day

yet they are not afforded the opportunity to learn computer skills. Fundamental prerequisites and basic life skills like budgeting are also a thing of the past. The meager 17 cents is a long way from the amount that would instill money management skills after landing a job, and insufficient training in fields which can make prisoners employable is a contributing factor towards recidivism. In this era of punishment as opposed to reformation (rehabilitation being a myth), prison labor is in dire need of reconstruction to keep up with the demands of society and the current job market. Prisoners are being predisposed to fail.

From a prisoner's perspective, doing a prison term comes with many distractions—having guards on your back, peer pressure, walls closing in, and family conflicts. They can all bring about stress and frustration where a prisoner can easily lose focus and snap from the pressure. The monotony of a dreary, boring, and unproductive program assignment (prison job) does not relieve the idleness prevalent in prison. There is nothing worse for the mental well-being of those who find it difficult to cope with life in prison than being idle. Many become conditioned, wrapped up in worries and learned helplessness, so that failure to visualize and plan for a better life beyond the walls becomes the norm.

Former offenders have a strike against them because of their criminal past. Add to that inadequate job training, a substandard education, and the result is a person who does not stand a chance of finding satisfactory employment. The average citizen without a criminal record has a hard enough time finding a job! Former offenders are said to have an equal opportunity in becoming employable but hiring practices discriminate against former offenders. How can they be expected to excel under these circumstances?

They are seen as failures, and the stigma of past actions follow them long after release. Sincere attempts at staying crime-free and finding employment are difficult at best. It gets to the point where they



believe they are failures and continue a self-fulfilling prophecy where crime is the only thing that pays.

It becomes too cumbersome to take their skills—those utilized in selling drugs on the street, in persuasion, or in setting up a plan of action—to use them a constructive manner. To make matters worse, they are not trusted enough by prospective employers to see those talents as profitable to their business. There are many forms of discrimination in our society which prevent people from getting ahead in life. The poor, uneducated and unskilled person of color with a criminal record faces a nearly impossible situation.

It seems as though it is in the best interest of the criminal punishment system to keep prisoners ignorant in order to justify it and continue to spend billions of tax dollars each year to warehouse them. Training in vocational areas is simply not enough. Much more is called for. Most prisoners and those recently released know nothing of projects like Federal Bonding Program and Work Opportunity Tax Credit which can provide an edge towards obtaining employment. They do not know how to write a resume, go on an interview, or how to conduct a job search. They are unfamiliar with the agencies and grass-root organizations (such as John Howard Association and CURE) that provide such services.

Prisoners and those released must also do their part to keep the belly of the beast from expanding. STOP FEEDING THE ANIMAL!!!

*Education NOW Continued...*

Here are some suggestions for self improvement and self education:

1. Develop the habit of turning off that "tellie." Cut out television for one month and you will be surprised what you can accomplish with the time.
2. Begin to make daily schedules. Keep the list and check off what you read and researched and understood. Pick what you didn't finish aside, make a note to finish it, and do this every day.
3. Set short and long term goals. In order to obtain your goals, you must formulate a plan. For instance, if your goal is to obtain a GED, then your plan would include studying a few hours every day.
4. Read. There are all kinds of books to elevate your mind and stimulate our thought processes.

In conclusion, our time in these modern day isolation camps should not be wasted. We must reprogram our thinking process for change. The each one, teach one, concept should be manifested to change the locked down mind. Education is the only solution to part of the ongoing problem. NOW is the best time we have to develop this way of feeding our starvation. Education is the road to the liberation of self in freedom. This should be our primary objective. If this racist, broken system has given us a lot of time, then we should leave prison with a different outlook on life, a positive direction and knowledge to move forward. Get the best out of this situation and DON'T let this situation get the best of you.

Over the years, prison has changed me, but little has changed about prison. There are the same sights, sounds and I hear the same voices. I see many of the same faces returning time and time again. Other faces have become much younger. What all the faces seem to share in common is that lack of knowledge, education, and that lack of hope written in them.

Thank you my fellow Brothers and Sisters during this struggle for change and I thank Allah and hold a strong belief in change.

Here are some suggested readings:

- The Holy Quran*
- Black Men of the Nile* by Yusef Ben Jochohanan
- Elijah Muhammad on American Education* by Elijah Muhammad
- Stolen Legacy* by George James
- Nature Knows No Color Line* by J.A. Rogers
- African Origins of Civilization* by Chjeil Arta Diop
- We the Black Jews* by Jusef Ben Jochohanan

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## What A Fool Believes

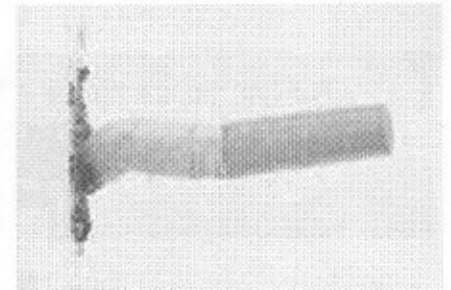
Jerome Franklin

A fool believes he can dilly-dally his way through life and that his half-hearted attempts at success will bring him much gain, never stopping to realize that anything worth having in life will come with a struggle and demands full straight-laced determination. A fool believes that he can continue to pile up wrongdoings after wrongdoings and never have to pay the piper for the afflictions he's caused.

I guess he thinks that old proverbial saying, "What goes around, comes around," are just empty words used by those that are not as tough as him. A fool believes that the world owes him something and when things don't go his way he is free of blame and justified for blaming others.

Only a fool is content to emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually neglect his woman believing that she will remain at his side.

This is what a fool believes.



## Stop Smoking Proposal

to Warden Dee Battaglia:

Vincent Galloway

We have many men here at Stateville that want to stop smoking but can't do it "cold turkey," so to speak. The Big Tobacco companies have been made to pay the states in a settlement because they know that smoking is bad for your health but they sell it any way. Could you start a program that will help us who want to stop smoking quit? Give us counseling, classes, or a support network. We could use the nicotine patch/or gum. This could be passed out by the Med. Tech. We would also need more exercise to stop the weight gain after we quit smoking. It would be good for our health as well as the staff that work here. You could also start a program for the staff who wants to stop smoking.

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## Do Something

William Hudson

Brother, I say, Get up and do something other than looking at that TV. Read a book, do a pull-up or something. Just don't sit there. I know how easy it is to do nothing. Brother, don't let yourself get into this way of doing nothing. Get up everyday and look at some books. One of those days, read one too!

# Good Men Locked

Dear Warden Battaglia,

In the world there must be laws and rules for society to follow or the result would be chaos. Those who follow the rules and abide by the laws are rewarded. They receive promotions, raises in pay, houses, cars, etc. Those who do not follow the rules and break the laws are put into jails or prisons like Stateville. The proposal I would like to make deals with the punishment, without reward, system that is presently being used at Stateville prison.

At Stateville, if we don't follow the rules or break any law, the punishment is segregation, C—grade, and loss of good conduct credits. However, if you do follow the rules and laws while serving your sentence there are no rewards for doing so other than good conduct credits for the few who are eligible to receive them. Those serving life terms or 100% sentences receive nothing. Maximum Security Prisons are filled with mostly inmates serving these type of sentences and are considered dangerous environments for staff to work in because of this population.

My PROPOSAL would make this prison a safer place for the staff to work in and a better place for inmates, who follow the rules and regulations, to live in as they complete their sentences or live out the rest of their natural lives.

**A REWARD SYSTEM FOR THOSE WHO MAINTAIN A RECORD OF NO SERIOUS RULES VIOLATIONS AND A GOOD BEHAVIOR WITH STAFF GENERALLY.**

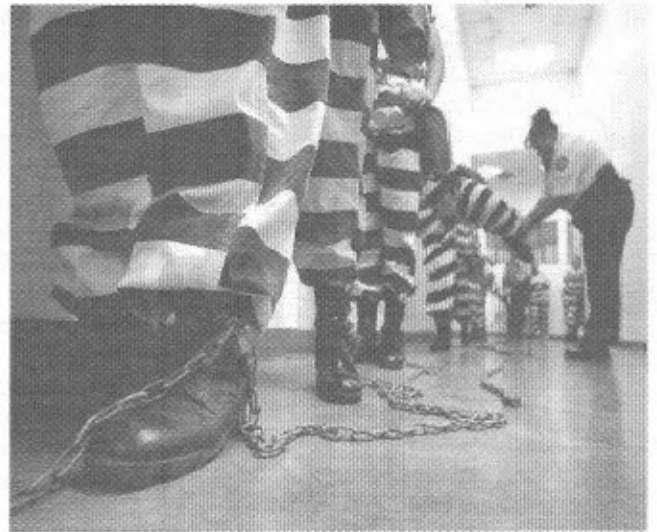
At present, when an inmate or just a few inmates cause a serious problem or threat to the security of the institution every inmate here gets locked down and his visit, phone, and commissary privileges are suspended. There is no incentive to follow the rules or to respect the staff with good behavior so inmates act out with disrespect and/or violence with other

## Down

Bruce Engle

inmates and with staff. I propose that an HONOR HOUSING UNIT be opened and made available to inmates who maintain a good conduct record for at least one year and extra privileges for those inmates housed there. This could be done easily and would result in a great incentive for other inmates to behave themselves and stay out of trouble too, so they too could gain entry into the Honor House and the extra privileges. This Honor House would not go on Lockdown when all the other housing units did and could be used as a way to keep the prison running smoothly when Lockdowns were required. Extra privileges would have to be approved by the administration but, I submit: extra showers, extra yards and gym time, MSU commissary shop allowed with hot pots also approved for purchase, and honor jobs for those in financial need. I believe there are already enough inmates eligible to fill a housing unit and the incentive this would create eventually would fill another house or two.

**PLEASE CONSIDER THIS IN THE UPCOMING 2006 YEAR AS A WAY TO IMPROVE THE CONDITIONS HERE AND MAKE IT A SAFER AND BETTER PLACE FOR US ALL.**



## Foot Notes

### CALL FOR DEATH PENALTY RELATED ART

This is an international, all-media, juried exhibition on view May 6 through May 22, 2006 at Gallery Lombardi in Austin, Texas and online for at least one year at <http://www.deathpenaltyartshow.org>.

Work in all media is eligible. Artwork must address the issue of the death penalty. We welcome submissions from artists who engage the issue from all sides. Purpose of the art show is to foster the creation of new artwork on the death penalty, to celebrate artwork that may already have been created and to encourage and enhance civic engagement and dialogue about the death penalty. Cash awards totaling \$1,300, including \$500 for Best in Show. \$15 Entry fee.

Contact: Death Penalty Art Show, Texas Moratorium Network OR 512-302-6715 OR  
<http://www.deathpenaltyartshow.org> OR  
[info@deathpenaltyartshow.org](mailto:info@deathpenaltyartshow.org)



# Updates and Progress

PRODUCTIVE NEWS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS



## Stateville Book Club

Shaena Fazal, LT3P

The Stateville Book Club has been meeting monthly since early November. A group of about 10 men meet with 2 volunteer leaders. One of the first books read and discussed was *Skeletons On the Zahara* by Dean King. Mr. King was kind enough to send copies of the book to the club. *Skeletons* is a true adventure story. It concerns the wreck of an American brig off the coast of Africa in 1813. The crew was captured and enslaved by nomadic Islamic tribesmen. Most lived to return home and tell their story. The following are excerpts from letters of thanks sent to the author by book club members Jonathan Bartlett and Eddie Brown.

*Jonathan Bartlett:* "Your book helped me come to a better understanding of the harshness of life in the desert. It was a quick and interesting read . . . Reading about the eastern seaboard before the Monroe Doctrine was in effect was fascinating. It's hard to believe that not too long ago, as far as history is concerned, American sailors were at the mercy of European powers. Seeing America now as a superpower I find it enthralling to think of our humble beginnings . . . I think any

disenfranchised person can identify with the struggle and hardships of the Commerce's crew. Being a prisoner and a marginalized member of society myself, I found it very easy to relate to James Riley and his crew. . . The socially accepted abuse that was heaped upon the crew by their captors is still prevalent in society today. It may be in a different form or guise, but we as Americans need look no further than how we treat our prisoners of war. . . . I found both Sidi Hamet and John Riley fascinating. . . Both men are proof that life is more than black and white issues. . . After reading their story you see their lives as a series of gray issues that we choose to perceive as black and white, right and wrong, good and evil. . . After reading your book I found it easier to identify with the African American slaves. I think in our politically correct society today everyone would agree that slavery was wrong. However I think it's hard for the average white American to comprehend the atrocities that were committed upon black slaves. However the imagery in your book was so vivid, any man with an ounce of dignity couldn't help but feel horrified. . . You wrote a great book. I hope more are forthcoming.

*Eddie Brown:* I knew that when I joined the Book Club that I would not be reading the types of books that I would select if I were to walk into a bookstore . . . So, on my first day of the Book Club, when presented with your book, *Skeletons On the Zahara*, my first thought was "Boring, this book will probably be so dry I'll think I'm in the Sahara desert. Wow! I think I'm collecting sand in my shoes already!" After reading the book I'm glad my thoughts were not recorded or voiced publicly, because I was wrong. I was also reminded to "never judge a book by its cover". . . I felt connected to Riley's plight because when in a seemingly hopeless situation with no or little

possibility of a way out; and while still maintaining a strong will to live and return to life as you knew it before your plight (i.e. for Riley, slavery, and for myself, natural life in prison) we both draw strength from faith in God. . . I believe his faith provided him with the strength to continue to battle for himself and his crew. He was able to draw hope from his faith and it was so strong that his slave master, Sidi Hamet, felt it and proclaim, "Allah's blessings are upon you." Or "Allah is watching over you." . . . I don't think I'll ever forget either James Riley or Sidi Hamet. As I continue my incarceration, no matter what struggles that I face I will understand that God is still watching over me. . . I thank you for sharing your book with us.

More volunteers are needed for the Book Club. Please contact *Stateville Speaks* if you are interested.

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## NOTES from the PUBLISHER

### Lawsuit Update

A settlement has been reached between myself and the IDOC regarding the federal lawsuit (Ryan v. Briley et. al.) alleging violation of my First Amendment rights as publisher of *Stateville Speaks*. The revised IDOC administrative regulations are subject to the approval of the Joint Commission on Administrative Regulations. It is anticipated that the approval will be forthcoming in the next twelve months.

*Continued on Page 10...*

*Lawsuit Update Continued...*

The settlement establishes for the first time specific notification time frames that IDOC must follow when a publication is censored. These specific notifications are necessary to insure that constitutional due process is honored. There were no damages sought by me.

The settlement conference was very amicable and the cooperation of the IDOC representative was much appreciated.

**Long-Term Prisoner Policy Project**

The Long-Term Prisoner Policy Project has received the mail that you have sent. Shaena Fazal, the staff person at LT3P, is prohibited from sending non-legal mail to prisoners as long as she remains a volunteer at Stateville. We are in the process of asking for this restriction to be lifted. In the meantime, we ask for your patience and please know that we do receive and read all of your mail.

**Program Plans**

- Over 50 Keiros volunteers are taking part in extensive training to prepare for the upcoming Keiros Prison Ministry International program to be held during April 2006. While the four-day program is presented from a Christian perspective, inmates from different or no religious backgrounds will be invited to attend. This interdenominational Christian ministry will be an ongoing program with monthly meetings to follow the retreat.
- Forty-two inmates will be SELECTED by the staff. Those attending must agree not to have visitors the retreat weekend. If an inmate leaves the retreat, he will not be allowed to return.
- Planning is underway for a series of motivational seminars for guys both inside and on the farm. It is anticipated that this program will be launched during the summer. Volunteers



are currently being recruited and curriculum developed.

- Warden Battaglia has approved Cable TV with the necessary paperwork being processed in the IDOC Central Office. Final approval must be given by Director Roger Walker.
- Modifications in the rotation schedule for commissary may be changed during the next three months. The schedule is under review.

**Special Issue of Stateville Speaks**

The June 2006 issue will be the first one devoted to **creative writing**. Send us short stories and poems. (We especially need short stories!) Please limit submissions to 500 - 750 words. Submissions should be postmarked by May 1, 2006. Let us hear from you!

**Subscriptions**

Effective in June only paid subscribers will receive *Stateville Speaks*. Donations have enabled us to provide copies past the subscription date for many people; however, with the large numbers of inmates requesting, we will no longer be able to provide free copies to anyone else.

Please renew your subscription and support this vital newspaper. If you are unsure when your subscription ends, please contact Bill Ryan by email at [nanatoad@comcast.net](mailto:nanatoad@comcast.net) or call 708.531.9923

*Soldier of Misfortune Continued...*

determination; inspired by a secret, something intangible; something unseen that lays hold of his heart when the battle is at its thickest.

He engages with a lion's heart to fight; he lunges at his foes, wielding a sword of iron resolve. A breastplate of resilience guards his heart; giving him the ability to bounce back. Integrity surrounds his midsection, while his loins are girdled with sacrifice. He's a modest man; no "bling". The only jewels he possesses are his seeds. The love of his wife is his wealth and his mansion is in heaven...

He is a lover  
He's a warrior  
He's more than a conqueror... He's a soldier of misfortune.

# What Can You Do?

## Stay Informed.

**Subscribe** to Stateville speaks for only \$10.00

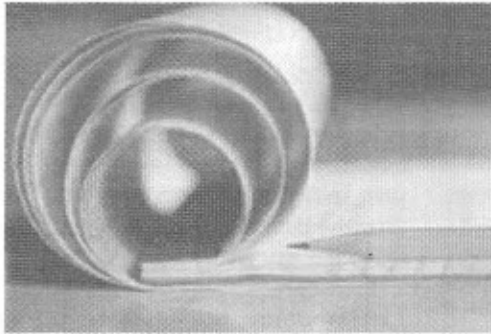
**Make a donation** to the LT3P so they can continue in their efforts to create bills and pass bills that make change.

**Join the hundreds** who have already joined the N.I.V. mission statement. Receive post cards and updates about events and bills that are being worked on by LT3P.

The N.I.V. **Mission** is to better society by assisting to reduce overcrowding of prisons, reduce recidivism and improve societal productivity by strengthening rehabilitation, reforming sentencing and implementing programs to advocate positive change, productivity and restorative justice for the benefit of society as a whole.

# Creative Corner

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



## I can!

Renaldo Hudson

I can sing a song.  
I can dance all night long.  
I can change my mind from bad to good.  
I can even smile, when I'm  
misunderstood.  
I can touch the sun, I can jump higher than  
you can run!  
I can see behind the walls.  
I can wear my mask all day long. I can  
destroy a city. You see. I am. I am. I am. I  
am. I forgot who I am. Therefore can I  
be?

## Doves of Hope

By M. del Sol

Who will hear my feathered rage?  
Who will give ear to their fluttering  
laments?  
In whose palms will their wings rest?  
Who will listen to my voice singing  
Through the throat of hope's snow-blood  
flame?  
The one whose hand will hold my heavy  
heart as the other opens the door of my  
prison.  
The one whom I search for,  
The one who searches for me

## Solitude of the Flesh

M. del Sol

Across the solitude of the flesh

are stitched the silences and shadows of  
life living through the wounds of  
suffering stone, whose walls mirror  
silhouettes of hunger.

As they gather close, gathering closely,  
shadow against shadow present, each  
touches what dissolves before the eyes,  
and says what silence leaves unsaid.  
How the lament of time Stitches each  
silent silence, How the sighs of solitude  
thread each hungry shadow.  
Darkening the eyes that reflect the wear  
that despair has given to faith.  
Yet I go on licking and twisting  
the thread of each fear, and,  
passing it through the eye of hope's  
needle I saw each silence and shadow  
on white eyelids of paper.

## Metamorphosis

Vincent "Legg's" Galloway

Change  
You are what you think  
think right be right.  
Da bigger man is the one who  
walks away from a fight . . .  
Why are you fighting your fellow man?

Change  
Bill gave us a voice,  
we all have a choice.  
Stop singing a rap song hook,  
and pick up a book.  
Change the way you look at the world,  
treat our woman and girls.

Change  
What the mind can conceive and believe  
the mind can achieve.  
from Legg's Diamond the hoodlum  
change Bilal Wakil the Muslim.

Metamorphosis

*Continued on page 12...*

## Join the N.I.V. Foundation

No dues, no commitment. Inmates,  
encourage family and friends to join  
hundreds as a collective force to make  
an impression on legislature. See our  
mission statement on page 10.

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Mail slip to: N.I.V. P.O. Box 8546, Chicago, IL 60680.

transformation  
a marked change in appearance,  
character  
condition or function;  
change in the structure and habits.  
Change...  
We can stand on our feet

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Rosa Parks didn't give up her seat.  
2006, what are we going to do?  
Live on our knees, joke and shoot the  
breeze or  
change the way that we think!

## In God

Willie Scales

In God's World, all things are possible!  
Isn't God wonderful?  
You and I are the vessels  
Through which God does his own works.  
God has an individual plan for each  
person.  
God loves us and we are special to Him.  
God listens to me as I share my innermost  
thoughts and feelings.  
Only a fool would disregard all the  
evidence of God around him.  
God's grace restores the faith we need to  
overcome our fear.  
For only God can meet each need  
And take the hurt away.

## WE MUST

Willie Sterling Jr.

We must turn our tribulations and  
tragedies into treasures of true testimonies  
of triumphs and thus translate to the world  
our tremendous transformations.

We must vow to virtuously revitalize our  
visions into vivid valuable victories.

We must turn our stagnating stumbling  
blocks and setbacks into solid stepping  
stones, showing a sincere sense of survival  
and seeking of success.

We must turn our pessimistic perilous  
problems into optimistic opulence of  
overcomings; never allowing any  
obstacles to obstruct our opportunities.

We must turn away from all evil and  
negativity, and turn toward perpetually  
only pursuing things that reflect a vastness  
of humility, morality and goodness.

Foremost to survive and stay alive C-  
numbers, we must turn to God and trust  
Him to enlighten us,  
embrace us, enrich and help us to  
endure.

## Intimate Conversations

A.D., Captured Sun, Patterson

I can't grasp hold of any serenity. My  
mind is unstable and my heart is full  
of pity. My soul is insatiable, I don't  
feel capable...

So you want to end it all now? Is that  
what you're telling me? Your  
struggles have given you a suicidal  
tendency? Your light is dimming;  
your spirit diminishing; once it's  
quenched, there's no rekindling. Is  
that what you want?

I feel worthless, helpless and  
hopeless; incapable and unstable;  
unwilling and unfulfilling...  
consumed... and I assume I will  
eventually resume, but the loss is  
overwhelming - the outcome looks  
grim. How can I look toward a future  
so dim when the past is so bright?  
Illumined by a world void of light?  
Roads built and guided by blind men  
who see past your needs and lead you  
to the desires of your heart...

Rejected by the faithful and embraced  
by the infidels; taught by ignorant and  
shunned by the wise; there is hope yet  
because GOD stores up every tear that  
I cry... But he has to thaw them out  
first, because the rivers that flow from  
this soul are so cold...

Skating down icy roads... dealing  
with intimate foes; demons that have  
known me from birth call me by my  
first name; leaving my will chained  
and my heart maimed... Pieces of my  
life lay tattered and scattered;  
disturbed by a whirlwind of turmoil  
and dancing before my eyes like a  
motley crew of leaves... dead...  
dying... resurrected to torment me  
again with guilt and shame... no  
escaping this stigma, permanently  
engraved in my brain like 30 lashes to  
the flesh; welts and wounds horrific to  
the sight; painful to the touch; swollen  
and ready to bust. Is there no healing  
for damaged emotions? Is there no  
silence to the noise? Even GOD  
was able to rest... briefly... why toil  
when everything is fleeting? I have to  
keep going... Have to keep going...  
Have to keep going... Have to  
discover the purpose of this next  
breath... there is only rest in death...  
Rest can wait.