

## NEIU EDITION

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# STATEVILLE

## SPEAKS

VOICES FROM INSIDE...

SEPT 2010

## Northeastern Illinois By Bill Ryan

### University's Edition of *Stateville Speaks*

Welcome to Northeastern Illinois University's (NEIU) latest edition of *Stateville Speaks*. With pleasure I announce the expanded role of the University in the production of this newspaper. This is an excellent opportunity to strengthen the publication further than I ever imagined possible. It is our goal to magnify the voice of you, the prisoner, while helping to bring to light the much needed reform of our prison system. We are excited about this new institutional partnership; however, it does entail a few logistical changes. Beginning August 1:

1. All articles and letters for publication should be addressed to: *Stateville Speaks*, c/o Justice Studies Department, LWH 4062, 5500 N. St. Louis Ave., Chicago IL 60625-4699. Any letters sent to me at the Westchester address will be forwarded to the NEIU address. Though I will remain as

a consulting editor and continue to do all that I can to help this paper thrive, I will be concentrating my efforts on legislation and volunteering inside prisons. Most of you know that the latter precludes me from direct correspondence with inmates.

2. NEIU students will respond to letters. This will be a learning process for them. Your candor about your life on the inside is appreciated and imperative for the students to gain understanding of prison life. In return they will do their best to answer your general questions regarding prison policies and proposed or potential policy changes. They will be unable to address individual, personal, or legal issues. They will, however, research and write about pressing systemic issues that you, the inmates, deem most important. While the student response procedures are still being implemented, we hope to have our system in place this summer. We receive many thoughtful letters, but we are unable to

print many of them due to length. We can only consider letters that are 1-2 pages. When submitting a letter, please let us know if we may use your name or if you would prefer your name withheld. Although some students may stay on longer, most students will only work on *Stateville Speaks* for a few months.

3. We are thrilled that Cynthia Kobel continues as the publisher. NEIU Justice Studies Professor Kingsley Clarke and NEIU graduate student Gayle Tulipano will be joined by additional NEIU staff, who will provide direction to students. We hope to engage other students, beyond the Justice Studies Department. Again, we would like to give our many thanks to Cynthia for her untiring dedication and support of *Stateville Speaks*.

*Continued on Page 6...*

*hope / change / redemption*

# Coverage

WHEN YOU NEED IT

INMATES IN EACH DOC PRISON CAN SUBMIT ARTICLES TO  
STATEVILLE SPEAKS

## Interview with IDOC Director, Michael

By NEIU Students,  
with Cynthia Kobel

### Interview with IDOC Director Michael Randle

*In the last issue we featured an interview by NEIU and Stateville Speaks staff with then newly appointed Director of the I.D.O.C., Michael Randle. This is the second installment of that interview. We want to thank Director Randle for his time and willingness to answer our questions. We have listed our questions and followed them with a condensed version of Director Randle's written and verbal responses. Watch for the third and final installment in our next issue.*

**Q:** Wardens hold key position in Corrections. How will you insure wardens carry out your corrections philosophy given that practically no new wardens have been hired and those in positions have been trained in a punitive approach to corrections?

**A:** I would not agree that wardens have been trained in a punitive approach. That being said, there will be measurements established to monitor wardens' progress in meeting certain goals, including policy changes. There will be increased interaction between supervisor and subordinate leading up to the annual evaluation.

**Q:** The Missouri maximum security prison in Jefferson City and Angola in



Louisiana (the largest maximum prison in the U.S.) have demonstrated the value of programs in maximum prisons. Both institutions report that security concerns have been greatly lessened by positive programming. What is your position?

**A:** I agree good programming will help reduce violence.

**Q:** In the past, IDOC officials have verbally indicated support for volunteers but some wardens and others discourage usage. You have said you support volunteers. How will you show this support and increase the numbers in programs, such as the successful Stateville Book Club and Kairos in Stateville and Dwight?

**A:** I am very much in support of volunteers. As an example, we are changing procedures so that a volunteer approved in one prison is approved to be a volunteer in all prisons, although the volunteer will have to participate in orientation training at each prison. The Kairos program will be implemented soon in Menard. I will support expansion of Book Club programs.

**Q:** Speaking of volunteers, *Stateville Speaks* has had articles about the value of Impact of Crime on Victims (ICVC) program in Missouri. There have been efforts for 5 years to implement the program here but nothing happens. What will you do to implement this program as well as the

transitional program called Horizons? The ICVC is free and Horizons has minimal costs.

**A:** It is my understanding there is continuing discussion regarding implementing Impact of Crime of Victims Classes but all details have not been resolved.

**Q:** We have several questions that focus on medical issues: When an inmate has an illness, such as high blood pressure, how soon can the inmate be seen by medical personnel?

**A:** For non-emergency medical issues, inmates must fill out a request form to see the doctor. These inmates are seen within 72 hours of making such a request. Inmates with emergency medical issues are seen immediately.

**Q:** If an inmate has a serious injury, is that inmate able to receive health care outside of the facility?

**A:** If an inmate needs medical attention that cannot be provided at the facility, he/she is transported to a local hospital.

**Q:** Is the IDOC open to independent mental health oversight at its facilities?

**A:** No. But we are interested in having an independent assessment of the entire health care delivery system in an effort to provide the best care in an efficient manner.

*Continued on Page 6*

# An Unconventional, Unforgettable Education

By Cynthia Kobel

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### Observations from the Editor:

As writers for *Stateville Speaks*, the students in the Justice Studies Department at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) are getting an in-depth look into the Illinois prison system. Not only have they met the Director of Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and people who work in the system, they had a tour of Stateville, the namesake prison, and are getting to know the prisoners.

Each semester, a panel of former inmates has visited Professor Kingsley Clark's class to talk about their experiences. The three men who spoke on April 12 at NEIU Jacob Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies were all C#s. These are prisoners who were given indeterminate sentences before 1979. These three men spent more than 30 years in prison before being released by the Prisoner Review Board (see box on Illinois parole). The three men presented different reflections on their experiences and described the difficulties of their release. "When I realized I was about to be released, I was terrified. After 34 years I was used to the scheduled. I made no decisions. In prison, everybody does what he has to do to survive. You never show fear. At night you may cry in silence, but during the day you walk with your chest out and a hard face," one man, who is now working in the legal profession, explained.

"Psychologically they (the guards) put everything on us and they do it intentionally and a lot of guys lose it. I found that anything you go through in life you cannot just sit there. I learned that it's going to be all right. I never forget and I will never forgive, but I work to take that time back."

The second man spoke only about what he is doing now. He is working as a paralegal and for F.A.I.T.H, Inc., as well as Ceasefire. He has been active in politics, working for re-elections of state senators and representatives. He hasn't been out of prison for long so he is jumping into life. He's engaged and ready to settle down.

The third speaker is an activist, helping other C#s get out and working on the streets to do something about kids who are killing each other. He knows what it is like to be a gang member. He was a gang leader and no one, in IDOC or the police on the streets, forgets that. "They never leave you alone. They don't let you resign," he said. After he was arrested, he spent time at Stateville, then he was put on the "circuit", as they called it and moved from one prison to another. When he got comfortable at one prison, IDOC would move him to the next until they built Tamms. Then he was sent there.

As hard as his time was, he reflected, "All my friends are

either dead, doing time or messed up on drugs. Incarceration was a blessing rather than a curse because I could have ended up dead."

All three agreed that they returned to a different world than the one they left: cell phones, computers . . . it's a technical world and "we feel like cavemen." However, each man has a cell phone and a computer. It didn't take them long to catch up.

The class comes alive during these encounters. The students are amazed at the stories, and the action really begins when the students ask questions. The questions range from the daily schedule of prisoners to what interaction is like on the inside. The men tell it straight, down to how many pieces of toilet paper they are allowed. This brought back memories for two of the men and they started laughing. The interaction and camaraderie between the men, who don't see one another that often but who know each other well, is inspiring for the students.

The students in the Justice Studies class may become police officers, social service practitioners, lawyers, or politicians. They chose to work on *Stateville Speaks* as their community service program. Professor Clarke, Bill Ryan, and I believe it is essential to have former prisoners talk to the students in order for them to write for the newsletter.\*

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\*\*This issue of Stateville Speaks is generously supported by Cynthia Kobel.\*\*

# Legislative Hearing: Testimony on Elderly

By Bill Ryan



As publisher of the prison newspaper *Stateville Speak* and through visits, I have been in touch with hundreds and hundreds of prisoners, many of whom are long-termers. These contacts provided the impetus for my being here today to talk about the elderly in our prisons.

I see first-hand that some people have changed under the most difficult of circumstances. Not everyone has changed but some have. When looking to reduce prison population, reduce costs and provide assurances for public safety, we should look to the elderly in our prisons. Research study after research study shows that the elderly recidivate at a much lower rate than anyone else. Age indeed is the best rehabilitator.

A study in Pennsylvania a few years ago found a recidivism rate of less than 5% for those released after serving 35 years and reaching age 50. The overall recidivism rate in Illinois must be over 50%.

Last year a bill, HB 4154, sponsored by Art Turner was approved in committee but defeated in a House vote. This bill provided that a prisoner who had served 25 consecutive years and reached age 50 would be eligible to apply for parole. (There is wide consensus that prisoners' bodies act as if they are ten years older than chronological age because of previous life style, stress, and poor medical care.) There were numerous requirements in HB 4154 that people would have to meet to show that they no longer present a threat to public safety.

In my view victims and their families are not required to be in support of legislation like HB 4154. The pain is so real and emotions so intense and long-lasting. Frankly I am not even sure what my reaction would be, God forbid, if a loved would be victimized. I also believe those of us who are not victims have a real responsibility to view sentencing in light of broader

principles than the pain of an individual family.

These are the basic questions raised by HB 4154: Can people change? Does it matter if they do? What is the purpose of long term sentences—to protect the public? To punish the guilty? Both? When these fundamental goals have been successfully met, does continued imprisonment serve any moral or even legal purpose? It is worth mentioning parole in Illinois was eliminated in 1978, so a life or pro facto life is an in-house death sentence.

An elderly bill should be viewed in the context of our criminal justice system and democratic principles of fairness and utilizing the least restraint necessary to maintain social order. The United States incarcerates more people than any country in the world and the vast majority of them are poor and people of color.

I hear story after story of childhood abuse, no schooling,

no jobs, young men and women left to fend for themselves in an environment where guns and drugs are rampant. These factors are not excuses for personal responsibility but they are factors. I believe strongly in personal responsibility but factors that bring one into the criminal justice system should be recognized.

I was and am active in abolition of the death penalty. As we know, there are significant flaws in death penalty system. These very same flaws are present in general population - maybe even more. There are innocent men and women, the same impact of racism, the same

stories of incompetent representation and wrongly convicted. Almost every day someone wrongfully convicted is being exonerated from prison.

I don't mean to give the impression everyone in prison is innocent or wrongfully convicted, as that is not the case, but there are enough to give us pause. Nor do I want to give the impression that every man and woman in prison has changed, as this is not reality.

A word on costs. It costs \$75,000 per year to house an elderly prisoner, so if 10 are released the saving is \$750,000; 100 elderly released would save \$7,500,000. Some elderly prisoners can be released with virtually no risk to public safety and huge costs savings.

There will be a bill introduced in 2011 legislative session similar to HB 4154.\*\*

# House Committee Hearings Address Unsustainable Corrections Budget

*A New Direction in Corrections Would Increase Public Safety and Cut Costs*

CHICAGO—April 26, 2010  
Four Illinois House Committees—House Appropriations, Public Safety, Criminal Law, and Prison Reform—held a rare joint hearing today to address the crisis in Illinois corrections. Chaired by Representatives Karen A. Yarbrough, Constance A. Howard, and Eddie Washington, the hearing allowed policy makers, non-profit administrators, mental health experts, and re-entry providers to testify about rehabilitation, treatment, and prevention programs. Such programs are required inside and outside prisons to lower recidivism rates, diminish the state's reliance on incarceration, and save money.

Rep. Yarbrough, chair of the Appropriations Committee, said this was why her committee sponsored the hearings: "We have been doing the same thing for 20 years, at great cost, and it isn't working. We need a new direction in Corrections, and we should start asking how we can bring down the recidivism rate." Malcolm Rich, Executive Director of the Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice, told the committees, "The Cook County criminal justice system

has become a de facto mental-health and drug treatment center. We must create community-based alternatives instead. They work."

Illinois's high recidivism rate, combined with new laws that increase prison sentences and limit IDOC discretion for early release, are certain to add to a prison population that has grown by 1,000 since January of 2010. Yet in a state with a \$12 billion

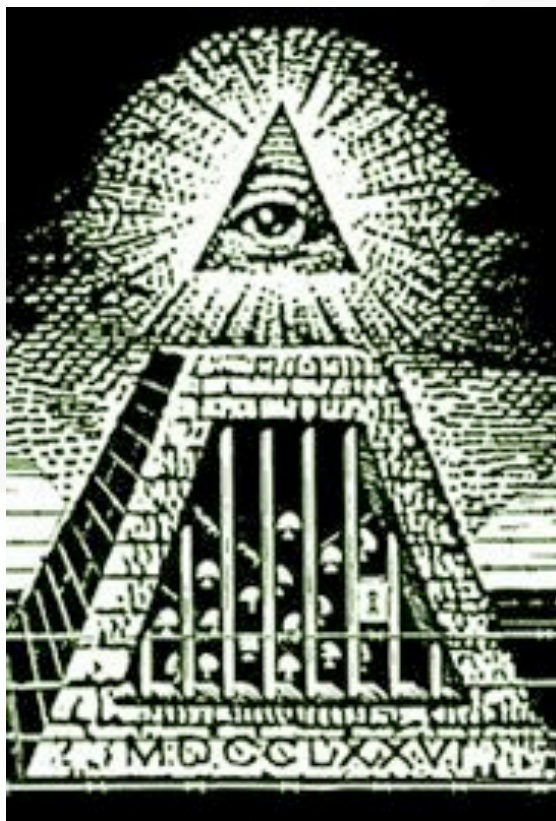
deficit, the IDOC, whose budget is nearly \$1.3 billion, will be a target for cuts. Rep. Washington argued that legislators and the public need to better understand the cost of mass incarceration and the case for reform. "We have an excellent, new IDOC director who understands the issues. But he inherited an impossible situation. Now legislators need to do our part. All evidence shows that we can cut costs and increase public

safety. Why don't we? We are lacking only political will."

Mark Heyrman, a law professor at the University of Chicago and facilitator of the Mental Health Summit, addressed the relative ease with which community-based treatment could prevent large numbers of prisoners with mental illness from entering the system or returning to prison. The savings would be enormous. Malcolm C. Young, the director of the Programs for Prison Reentry Strategies at Northwestern University School of Law, warned that Illinois is currently on a path for increased Corrections spending, and provided examples of states that have lowered incarceration rates and crime rates.

Many speakers addressed the ethical and practical scandal of warehousing prisoners without rehabilitative goals. John Maki of the John Howard Association of Illinois recommended improving the Department's step-down policy and increasing educational and vocational programming. Laurie Jo Reynolds and others from Tamms Year-Ten pointed out that the cost of isolation at Tamms supermax, estimated at \$90,000 per year, is three to four

*Continued on page 8...*



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recidivism and improve societal  
productivity by strengthening  
rehabilitation, reforming sentencing and  
implementing programs to advocate

## Northeastern Cover Story Cont...

4. We would like to announce two new features that will be added to upcoming editions. The first will be a women's section, dedicated to concerns of incarcerated women, such as, health care, dietary needs, contact with children, positive relationships, and more. The other feature is an invitation to DOC staff to submit articles or letters, so as to encourage *Stateville Speaks* to be a forum for an exchange of ideas. We do so under the transparency and good faith shown by the current leadership of Director Randle (For more on the Director's plans, please see the rest of his interview in this



express themselves, for staff and prisoners to address their concerns and to advocate for positive change. The added goal at NEIU is to foster an environment of justice with compassion and an understanding and desire to help institute change within Illinois prisons. Remember, today's students are tomorrow's policymakers.

Feel free to write to NEIU, at the above address, as we welcome any suggestions and ideas. We look forward to your artwork, poems, essays and any unique wisdom you would like to share. Once more I ask those of you submitting work for possible publication to be mindful of space constraints, limiting your submissions to 1-2 pages in length.

A final special note of appreciation to Dr. Cris Toffolo, chair of NEIU's Justice Department, for the audacity needed to bring a prison newspaper into the University and for her continued commitment and leadership in establishing a committee to work on building this partnership between *Stateville Speaks* and NEIU. It is most impressive and appreciated. The enthusiastic support of NEIU faculty is outstanding and speaks volumes for the future of *Stateville Speaks*. So, "pardon our dust" and welcome to this new edition. Thank you for allowing *Stateville Speaks* to be your voice. Know that when you speak, you will be heard. \*

### Randle Interview Cont...

Q: We receive numerous letters regarding diet both in terms of proper nutrition and lack of alternative to soy diet. Can you elaborate on what is being done to address these issues?

A: IDOC provides healthy and nutritious meals. If a person has medical verification for an allergy to soy, an alternative diet is available.

Q: We have also received letters regarding the water quality at Dwight. Are you aware of the problem and is anything being done to ensure water quality?

A: We provide bottled water anytime we have issues with our well water system. We never give our offenders unclean water regardless of the situation.

Q: Comment on your assessment of medical care provided prisoners. How will this be improved since there are serious issues, as demonstrated in previous *Stateville Speaks* articles?

A: Doctor Louis Shicker has been promoted to medical director. Dr. Shicker was in Dwight before being promoted. It is expected the filling of the medical director position will have a major impact upon medical care as this position has been unfilled for a year. I do believe medical care is adequate but we can do better. A person's lifestyle prior to coming to prison often has an impact upon medical care issues, such as diabetes and other chronic illnesses. [Director Randle also cited working more closely with the University of Illinois regarding specialized care requirements as one example of how medical care can be improved. Because of pending litigation, the Director declined to comment further on medical issues.]

Q: In your speech at the John Howard Association Annual Meeting, you spoke of how reentry is the "major focus" of the IDOC. One of the biggest influences on the success of reentry and the on the reduction of recidivism is an inmate's family's support. Can an inmate in segregation/lock up have visitors, and if not, is there any discussion of changing that rule?

A: Inmates in segregation are allowed limited, non-contact visits.

*Continued on Page 10...*

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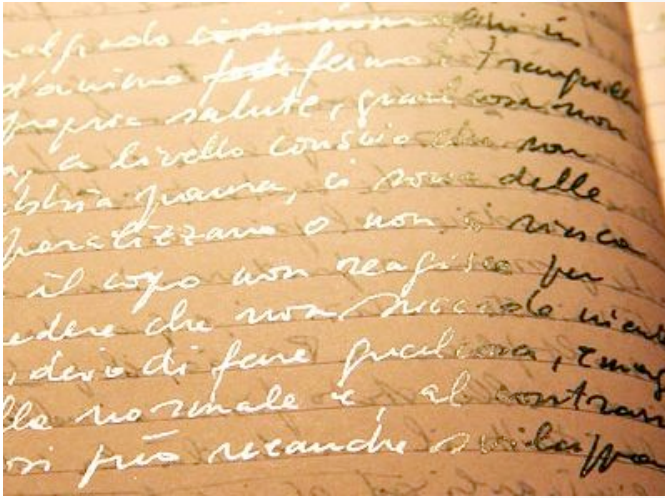
edition).

5. While I will not be able to answer letters, subscription information (new, renewals, change of address) are still to be sent to me for now: Bill Ryan, 2237 Sunnyside, Westchester, IL 60154. Let us know if you have changed prisons, been released, or have not received your subscription. We are constantly updating our mailing labels, but we need your help in maintaining accurate information.

The mission of *Stateville Speaks* remains the same—to provide a way for prisoners to

# Essays, Letters and Insight

PROPOSALS AND PERSUASIVE EDITORIALS



## The Changing Face of a Street Gang

By John D. Velez

The beating death of yet another Chicago teen has sparked outrage throughout Chicago and has even drawn the attention of the nation. The first reports coming out of Chicago claimed the gang intimidation was the motivation for the deadly beating; however, those claims have backed off as more details emerged about what really happened.

What's been lost in all of this back and forth is why these kinds of brawls are happening? Neighborhood rivalries are nothing new in the inner city, nor is the violence that comes with them. What's new is the fact that the participants in these brawls are non-gang members. This raises the question of whether Chicago's tough gang initiatives are actually working or just forcing gangs to change tactics. For years Chicago's

Alternative Policing Program (CAPS) and Cease Fire have worked to keep guns off the streets and gang violence in check with special attention paid to the youngest and the most at risk of joining a gang. All things considered the success rates of those programs that specifically focus on keeping kids out of gangs are extremely high.

However, the programs necessary to sustain that success are poorly if at all funded. This leads to a large group of kids (who are smart enough not to join a gang) to form these hybrid cliques in order to satisfy the need for acceptance. While they do not have the notoriety of the "street cred" that the known gangs have, they have their pride. In a war zone like Chicago's inner city where even the non-gang member needs to be alert, pride is as dangerous as in any street gang.

Was this savage beating the result of traditional gang violence, its hybrid cousin or the misplaced aggression of youth who feel like their efforts not to join gangs are being taken for granted? \*\*

## The Pain of Incarceration

By Cedric X Cal

How can one express the pain of being incarcerated? Regardless of the circumstance that led to incarceration, to be deprived of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is a pain beyond measure.

The pain of abandonment occurs when people that you love and who you thought love you just fall off from the face of the earth. The power of moral support, of receiving a letter, or your collect call being accepted, hearing a voice of compassion or to going on a visit; all this goes a long way. We prisoners wake up every day looking for it. When one has been abandoned, hopelessness sets in. It causes the environment to be volatile. This level of stress in an abnormal condition is very high. Prisoners suffer with depression, and the majority don't know how to deal with it. Some use sleeping as a narcotic. Some eat, becoming obese and diabetic, or watch the idiot box (T.V.).

Some become violent towards other prisoners and staff. Some even commit suicide. Others request to be put on psychotropic drugs to dull the senses. The irony is how easy prisoners are given medication without thorough observation. There is the pain of seeing other prisoners lose their mind, resorting to savage behavior of throwing urine and feces at each other and staff. What is the psychosis of defecating and urinating in a bag and bottling it

up as a weapon to throw at people?

There is the pain of family members and friends dying and not being able to pay your last respects. The pain of seeing your children grow and trying to impart wisdom within a hour or two-hour visit. The pain of not having a relationship with your children. The pain of regret for not being a good parent before one was incarcerated.

There is the pain of feeling powerless, of being treated less than animals in a zoo. The constant denial of appeals in a corrupt court system. The misuse and abuse of authority by the administration. There is the fear of waking up everyday not knowing if you are going to get stabbed or shot. The fear of dying in prison by violence or health issues.

The pain of incarceration is something that words cannot give justice to. People survive such pain only by the grace of Allah (God). It is a miracle to survive.

Prison tries the very fiber and essence of one's being. Prisoners understand what Rev. Jesse Jackson's mantra means, "keep hope alive." If prisoners did not have hope, there would be no stories of survivors of the pain of incarceration.

Jesus knows about the pain of prisoners because he was a prisoner himself. He called prisoners his brethren and made us part of the criteria of those who claim to love and follow him. He understood prisoners are human beings too. \*\*

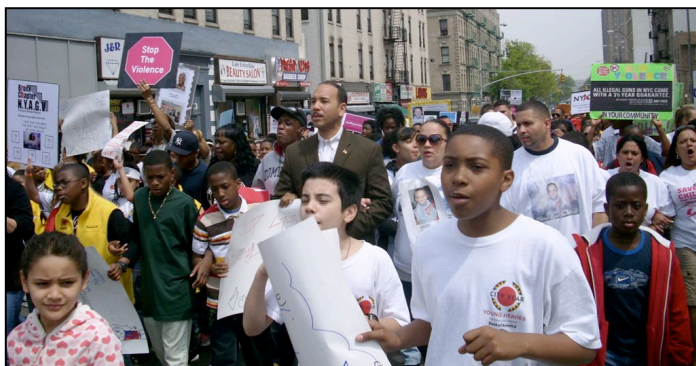
# Violence in Our Streets

By Vincent Galloway

The violence in the streets of the U.S.A. is Our War here at home. When the fatal beating of the 16-year-old Derrion Albers, a Fenger High School honor student was shown on T.V. for the world to see, it prompted calls to stop the violence. We saw anti-violence protests and the Obama administration sent Attorney General Eric Holder and Education Secretary Arne Duncan to meet with officials in Chicago to deal with the growing violence. The Obama administration is showing a commitment to combating the violence which included the White House Gang Violence Prevention and Crime Control Conference held in August 2009 and \$24 million to support anti-crime programs like Operation Ceasefire in Chicago. It is a grassroots organization on the front line everyday in the streets trying to stop the War.

We need more programs for the young people in our inner cities – a 15-year-old girl in Richmond California was beaten and gang-raped at a high school homecoming dance. More than 20 people watched for over two hours and no one stopped it. Our children see so much violence that it becomes a way of life to some of them. They post fights on Facebook and YouTube, like fight club. Parents, teachers and ministers must work together.

We have to change the thinking of young people and give them hope for a better future. Parents tell your children you love them because their so-called friends in the streets will tell them they are family and they love ‘em. It not only starts at home but we must put neighbor back in neighborhood...The violence must stop and together we can bring it to an end! \*\*



## House Committee Hearing Addresses Budget Cont...

times that of regular, maximum security prisons, and urged the adoption of policies that will break the cycles of long-term solitary confinement.

Owen Daniel-McCarter of the Transformative Justice Law Project of Illinois addressed the serious problems facing transgender and gender non-conforming prisoners in IDOC custody, many whom are put in default segregation. Providers from the Alternative Behavior Treatment Centers explained how residency restrictions for sex offenders have caused a scarcity of housing, forcing hundreds of paroled prisoners to return to IDOC custody at taxpayers' expense. Yet community-based housing and educational/vocational programs, along with treatment, is the key to community safety.

Illinois is not alone in facing this crisis. A vast budget deficit and court order are forcing California to make deep cuts to its highest-in-the-nation prison population. Prison populations have also been cut in Michigan, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Texas and Mississippi. In all these states, methods for reducing costs and lowering recidivism are coming back into fashion: education, rehabilitation, re-entry programming, and alternative sentencing. Rep. Howard hopes that the current budget crisis will lead the state to a wiser corrections strategy: "We need more programs and increased focus on rehabilitation," she stated. "It is the right thing to do, and the only way to get the recidivism rate under control."

### Organizations that support a new direction in Corrections in Illinois:

Tamms Year Ten, Mental Health Summit of Illinois, Human Rights Watch-Chicago, Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, Waukegan Coalition to Reduce Recidivism, NAARPR-Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers (CLAIM), Roosevelt University-Illinois Consortium on Drug Policy, Youth Advocate Program, Adult Division, Illinois, ARC: A movement RE-imaging Change, *Stateville Speaks*, Transformative Justice Law Project, Joliet Diocese Peace and Social Justice Ministry, Champaign-Urbana Books to Prisoners, NAACP, Lake County-Prison Branch, Former Inmates Striving together, Books to Women Prisoners, Illinois Institute for Community Law, Saving Our Sons Ministries, Inc. Illinois Prison Talk, Alliance 1-11. \*\*

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The result: **No refund**, since most would not incur a cost to obtain a refund greater than the amount of the refund itself. Ace beat Canteen in a bidding war for the recent vending contract to IDOC. However, the visitors and even IDOC staff are the ones left paying the price.

**THERE IS  
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### File your complaint against ACE with the Better Business

**Bureau** to spark an investigation. Companies with such poor practice and morale do not deserve a monopoly-sized contract with IDOC. Go to:

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BBB Headquarters / 330 N Wabash Avenue Suite #2006 / Chicago, IL 60611 / The more complaints filed, the more ACE will have to be held responsible for their poor business practices. \*\*



# The Three R's Reading Reduces Recidivism

By Barbara Kissell



On April 26, 2010, Representatives Karen Yarborough, Eddie Washington and Constance Howard held a legislative hearing to discuss how new directions in Corrections could increase public safety and cut costs. Among the 40 speeches in this four-hour session was one from Books to Prisoners (B2P) of Champaign-Urbana. In the six years since its inception, B2P has mailed 47,442 books to 7,533 prisoners. There are 47,000 prisoners in the Illinois prisons, so this is a drop in a bucket that is full and leaking.

B2P is initiating a campaign to open, re-open, and re-fund prison libraries. Below is the call for organizations to join this new project.

The 28 state prison libraries of Illinois are in deterioration (due to no funding for the past seven years), and several are closed altogether for lack of a librarian. Research has shown a strong connection between *any kind* of educational program in penal institutions and *reduction in recidivism*. B2P seeks to create political pressure on the State of Illinois to keep prison libraries open and supplied with current

materials. We also seek to build bridges through new community volunteers near state prisons who can facilitate access to reading materials and other educational tools/programs.

Endorsing organizations: Books to Prisoners, C-U Citizens for Peace and Justice, First Mennonite Church, Interfaith Alliance of Champaign-Urbana, McKinley Presbyterian Church, *Stateville Speaks*, Tamms-Ten, Urbana-Champaign Friends' Meeting, Volunteer Illini Project, Youth Advocate Programs, Adult Division, Chicago, Alliance 1-11.\*\*

**ANNOUNCEMENT:** Rev. Anthony Spaulding, has published a book, *Distractions*, Real talk about gangs, drugs, violence and sex.\*\*

## Bring Back Parole

To the right is a coupon to send to *Stateville Speaks*. Surely your freedom is worth a postage stamp. All we ask is the name, address phone number and if possible, mail address of the one free world person you can count on for support-the one person who will work for your release. So please fill out the coupon and mail it to *Stateville Speaks*. \*\*

## Write to Win

The Write to Win Collective is a penal project for transgender, transsexual, gender self-determining and gender-variant people who are living and surviving inside Illinois prisons. Members of the Write to Win Collective are radical trans, queer, and ally activists, youth workers, social workers, writers, lawyers, and community organizers working in solidarity with prisoners to provide support, resources, and dialogue. We stand firmly behind the values of transformative justice, gender self-determination, and prison abolition, and see these values as fundamental to our project. We are excited to provide friendship, support, resources, literature, collaboration, and consistent communication to people who are living on the inside. We look forward to hearing from you! Contact us at: Write to Win Collective 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave. Chicago, IL 60647 (773) 262-2172 [www.writetowin.wordpress.com](http://www.writetowin.wordpress.com); [writetowincollective@gmail.com](mailto:writetowincollective@gmail.com).

I support bringing back parole. I support the below offender.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your I.D. # \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Supporter Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

# Tolerance

By Daniel Parker

I was recently reminded that people are suspicious of ways that they aren't familiar with. I was interrogated by internal affairs because I practice the religion of my ancestors, which is called Asatru or Odinism. I want to give you basic information about my religion, so that it won't be misunderstood. I intend to give food for thought concerning the relationship between faiths. Though we all undoubtedly have some differences, we all share many common values and virtues as well.

Most of you have probably never heard of my ancestral religion because it has been suppressed for the past thousand years. Yet you are familiar with its major holy observances, which have been absorbed into the Christian tradition. Easter, Halloween and Christmas (Yule) have their origins in my faith. This ancient religion was practiced in one local ethnic variation or another from Northern India across Eurasia to Spain, and it raises highest the virtues of courage, fidelity, industriousness, discipline, self-reliance, honor, hospitality, perseverance and truth. My religion, by its very nature, is very tolerant of other people's beliefs and practices. My god, All father, is not a jealous god, and does not command hatred of others or their religions. Asatru is an idea of the Indo-European people, just as Shinto is an idea of the Japanese, and Judaism is an idea of Jews. There are many cultural expressions of the one truth.

Does anyone reading this article believe that we are not all talking about the same being when we speak of the creator of the world? Being at odds with each other because we have different accounts of the same story is a terrible way to spend our time on this Earth.



When a psychological orientation is stressed, it is easy to see that all religions are versions of the one truth. Stepping back and viewing the bigger picture is how we recognize our commonalities. Ponder the words of Ramakrishna, the nineteenth-century sage: "God has made different religions to suit different aspirants, times and countries. All doctrines are only so many paths; but a path is by no means God himself. Indeed, one can reach God if one follows any of the paths with whole-hearted devotion. You have no doubt heard the story of the chameleon. A man entered the wood and saw a chameleon on a tree. He reported to his friends, 'I have seen a red lizard.' He was firmly convinced that it was nothing but red. Another person, after visiting the tree said, 'I have seen a green lizard.' He was firmly convinced that it was nothing but green. But the man who lived under the tree said, 'What both of you have said is true. But the fact is that the creature is sometimes red, sometimes green, sometimes yellow, and sometimes has no color at all'" (The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna 559).

Many of us waste our time focusing on differences, while we should calmly accept the fact that we are free to walk our chosen paths. My religion does not threaten any other belief, and I do not feel threatened by any other

religion. Inside these grey walls, where we are all forced to cohabitate closely, tolerance is even more precious. I sometimes find it amazing that we get along so well together, given all of our differences. Maybe we could teach the rest of the world a thing or two about tolerance? \*\*

## My Soul

by Art E. Holtz

Your name is meaningless to me. I am white, I am black with names. Death and my heart sneer through my eyes. My soul is a plank off my heart, for the cries of dead men. My soul is a cold grey sheet of paper as unrewarded dreams persist with life...my words become meaningless when I look at the top of the mountain. From the fires low angle I saw the squirrel bound between the wheels with perfect timing bounce back upon the grass to be found by passing dogs, and ate, so not to arouse talks.

My soul is clustered together like bankers, lawyers, judges, doctors, merchants. I am a bio-agent of epidermis, a phantom within my own soul as liken unto that squirrel resurrected and running up and down each tree; a phantom in other people's silly minds.

I am too dark for darkness, as I am poured within the light. And

## Randle Interview Cont...

Q: Are there any programs available to inmates to promote their bonds and relationships with their children?

A: The Moms and Babies Program at the Decatur Correctional Center is designed to help strengthen the special bond that is critical to a healthy mother-child relationship. A host of special programming is also available including: Mom & Me Summer Camp, Mom & Me Mother's Day, Project Storybook and parenting classes. There are also programs for males where they can interact with their families as well as other certain privileges. Certainly moving forward we want to do more of these types of things. I think that's really important.\*\*

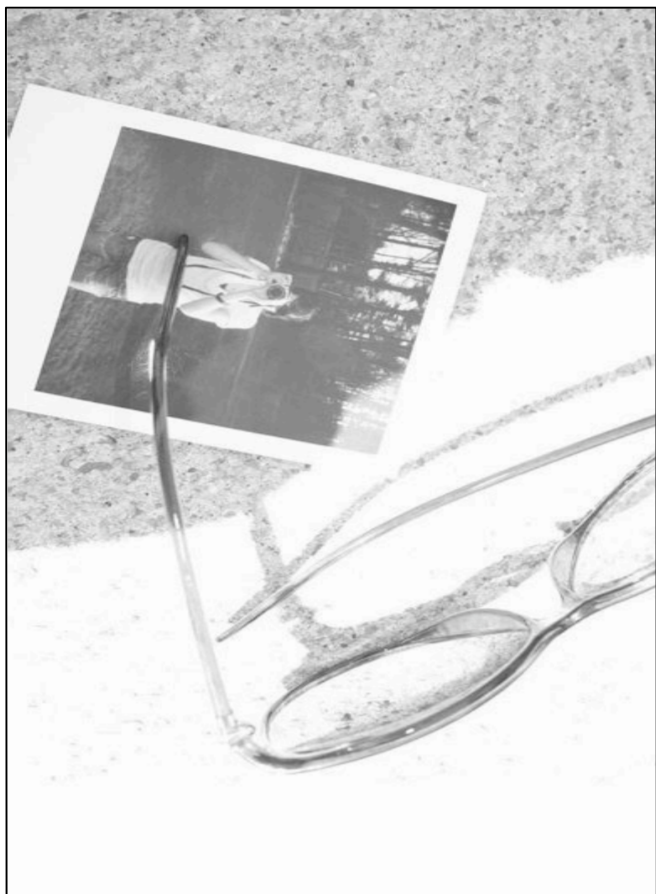
eternally to black and blue for a shadow because you see my tears, my souls face like old mascara runs to blacken my eyes. You can see my tears as I appear as a clown. That makes me disgustingly human.

Come to me broken dreams and all, bring me the glory of fruitless souls. I shall find a place for them within the graven image, in my gardens; to relieve Eve's sighs. I am the hope of all unborn, truly when there is no more me there shall be no more you in its place. The mother will I cry, her baby has been rushed away, out of its place.

My Hells subway is marvelous. Eternity...we refined and refined souls knows, but life's end. We can dream through this space but dear life, the end is not changed. We must dream quick for it is ever changed. We cannot become human here, for paradise lost; this place is for the gods. Dehumanized and cursed, thought about, laughed at, with exotic music. Dear life, dream here.\*\*

# Photo Memories

By Anthony Spencer Jr.



I've recently suffered the loss of my beloved daughter, a soldier on holiday leave from Afghanistan. She was murdered at home in front of her children by her husband (also a soldier), who after shooting her called for medical assistance. By the time authorities arrived, he had committed suicide. The other tragedy is that I have no pictures of us together. Fifteen years I have been in Stateville I haven't been able to take a picture with any of my children, family or friends. I had kids that were toddlers that are now teenagers that have never taken a picture with me in their entire life...not one!

I'm not unique or alone. All inmates suffer a similar fate. No one has been able to capture a

memory in a photo with their loved ones. The only photos available are our state mug-shot. Do you want your family to treasure your mug-shot in their photo album?

We must assemble and stop the punishment of our loved ones. We must write everyone necessary, have our loved ones call, e-mail, write and rally to have our photo privileges re-instated. Contact the Warden, Director, Governor, State Representatives and Senators – how long will we be punished!?

**Stateville Speaks would like to express our heartfelt condolences, to you and your family, for the tragic loss of your daughter, Ariana Thom.\*\***

Dear Stateville Speaks--

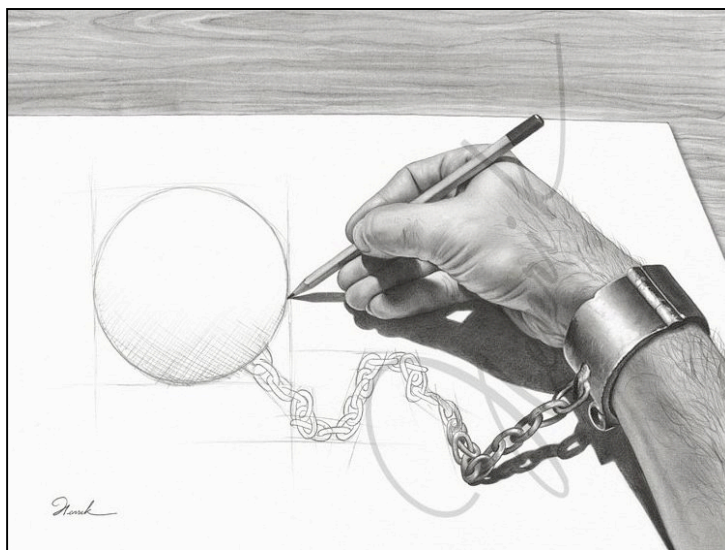
I write this letter with concern for the loss of virtues, morals and character in the justice system. Has justice changed its meaning from justice to "just us"? I say this in regards to the Illinois Department of Corrections. There seems to be no consequences to the doctrine promoted by a growing percentage of correctional officers who vigorously vent hostility against inmates. The CO's have established their own rules for inmates to follow contrary to those set by the Illinois State Prison Board and statesmen or representatives. These prison guards have abused their authority, as well as mentally, physically and emotionally abused and shown malice disregard for inmates' human (as well as Federal and State Constitutional) rights. Not only do these prison guards verbally abuse inmates, but physically too. They have threatened others who show concern for those inmates who are being abused. These prison guards threaten and sometimes tamper

with their food, mail and property.

Some guards have allegiance with the medical personnel such as med-techs and nurses. These medical personnel who embrace these guard's doctrines write fake reports about inmates refusing their medications or medical treatment, therefore denying inmates of prescribed medication and/or medical treatment. These unprofessional tactics have jeopardized many inmates' lives. This crisis call has gone on deaf ears at the upper levels in the Administration. Inmates' grievances have been taken out of the doors, cells, and the inmate's mailbags and destroyed. There isn't any prison advocate to ensure that merits, principles and tranquility in the name of justice and not "just-us" are represented.

I would truly appreciate your assistance in this struggle for truth and justice. Thank you for your time and concern and support in this matter.

Name Withheld\*\*



## Historical Homicide.

First degree historical homicide – bringing charges against all those responsible for attempting my culture’s genocide – who blew the nose off the sphinx and slanted the Pharaoh’s eyes – took us out of the palace and placed us naked in the jungles swinging from vines – so they could justify the rape of our women and the muffle of her cries – the enslavement of our people and the desecration of our pride – Historical Homicide.

Alexander tried to burn the accumulated knowledge of ancient black civilizations – but only after the Greeks sat at the feet – of wise Black sages – learning the mysteries of the ages and the beginnings of creation – Aristotle, Plato and Socrates, returned back to Greece and flipped it to philosophy – now they’re in possession of a stolen legacy.

So let’s call a spade a spade – and not my people – because our skin is dark we were “separate but equal?” – What a paradox – Thank God for Cheikh Anta Diop – the anthropologist/ historian from Senegal – who had the gall – to set the historical record straight – who revealed that the ancient Egyptians weren’t descendants of apes and their hair wasn’t straight – Nope, they weren’t Arabic either. Contrary to what you see when you watch “Moses” every Easter – he put the truth in the ethers.

Their contribution to civilization was key – because they held the keys to civilization – and the universal laws to govern a balanced nation.

Their transcendent understanding of spirituality – influenced Buddhism, Islam and Christianity – innovators of astronomy, anatomy and

# Historical Homicide

By Andre Patterson



various forms of surgery – and the embalming of the human body.

Yes, these people were Black – where’s my proof? – Just check the walls of ancient Kemet – their name means, “land of the burnt people” – and they originated at the base of the mountain of the moon – Humanities womb – where the first “holy” trinity was Asar, Aset and Heru – I have to stress again that they looked just like you! On the walls they painted their ethnic persuasion – standing next to a Caucasian and a Western Asian – identifying the difference between the indigenous people – and the foreign invaders – not to mention the oldest human remains found near the Equator.

Please don’t equate these scientific statements as racist – I’m just stating the actual facts – the original man, woman and child were Black – and they were scientists of nature and the Quasars – the melanin in your skin is power – actuated by the rays from the sol-ar – lost knowledge from the days of long gone – but encoded in our DNA – always available for us to call upon.

They were unsuccessful with their historical, murderous intent – painting the pages of history with half truths, lies and contempt – they can NEVER wipe us out – only attempt!

So let’s do the knowledge and become conscious of our true story – so we can restore our people to greatness – the inevitable Return to Glory!\*\*

## Changing Minds Campaign

By James Chapman

On June 26, current and formerly incarcerated men and women held a most unusual and exciting event: the introduction of the Changing Minds Campaign, already a year in progress, and a unique people’s web-site concerning prisons, resources, information and virtual discussion. The campaign seeks to eliminate the stigma that the public, media, employers, legislators and too many others impose on persons released from prison and those serving their sentences with dignity. As a result

*Continued on Page 14...*

Dear Stateville Speaks,

We have problems with our water very often. At times it has made me sick to my stomach. It has made me nauseated. The water at times is cloudy yellow, rusty or black. They often do not tell us not to drink it. They may tell us later when it has been like that for several hours. By then you have drunk a lot of it. The water smells bad and my stomach hurts and I almost always throw up. Also, our toilets are the same, filled up with black water, and the whole shower room smells bad. After telling us not to drink it, we only get one bottle of water which is a very small bottle for the whole day. We are forced to drink water the way it is because we need to take our medicine and have no choice except to drink it.  
Rosalie Menotti  
Dwight

Dear Mr. Ryan,

I am writing to regards to the mailroom personnel and the mailroom correspondence delivered late here at Graham Correctional Center. The mail has been extremely late in distribution for the past 4-6 months. We used to get mail 2 to 3 days from the post date on the mail and now we receive mail 2-3 weeks late. Sometimes money orders take two to three weeks to get on the books. There is no reason for us inmates not to receive mail from our families because for some of us this is our only contact to our outside world. Our families depend on it to keep us motivated in here. To my understanding, inmates are to receive all mail delivered within 24 to 48 hours after receiving it from the U.S. Postal Service. This is also to money orders, legal mail, mail processed and handling. Please look into this matter for me. It is because people like you from *Stateville Speaks* that help voice the injustices in IDOC.

Your newsletter can help inmates inside be aware of their rights that IDOC seems to disregard. A lot of the inmates here at Graham Correctional had the privileges to read your newsletter you sent me and hopefully people will start to pursue making the changes that need to be made.

Thank you and your staff for all your dedicated work that you do to help create change for the better. This helps both the prisoners within and the ex-prisoners outside the system.

Thank you,  
Steve Roden\*\*

RE: PAROLE BOARD

Dear Ms. Jackson,

Hello. Having read your article in the latest *Statesville Speaks* on bringing back the parole board, as a parole eligible C number I must say "Be careful what you wish for". Most of the remaining C number inmates will die in prison rather than be paroled by the current system-so long as you have a system of good ole boys that can and will be held accountable for releasing serious criminal offenders, such as in the case today. Without some serious outside political help it's "parole denied". Not having any such help I will die in prison.

What I propose instead of indeterminate sentences is to return to the determinate sentences with a day for day good time and eliminate life without parole. Instead of a parole board vote required for granting parole, have the legislature devise a criteria based system called earned early release that functions as a computerized system. Once a person has completed all the requirements he/she is released on parole for the rest of his/her sentence on mandatory supervised release for up to three years. This system would even work with the

85 and 100 percent sentences in effect now.

An example of the criteria for say first degree murder would have a minimum term of 20 years to serve, or 15 years if the person reaches age 65 years-old first. Do away with the rule of if you have 20 years or more you must serve it in maximum prison. This combined with the proposed specialty prisons and only having max as a punishment unit (in all other states you must do something to earn a trip to a max prison).

It would also require a minimum term to be served. A GED or other education such as drug rehab, sex offender counseling, anger management or vocational training would be mandatory. There would be paying jobs where work history is recorded, such as cleaning highways and parks. Outside businesses could be brought in to employ those with little time remaining and until all criterions is met. It could even be jobs that not many free people would want. The businesses could even receive tax breaks or not have to pay minimum wages to start. If you mess up then it costs extra time in prison.

This is a much simplified plan but it would be up to the person whether or not they earned early release. These people would be far less likely to repeat offend as they had invested many years of hard work in doing the "right thing", I think it's called rehabilitation. Only those who had put forth the effort and stayed out of trouble would get out early and more than likely become worthwhile citizens.

The cost of such a program (based on the specialty prisons), could be alleviated by training inmates to teach the classes. Once a class of inmates graduates, they in turn can

teach more inmates, before moving them out into jobs. A security camera and an officer could monitor the classroom.

Hopefully I have offered an alternative to returning to the dreaded indeterminate, as I have 100 to 300 years to serve. This system would also include the C numbers so they could finally get out too. Pass this around to the others there and see what they think. If I wrote a comprehensive package on based early release would your organization pass it on to lawmakers?

Respectfully,

Herman Lamb \*

Dear Bill Ryan,

My name is Angelo. I am writing to you about any programs for prisoners getting out. I am from Mt. Vernon IL and I am getting out in two years. I am asking if you know about any job training because I will be getting out on parole. I cannot get any job training because they don't have any job training to offer. I have been locked up for ten years and I can't go to a minimum prison because I am a level E prisoner so I can't get any job training. So I am asking you if you could find out what they got to offer on parole. Can you get me some information?\*

#### ANNOUNCEMENT:

Cornelius Lewis aka bobby lewis has completed a book *Caged, But Not Trapped*. Please continue to send information about accomplishments by prisoners.

# Parole in Illinois

By Bill Ryan

*Changing Minds Cont.*

There is considerable confusion about parole in Illinois. Let me clarify:

1. There is NO active parole in Illinois today. Parole was eliminated in 1978 except for C#s—prisoners who were serving indeterminate sentences. There are about 200 C#s in prison.

2. Persons receiving any sentence other than life have ADDED to their sentence a Mandatory Sentence Requirement (MSR). This is in addition to the sentence. (MSR has been found to meet Constitutional requirements.)

3. Persons serving MSR are assigned a parole agent and are frequently referred to in the media as “on parole” but they are not. They have served their time.

In the last issue, Janet Jackson wrote an article and developed a form for persons in favor of a return to parole. *Stateville Speaks* has received several hundred of these coupons, but we need ten times that if we hope to pass parole legislation. Another form is included in this issue.

If you do not wish to cut out the form, you can submit information in any form you wish. Our plan is to develop a database of supporters who can be contacted.

Legislation will be submitted next year for parole to be reinstated in Illinois. We will need lots of support in order to get parole reinstated so please get involved and get your family and friends involved. The fall issue of *Stateville Speaks* will contain more information about parole and legislation.\*\*

## IDOC Director Randle welcomes members of the Adult Advisory Board

### IDOC Director Randle welcomes members of the Adult Advisory Board

#### *Board will assist IDOC in reforming state's criminal justice system*

SPRINGFIELD – October 1, 2009 – Illinois Department of Corrections Director (IDOC) Michael P. Randle welcomes the newly appointed members of the Adult Advisory Board. The board advises IDOC concerning policy matters and programs for incarcerated persons and those on parole.

“I look forward to working with the members of the board to help move the department forward and reform the criminal justice system in the state of Illinois,” Director Randle said.

The Adult Advisory Board meets quarterly and consists of 13 members, including Director Randle and IDOC Assistant Director Deanne Benos. Governor Pat Quinn appointed the following members to the Adult Advisory Board on Tuesday:

- **Wilder “Kendric” Berry** (Chicago)—a wrongfully convicted man who spent more than eight years at IDOC; senior paralegal at Winston Strawn LLP; affiliated with the John Howard Association of Illinois and the Positive Anti-Crime Thrust.
- **Shaena Fazal** (Chicago)—director of the Long-Term Prisoner Policy Project for the John Howard Association of Illinois; former chair of the Illinois State Bar Association’s Committee on Corrections and Sentencing.
- **James Gannon** (Homewood)—current chairman of the Adult Advisory Board; deputy chief of police in the village of Homewood.
- **William “Patrick” Hartshorn** (Danville)—member of the Adult Advisory Board since 2002; sheriff of Vermillion County.
- **Keith Lape** (Jacksonville)—retired vice president of MacMurray College.
- **Vernon Mercier** (Decatur)—banking and trust industry professional.
- **David Olson** (Arlington Heights)—professor and chair of the Criminal Justice Department at Loyola University; former senior research scientist for the Illinois Criminal Justice Authority.
- **Jesus Reyes** (Lansing)—acting chief probation officer for the Circuit Court of Cook County.
- **Angela Rudolph** (Chicago)—program education officer for the Joyce Foundation; former special assistant to Mayor Richard M. Daley on Ex-Offender Reentry; former program director for the Juvenile Violence Initiative of Chicago Metropolitan 2020.
- **Donald Young** (Ava)—25 year veteran of IDOC; retired warden of Shawnee Correctional Center.
- **Malcolm Young** (Free Union, VA)—retired executive director of the John Howard Association of Illinois.

If you wish to contact any board members, you may send letters to Illinois Department of Corrections, 1301 Concordia Ct., Springfield, IL 62794.\*\*

of this stigma, persons released from prison face overwhelming obstacles to successful reentry; and persons in prison are deprived of the opportunity to learn new skills to use on release; and legislators are afraid to do anything positive for prisoners and former prisoners, fearful of being labeled soft on crime.

Amazingly, on a very hot Saturday afternoon, over 60 people with diverse backgrounds—from former prisoners, their families, interested activists to Rep. Constance Howard and Prisoner Review Board Chair, Jorge Montes—were treated to three staged readings written by men from Stateville, women who served long sentences and Adler School graduate students working on the Campaign. These readings were performed by formerly incarcerated who served time at the prisons the readings depict, and have been performed over 30 times over the last year in many different places like Alternative High Schools with youth at risk to universities and neighborhood groups. The audience then spoke with the readers about how to improve these and other approaches to modify negative attitudes—to demonstrate that those imprisoned and those released can and have changed, that they are not a risk to society and should be given a meaningful chance to succeed.

On a large interactive/ screen, the audience then examined the Campaign’s interactive web-site, designed to bring important information and resources to the persons who need them and to create a virtual discussion about stigma reduction. See [www.illinoisinstitute.net](http://www.illinoisinstitute.net). The June 26 event is the first of many to be held throughout the State of Illinois.\*\*

We encourage those who have lost friends and loved ones, to send us their information, so we may acknowledge their passing and share our condolences. Submissions can be sent to: *Stateville Speaks* • C/o Justice Studies, LWH 4062 / Northeastern IL Univ. / 5500 N. St.Louis Ave. / Chicago IL 60625-4699



# We Lost a Friend and Ally

By Laurie Jo Reynolds

Our friend Rep. Eddie Washington died on June 5 of a heart attack, at age 56. As most of you know, Washington was the chair of the Prison Reform Committee, an advocate for giving ex-offenders a second chance, and a staunch proponent of rehabilitation for all prisoners. His politics came from the heart--he observed what people's lives were like, he saw the obstacles they faced, and their hardships genuinely seemed to cause him pain. He tried to do everything. He was a man of God, and he believed in redemption. He thought prisoners and ex-offenders should be given the chance to turn their lives around. He didn't make exceptions.

As many of you know, he was our first legislative ally in the recent efforts to end the use of long-term isolation at Tamms. He pushed and pushed for educational programs at Tamms supermax and always referred to education as "the great civilizer." He said, "No one should be deprived of the freedom that comes from learning." Besides holding the Tamms hearings, signing on as a chief co-sponsor to the reform bills, and much more, he organized a tour of Tamms supermax with 15 advocates and family members in the winter of 2008. This trip had been planned weeks in advance, everyone was pre-approved, and we spent a lot of money getting ourselves down to Tamms and in a hotel. When we arrived at the

supermax, the IDOC suddenly announced that no one from Tamms Year Ten could enter the prison. Rep. Washington told them, "I am here with them. We came here together. If they can't go, I won't go." We eventually convinced him to go in without us, and gave him a list of about 25 prisoners to speak to cell front. With a bad leg, he spent hours climbing up and down the stairs, determined to speak to everyone on the list. In fact, he skipped lunch, and nearly missed his train back to Chicago that evening. He was joined in his determination by Malcolm C. Young, then the director of the John Howard Association, who also had permission to enter, and who authored a powerful report of their findings that made a big difference in our advocacy. Their stamina turned that crisis into something positive.

Eddie was known for his spontaneous, passionate orations. If his heart directed him to speak, nothing could stop him. It brings me a lot of pleasure to think about

some of the things that he simply could not resist saying, and how beautifully he said them. Washington was a true progressive, and could bemoan U.S. consumerism, marvel at the low infant mortality rates in Cuba, and condemn the senselessness of ex-offender residency restrictions--all in one breath.

In doing such difficult work as prison reform, our fellow-travelers become so important. They are the people who make you feel sane and uplifted, who reaffirm your humanity, and whose mutual respect, love and trust become part of the necessary fabric your life. When we would tell Rep. Washington how much he inspired us, he would always say, "I shine in your light."

Through his warmth, encouragement and bear hugs, he let you know that you belonged in the statehouse, and that you were part of his extended family. He was the person we could call any hour day or night--and we did.

When we heard that a prisoner died at Tamms, we called him at 11pm to help us find out who it was. He answered phone calls and text messages. He was communicative and responsive, and always there for us. The thought of working on prison reform without him is unbearably sad.

At the recent hearings of the Appropriations Committee, jointly sponsored by Reps. Yarbrough, Howard and Washington, they urged the packed audience to organize around prison reform issues. He politely told us that he and his colleagues could do the heavy lifting, but begged us to just go out and convert some legislators from the suburbs and beyond to be their allies! Indeed, that is the wisest strategy to create the foundation for prison reform. Like many, we at Tamms Year Ten are blind-sided by this loss.

We are grieving for Rep. Washington, his family, his colleagues, for ourselves, for all

prison reformers, and for everything we would have worked on together. Most of all, we miss our dear friend.

Even if you didn't know him, you have lost a great ally.

After we get through a period of mourning, we will give you more details about the newly forming Alliance 1-11 initiated by many prison reform allies. It is named after Article I, Section 11 of the Illinois Constitution: *All penalties shall be determined both according to the seriousness of the offense and with the objective of restoring the offender to useful citizenship.*

Together, with you, your families, our other wonderful legislators, and the many good people in Illinois, we all still aspire to build the movement that Rep. Washington envisioned.

Laurie Jo Reynolds, on behalf of Tamms Year Ten\*\*

Stateville Speaks would like to thank you for your readership and continued support. We encourage you to send us your comments, letters, articles and creative works for possible future publication. Submissions can be sent to:

Stateville Speaks • C/o Justice Studies, LWH 4062 / Northeastern IL Univ. / 5500 N. St.Louis Ave. / Chicago IL 60625-4699

# The Meaning of the Burge Verdict

By Ted Pearson &  
Mark Clements



*A short analysis by the Chicago Branch of the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression*

The conviction of former Chicago Police Commander Jon Burge on all three counts of lying about torturing Black and Latino men to obtain confessions and convictions, many false, was not just a fluke of history – something to be noted and forgotten. It demands concerted action to prevent such crimes in the future, such as the Anti-Torture Bill introduced into Congress on July 1 by U. S. Rep. Danny K. Davis.

The verdict also demands renewed action to bring the police under the democratic control of the communities, as proposed by the NAARPR Model Legislation for a Police Control Council.

Positive as it was the verdict indicts the whole system: Burge committed crimes against humanity yet the system was only able to convict him of lying about it. Thousands also demand that prosecutors for the State drop their opposition to full hearings on all claims of torture, starting with the 22 men still in prison. People

demand that Burge's pension be ended and that the City of Chicago and the Fraternal Order of Police cease to pay all his legal expenses. This must not stop with Burge. It must go on to ensure that all of his torture crew are charged and tried for their crimes.

Lastly it demands that Burge go straight to jail NOW, that his bail be revoked, because the chances of his success in appeal are near zero. Only prison for Burge can demonstrate to the world, and to the police, whether the United States is serious about ending such abuses.

#### **A more basic examination**

But Burge's conviction also requires examination of the whole criminal justice system of which the Burge torture crew was a key part.

- Why are the victims of police torture all Black or Latino?
- Why are 58 per cent of all the 45,500 people in

Illinois prisons African Americans? Why are 72 per cent non-white?

- Why is the rate of imprisonment for Black men for drug offenses in Illinois more than 52 times the rate of imprisonment of white men for the same offenses, when many studies have shown that white men are 6 to 8 times more likely to have used drugs than Blacks?

It is no accident that the Burge torture conspiracy was born in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement of the 60s. It is no accident that it was born as the factories in the North were being closed and the lands of the South were being taken over by agribusiness. It is one in content with the "war on drugs" launched by President Richard Nixon in 1973, at a time when crime and drug use were actually declining.

The regime of torture launched by Police Commander Jon Burge and supported and condoned by Mayor Richard M. Daley is part of an overall policy targeting African Americans and Latinos. Young African Americans and Latinos have been branded in the mass media and the public eye as "criminals." Once labeled as felons by the system, Black and Latino men are legally proscribed from many types of housing, many jobs (including government jobs), and educational opportunities. They are fair game for police crimes, because the white majority has been seduced by a hysterical campaign against Black and Latino crime. While "color-blind" in form, the result is a re-establishment of some of the worst features of the jim crow system, as documented by Michelle Alexander in her book, "The New Jim Crow."

Our society has been re-segregated based on race. While a few educated and relatively prosperous African Americans and Latinos are being integrated into mainstream society, thanks only to limited policies of affirmative action, the great majority are locked into ghettos with poor schools, no jobs, and between none and few doctors, hospitals, food stores, or theaters. These are ghettos from which there is almost no escape.

The movement that won the Burge verdict can be the first step in a revival of the Civil Rights Movement that challenges the whole white supremacist reason for existence of the prison-industrial complex and the criminal justice system. But this will only happen if we recognize the system for what it is and commit to confronting it and ending it. \*



# Creative Corner

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

## Ghetto Life

by Jeffery Latham

When it comes to ghetto life you  
have to live that life,  
and to understand that life.  
But from a boy to a man I've lived  
that life, and  
I've come to understand that if  
you're not careful the ghetto will  
steal your life  
and steal your fate, and you'll be  
sitting here just like me,  
wishing, hoping, and praying on  
an outdate.

We've got junkies in abandoned  
buildings  
crack heads chasing a dream that  
"ain't" got nothing to do with  
Martin Luther King.  
Now that's a shame - but that's  
everyday life of ghetto life.  
Now don't get me wrong the  
ghetto  
has its good times and bad times,  
but  
most of mine were sad times.

When young men - who look just  
like me, just like you,  
gangbanging or slanging,  
sitting back on the block choking  
on "weed", all the time killing our  
seeds.  
Your lil' shorty's got a glock - he  
cocks  
and pops and steals a life.  
Now shorty's right next door to me  
and he don't even have an "out-  
date".  
Now that's a shame - but that's  
everyday life of ghetto life.

The ghetto is the shadows of the

valley of death,  
it's a giver of pain and many  
tears,  
you see I've shed mine for many  
years - when my lil' sister lost  
her life,  
when another who looks "just  
like me, just like you"  
took her life - trying to claim  
his fame in the game.

The same game we've all  
played, only now the players  
have changed  
and some may say that this is  
just another ghetto story - but I  
feel it must be told  
because the ghetto has left a  
hole in my soul.  
It's cold, it's bold and if you  
listen it will rock the very ships  
of your soul.  
Because all across the world, on  
all four corners of this Earth,  
the game and the blood stains of  
an innocent child still remains  
And that's a shame "- but that's  
everyday life - of ghetto life.

You see the ghetto raised me  
the ghetto turned me into a thug  
the ghetto gave me love and I  
gave it all back in blood  
Now I got blood on my hands  
and  
that's a shame - But that's  
everyday life - of ghetto life.

Don't let your child become a  
blood stain on the sidewalk  
because that's everyday life of  
ghetto life.\*\*



## Why I Sing

By Anthony Spaulding Jr.

I used to be a thugged out  
stallion. Now I wear this cross  
on my neck.  
With an iced out medallion. I'm  
smiling, and I'm wilding out for  
Christ.  
We are howling (Hallelujah)  
because he paid the price!  
My style nice, my game tight,  
I'm Christ- like.  
I got rights; I'm waiting on  
eternal life. I might slip but held  
pick me up.  
I fight sin because in God I  
trust. I prayed hard and he  
stacked my dust.  
No lust I let my sword bust at  
the enemy. My armory be  
hollering and Christ is my  
cavalry.  
My salary is the pearly gates.  
Not long until I learn my fate  
and lose all this-dead weight.  
I state his name just to wipe my  
slate clean. I bend my knees  
when I ask for his blessings.  
Christ, the best thing, the first  
thing, the last thing.  
He bling, bling! And this is why  
I sing!

There is a new Illinois CURE chapter started  
by Madeline Ward. Citizens United for  
Rehabilitation of Errants is a membership-  
based grassroots organization that believes  
that prisoners should be given the resources  
to turn their lives around. Join and help Illinois  
prisoners tap into this strong voice, already  
recognized by the United Nations.

Electronic Home Detention is the law,  
730ILCS-5/8/1. Please apply for it, and  
then contact or have a family member  
contact Illinois CURE at 312-590-6129 or  
4904 S. Drexel Blvd, Chicago, IL 60615 or  
madeoday@gmail.com.

**Join CURE and unite for prisoner rehabilitation!**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Cost is \$2 for prisoners or \$10 for individuals

Mail this coupon and payment to:

CURE, PO Box 2310  
Washington, D.C. 20013

Visit [www.curenational.org](http://www.curenational.org)

## The Next Day

By Don Collins

At first it seems the world  
is crushing down on you...  
Thru those long stressful days  
it seems they last forever...  
Your strength is a test of wisdom  
and what will power you have...  
Only in time things will reverse  
and best of days are coming...  
Like a scenic volcano erupting...  
Don't expect it to go away  
Your life is to forever live  
So be ready for a better day.\*\*



### SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT:

On July 20th, the federal court held that every prisoner who had been transferred to Tamms (Illinois' supermax prison) since it opened had been denied their constitutionally guaranteed right to a hearing at which they could defend themselves from this severe punishment. The ruling by Judge Murphy of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois, came in a decade long class action case brought by prisoners at Tamms (represented by the Uptown People's Law Center and attorneys from DLA Piper--working pro bono).

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In reaching this conclusion, Judge Murphy made detailed findings establishing that the type of long-term confinement in near-total isolation practiced at Tamms inflicts severe damage on prisoners' mental health.

As a result of Judge Murphy's ruling, every prisoner sent to Tamms in the future will receive advance written notice of the reason he is being sent to Tamms, an opportunity to present a defense, and a written decision which includes the factual basis for his punishment. Judge Murphy also required that the Department put in place a formal appeal process, where those decisions will be reviewed by the Department's Chief legal Counsel.\*\*

## Can't See

By Floyd Robinson

How can you see when your  
mind is dark?  
How can you think when your  
thoughts are corrupt?  
How can you respect others  
when you can't respect  
yourself?  
How can you tell others the  
truth when you're a liar?  
How can you teach others when  
you refuse to teach yourself?  
You can't see yourself, because  
you can't see who you truly are.  
Be real with yourself before you  
try to be real with others. \*\*

## Teach Yourself

By Floyd Robinson

Sitting in a lonely cell  
Thinking about hell  
Don't ever tell  
Forget about being a snitch  
It won't get you rich  
Use your time wisely  
Teach yourself the positive  
rules  
And learn from yourself  
Only you can be your best  
teacher\*\*

## Keep it coming...

We would like to thank you for your membership and support. Please, continue to send all subscriptions and address changes to:  
**Stateville Speaks, 2237 Sunnyside Westchester IL 60154**

### Send all other correspondences and submissions for publication to:

**Stateville Speaks, c/o Justice Studies Department, LWH 4062,  
5500 N. St. Louis Ave., Chicago IL 60625-4699.**

Submissions considered for publication should be no more than 1-2 pages and should address general issues and concerns--not individual cases. Let us know if we can use your name or not. We are looking for submissions for our women's section and IDOC staff section.

**Thank you for your continued support and contributions, filled  
with wisdom and candor. \*\***



## Didn't You Know?

By Dennis Digby

My young brother do you see?  
What you're doing to yourself?  
Do you even care about yourself?

The violence, hate, anger, is  
directed at yourself.  
When you're: pounding them,  
beating them,  
stomping them,  
hurting them,  
shooting them,  
killing them,

You're doing it to yourself.  
The one watching you is also  
yourself.  
This is what you're teaching  
yourself.  
This is the example you're  
setting for yourself.  
Is this the legacy you're leaving  
for yourself?

You can't blame anyone but  
yourself.  
You'll be held accountable to  
yourself,  
for yourself,  
by yourself.

My young brother do you see  
What you're doing to  
YOURSELF?!\*\*

## Untitled

By Adolfo Davis

Had it hard as a child/So I  
moved in the wrong crowd to  
survive/made many parents  
cry/By the pain I released in the  
hood/Thought running the  
streets banging was cool/But  
reality set in and I realized I was  
a fool/Now I'm trapped in this  
cage/Heart filled with  
rage/Reminiscing about the old  
days/surrounded by shady  
niggas/Fake gangstas and wanna  
be's/On my knees asking the  
Lord to heal me of this pain  
that's inside me/To stop the tears

that run from my eyes/ To be my  
light/Through the eyes of  
darkness/Cuz I'm tired of  
walking in the Dark/Playing a  
part of this genocide/Seeing our  
youth dying/Seeing our  
communities destroyed/By that  
false reality/That false reality  
that's filling the graveyards and  
prisons with our youth/ My heart  
aches/As my body shakes/As  
sweat runs down my face/ Cuz I  
once played a part of destroying  
my race/So I ask for  
forgiveness/And guidance from  
above/Cuz I don't want to bring  
anymore pain to this world.\*\*

## A Diabolical Plan

By Arkee Chaney

Dark faces, nearly black,  
brown skin like a paper sack.  
Wine, drugs, a lack of hope,  
nodding on street corners high  
on dope.

Gunshots ring throughout the  
night, children cry, filled with  
fright.

Unemployed, life in a void.  
Picked up the gun,  
stuck-up the man fell into the  
diabolical plan.

Police patrol the hood in the  
dark of night, eyes sharp  
looking for a fight.  
Dark meat runs, heart racing  
wild, shot in the back, some  
mother's child.

Young girl looking for  
affection as she parts her  
round brown thighs, Nine  
months later she hears her  
baby's cries.

Crazy world, hard to  
understand, but it's all part of

a diabolical plan.

Can't find a gig to meet your  
needs, but when you take they  
call it greed.  
Preying on our sisters and  
brothers, though we know that  
it's not right,  
Hanging on street corners  
from morning 'til night.

Drive-by shootings are the  
order of the day. Young kid  
got shot  
to death because he couldn't  
get out of the way.

Men dressed in black robes,  
with gavels in their hands,  
They too, are a part of this  
diabolical plan.

Pretty black sisters, big wide  
hips, wigs on heads and  
lipstick on lips.

Wino on the corner, trying to  
bum a dime, Never saw him  
sober, stays blasted all the  
time.

Dismembered limbs, scattered  
all over the place, The results  
of a stolen car, which led to a  
high-speed chase.

Kid playing basketball,  
dreams of being a star, Winds  
up a junkie who didn't get  
very far.  
Pit-falls and traps, put there to  
block the way, It's really a  
struggle to live from day to  
day.

Such a crazy world, it's hard  
to understand

But I'm trying to tell you,  
brothers and sisters, it's part of  
a diabolical plan.  
Pregnant mother junkies,  
looking for another high.  
Premature births, the babies  
had to die.

Dilapidated buildings piss up-  
side the walls, Bottles on the  
stairways and winos in the hall.  
Little girls jumping rope, on  
their faces the sun do shine,  
Ready to dodge a bullet, they do  
it all the time.

Brothers killing brothers, what is  
there to understand? Open your  
eyes and you will see that it's  
part of a diabolical plan.

Locked away in a concrete cell  
to spend the rest of your life,

Cut off from the (so-call) free  
world, your mother, your kids,  
your wife.

Gunshots ring out in the cell-  
house, another Black man dies,  
While  
out there in the (so-call) free  
world his family moans and  
cries

When will we wake up, when  
will we understand?  
**None of this is accidental. It's  
part of a diabolical plan.\*\***

## In Memory

Stateville Speaks sends our  
condolences to the family and  
friends of Katlin Koral, who died  
on May 22, 2010 in Dwight. Also  
to the loved ones of Andrea Seals  
on her passing May 3, 2010 in  
Dwight. We send condolences to  
the family and friends of Brian  
Nelson on his passing April 29,  
2010 in Pontiac. To the family,  
friends and "brother" of Kenvin  
Young, all of us at Stateville  
Speaks offer our condolences on  
his passing March 5, 2010 at  
Menard.

Please send any information on  
the death of loved ones so that  
Stateville Speaks may honor them  
in passing.\*\*

# Political Toons



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