

# STATEVILLE SPEAKS

Voices from the Inside • Fall 2012

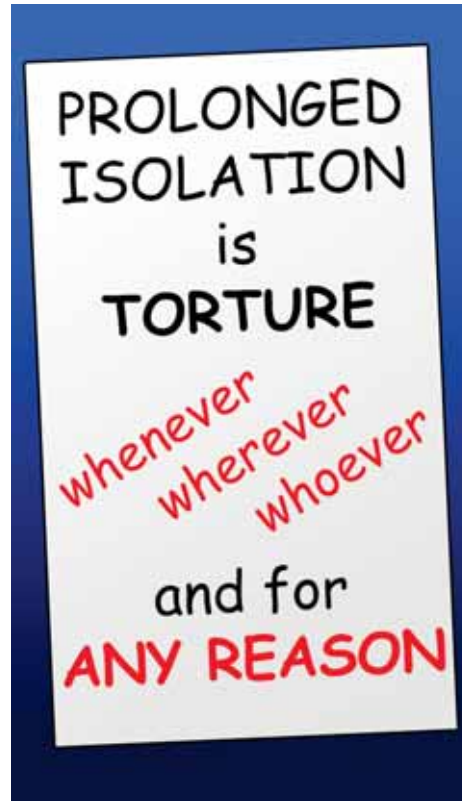
## TAMMS CLOSURE: HIGH COSTS VS. JOB SECURITY AND THE MISERY IN BETWEEN

By Jean Maclean Snyder

As *Stateville Speaks* goes to press, we are awaiting a court decision that concerns all those interested in prison reform. Shortly, the state court in downstate Alexander County will decide whether to allow Gov. Quinn to carry out his plan to shut down Illinois' supermaximum prison, Tamms Correctional Center. The decision will come in a lawsuit seeking to prevent the prison's shutdown, which was brought by the union representing Illinois Department of Corrections employees, AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees). AFSCME claims that closure will jeopardize safety at the State's other prisons, which will be unable to control the men from Tamms. (The lawsuit also seeks to halt the closure of the other state facilities Quinn has targeted; but Tamms is the star, for AFSCME and for those of us who favor closing Tamms.)

The notion that closing Tamms would jeopardize public safety is nonsense. In hearings held on the union's request for an injunction, the Department of Corrections provided statistics and expert testimony refuting the union's claim. State officials also argue that operating Tamms is costly and inefficient, so that closing the facility will allow the State to hire more employees at Illinois' other prisons, which unlike Tamms are understaffed and overcrowded. (Tamms is a stand-alone facility which never has housed more than 285 men. Since Quinn's announcement roughly 100 men have been transferred from Tamms, but further transfers are on hold for now, because the parties agreed to halt transfers until the court's decision.)

The Alexander County lawsuit is just the latest chapter in a long and convoluted journey that began in February, when Gov. Quinn announced his plan to close Tamms. In April, several of us supporting closure testified at hearings held by a state legisla-



tive commission in downstate Shawnee. Our short, respectful comments were followed by loud, long-winded speeches from opponents, which culminated with a rant delivered by a correctional officer striding back and forth across the stage while wielding a knife he claimed to have recovered from a prisoner. Then in June, downstate Ill. Sen. Forby, one of the closure's most vocal opponents, unsuccessfully sought to pass a bill that would take away Quinn's power to shutdown facilities and then held a press conference where he urged that Chicago be kicked out of Illinois and that the governor be put in a boat that was shoved out into Lake Michigan.

But it hasn't all been rants and jeers. For example, last month Tamms Year Ten held a press conference to promote closure, where

U.S. Rep. Danny Davis spoke movingly of the plight of the men remaining at Tamms, and also reminded listeners that closing Tamms was a moral issue.

Now we await the Alexander County court's decision about whether it will agree to the union's demand that Tamms remain open. While we're waiting, here three things to keep in mind:

1. Don't be fooled. AFSCME's lawsuit argues that closing Tamms will jeopardize public safety; but that is not the union's real concern. "Save our jobs" is the union's real battle cry.

2. Those of us favoring closure have a different imperative. Tamms is inefficient, redundant, expensive, and harmful, says Laurie Jo Reynolds, the lead organizer of Tamms Year Ten. Citing data from Illinois officials and testimony from experts across the nation, Laurie Jo urges that instead of improving public safety, Tamms threatens it. She adds that the long-term sensory deprivation practiced at Tamms is harmful to the human soul and serves no useful purpose.

That moral concern should be front and center when the Alexander County judge considers whether to allow the State to close Tamms. Yet in August, when Uptown People's Law Office sought to intervene in the lawsuit on behalf of some Tamms prisoners seeking to raise the concern, the judge said no. Uptown's Legal Director Alan Mills nevertheless attended the hearing held to decide the prison's fate. Alan reports that during the three days of testimony, the plight of the prisoners enduring long-term incarceration in the excessively harsh environment of Tamms was not mentioned by any witness.

3. If the downstate court orders the State to keep Tamms open, as it may, the fight will not be over. The State assuredly will appeal

SEE TAMMS, PAGE 2

# GREEN REENTRY: FROM HOUSE TO HOME

By Haroon Najam

“We want to change how society views formerly-incarcerated individuals,” says Dr. Rolanda West. Speaking of a training program for the brothers reentering the Chicago Lawn community through IMAN’s Green Reentry Project, she adds that “it aims to teach the social, emotional, spiritual, leadership and, eventually, economic skills necessary to make a successful reentry into the community.” The formation of a functional and empowering social identity is the key, according to her, to making such individuals pillars and leaders of the communities they are returning to.



The first house constructed under the Green Reentry Project is a beautiful and environmentally sound space made possible by training provided by the City of Chicago’s Department of Environment, major funding from the Islamic Society of North America and Zakat Foundation, equipment and materials from Home Depot, and resources from key donor families. It has been up and running and is becoming a critical resource for the surrounding community. It has hosted a series of meetings attended by residents, representatives from the City of Chicago and Green Reentry leaders, in which actions plans are being developed for how to tackle local issues such as public safety and foreclosed homes. IMAN has provided leadership for such meetings and is in the process of becoming fully certified with the Illinois Department of Corrections so that reentering individuals can come to the Green Reentry houses upon their release.



As the house turned into a home by welcoming its first group of four formerly incarcerated brothers during the next month, current Green Reentry leaders conducted a ten-week “Leadership and Empowerment” program designed by Dr. West and the Alter-

native Education Research Institute. Afterwards, they had undergone training to acquire the technical skills and certification required for “green” construction projects. Then, these brothers were responsible for the construction of the second Green Reentry house. In this manner, Green Reentry will become a self-sustaining and self-replicating model.

IMAN has always envisioned Green Reentry as a model that can be successfully scaled up, over time, in accordance with the enormity and complexity of challenges that inner-city communities are faced with, challenges such as lack of decent housing, job skills, public safety, and effective reentry programs that are fundamentally connected and

deeply entrenched. Now this innovative and practical solution is getting the kind of attention from community leaders and public officials that can turn it into a regional and national success story. Representatives from the offices of Illinois Governor Pat Quinn, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, and Congressman Danny Davis have all toured the house recently and shown interest in both the commitment and possibilities that such work by IMAN represents.

As the residents of the Green Reentry home become invested in and responsible for the community that surrounds their home—with program such as mentoring at-risk youth of color, help for residents and weekly neighborhood cleanups—and as more leaders and lawmakers see the alternate possibilities that this project represents, it can begin to change how the community views formerly-incarcerated individuals. Out of such change in perception toward them— they are assets not

liabilities—can come the social, cultural and, finally, legal change that is required to solve some of the crises that are tearing our inner-city communities apart. That is the change that Dr. West talks about and is working with IMAN’s Green Reentry Project to create.

\*\*\*

The Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) Green Reentry Leadership Home is now taking applications for new residents until Nov. 20th. If you have a loved one who will be returning home from incarceration (or yourself have been recently released) we have several spots available. The Leadership Home provides recently released men an opportunity to transition back into their communities with supportive services and with the opportunity to grow as leaders working to stabilize and improve the community.

To receive an application, please send your request to:

Green Reentry  
Inner-City Muslim Action Network  
2744 W 63rd Street  
Chicago, IL 60629

Email: [reentry@imacentral.org](mailto:reentry@imacentral.org)

To receive more information about programs and/or supportive services provided, contact Rolanda West at 312.341.7164 or via email at [rolanda@aerionline.org](mailto:rolanda@aerionline.org). (Sorry, collect calls cannot be accepted)

## TAMMS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

such an order, and the appellate court may rule differently. In addition, those of us who oppose Tamms are in for the long haul. A year ago no one would have thought that the governor and our State’s prison officials would align themselves on our side. Ultimately, we will win. And eventually, when our State’s supermaximum security prison is shuttered for good, Illinoisans will scratch their heads and say, what were we thinking.

**UPDATE: On October 9, 2012 associate Circuit Judge Charles Cavaness issued the ruling in favor of keeping the prisons open and for both sides to go back to arbitration, thus, at least for now Tamms remains open.**

# FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to another edition of Northeastern Illinois University's *Stateville Speaks* and once again, we thank you for your readership. We hope you enjoyed the special John Howard (JHA) Edition. I am confident they answered or addressed some of your most persistent questions. We are committed to introduce or re-visit the work of organizations that fight the systemic injustices and inhumane conditions facing those incarcerated, such as John Howard Association (JHA) and Uptown People's Law Center. We interviewed the Vigil, a movement that we introduced this past spring that is committed to shifting our prison economy from punitive to restorative by shifting where the money is being spent. We ask for your feedback.

In addition we will also do the same with those organizations that take on a grassroots approach, either with individuals inside or out, such as the Prison Neighborhood Arts Project, Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) and Alternative Education Research Institute (AERI).

We are equally relieved but dismayed over the legislation introduced to oversee your medical care while incarcerated. Relieved because people are dying, suffering, or receiving medical care befitting a developing nation and finally a system will be in place to monitor such care. We are dismayed that 1.4 billion can be paid out without any accountability. In addition, during one of the hottest summers, fans were confiscated, causing more heat related stress. Typewriters were also confiscated creating just plain stress.

Finally, the Supreme Court ruled against mandatory Juvenile Life Without Parole (JLWOP). While an important decision in the right direction does it really make a supreme impact? We ask our JLWOP readers to respond.

While one court rules favorably another delays Governor Quinn's proposed closures of juvenile, facilities, transitional centers, as well as Tamms and Dwight prisons. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) have sighted both safety and jobs as a need for them to remain open. Now a judge has ordered them to remain open and for both sides enter arbitration. We can be sure that there are many private negotiations taking place, as a few Democratic lawmakers have now asked the Governor to scrap his plans for the prison closures. At this time and since he has announced closure plans the Governor remains steadfast that this is the right thing to do.



Alan Vega was the winner of the *Stateville Speaks* T-shirt design contest. A rendition of his logo will be used on a shirt sold to raise funds next year. To see the rest of the entries, turn to page 9.

While we have many of our students researching some of your most frequently asked questions (FAQ) for our column, many do try to find information pertaining to your individual questions. In this edition we needed to take a moment to address what we at *Stateville Speaks* can and cannot do. While we welcome and encourage your letters with questions, essays and other creative work, all too often we are sent appeals that unfortunately we are unable to address. We are, however, always looking for organizations that do help and will print their information and the services they provide.

We did ask for submissions for our Tee-shirt contest and while I know we did not exhaust the potential talent of our readership,

were so amazed with the entries we received. While some were creative, others were clever and some were both. Some of the works were so detailed they were indeed "conventional" art. This got us thinking about the possibility of *Stateville Speaks* commissioning a future art show. Please let us know your thoughts and if we gather enough interest we will certainly consider moving ahead. In the meantime, we thank each of you for sending in your ideas on how to best represent this newsletter.

While we applaud the artists, most of us simply lack those talents. But clearly many of you have other talents, including exceptional writing and storytelling skills. Please see de-

**SEE EDITORIAL, PAGE 11**

# TRUE JUSTICE, A PATH TO SELF-EMPOWERMENT

In the March 2012 issue of *Stateville Speaks* we introduced a movement called Vigil for True Justice. This article generated a tremendous amount of mail with inquiries about the purpose and goal of this movement. Many questions such as who would benefit, how it works and how one might participate were asked. It also posed the possibility that participation could put an additional burden on inmates, families and friends, who already face tremendous stress, by asking them to deny themselves, or someone they love, some of the very few services or products that bring them a little bit of humanity or joy, while being incarcerated.

In an effort to define the ideas and motives behind The Vigil, we asked civil rights attorney, educator, prison activist and advocate, James Chapman to help enlighten us.

## Stateville Speaks: What does the name the Vigil for True Justice mean?

James Chapman: The definition of vigil is to “remain in a state of awareness.” In this sense, the Vigil for True Justice is a movement; an idea. It is not confined to an organization, group or one entity, but instead, its theories can be applied to everyone. Since it is not a 501C3 or any other non-profit it cannot accept donations. Instead, the Vigil is a free theory, built on the premise that “you get what you pay for.” If you continue to buy into mass-incarceration, rather than restoration... you will get what you pay for. The Vigil movement believes that people most affected by the Prison Industrial Complex are the very ones who have the power to save themselves. This can be achieved literally by being vigilant – or being aware, then acting on it.

## SS: What is the overall plan for the Vigil to carry out this theory?

JC: Participants can use this awareness and knowledge to make better choices with their money by diverting their spending away from incarceration and towards “cures” for incarceration. A system that does not seek to reduce recidivism is a system that endangers itself and the public. Every April and November, every year, the Vigil calls together as many people, organizations, family members and persons affected by mass incarceration as possible to re-direct their spending to support groups that work to end mass incarceration, reduce recidivism and create reform. These supported groups would lobby for law-changes, reduced sentencing, education programs, ex-offender jobs and entrepreneurship programs; restorative justice and rehabilitation programs. They would hold IDOC accountable for the claim to restore useful citizenship. They would also hold all other companies, individuals and entities accountable to provide fair and equitable goods and services. Simply stated this would starve the problem and feed the cure.

## SS: How, specifically will the Vigil to they do that?

JC: It is quite simple: We must stop buying things we can't afford. We must stop investing in companies that feed on our failures. Each month, people affected by incarceration have been known to spend up to nearly three hundred dollars a month on collect phone calls, vending machine junk food and unnecessary extravagant commissary items. All they have to do is make it a choice to STOP spending their money on these things and instead apply that same money (or even a portion of it) to the organization of their choice along with a letter detailing where they would like the money to be used. The Vigil is



How IDOC saves money in CDR

Cartoon by April Goodman

not out for anyone's money. Rather, people are encouraged to find an organization or a cause that they believe in. People are encouraged to “invest in themselves” and invest their money in a place that is rooted in the reform that they want to see; with any cause of their choice. All we ask them to do is when or IF they decide to make a donation that they let us know how or where they decided to invest it.

## SS: Don't inmates need things? How can they do without them?

JC: Ultimately no significant change can be achieved without some sacrifice, but make smart sacrifices. Letters are still great communication tools, limit calls. Do without the junk food from the vending machines, during visits or just don't put money on the card. Try to cut spending in half for a few weeks and save up some money on a card on the side. (Just don't binge prior or afterward as that is counter-productive). Limit purchases to needs only: soap, toiletries, not new gym shoes, televisions or other overpriced electronics. Most commissary items are inflated up to 70% while phone calls over 100%.

## SS: Many people believe that these cut prison costs and lesson the use of taxes, or fund services to benefit all inmates.

JC: 60 % of the commissary profits supply the Salary Reimbursement Fund, the rest goes to private companies that are providing these services, while making obscene profits at the expense of inmates and their loved ones. These companies provide products and services such as uniforms, shoes, soap, towels, food, music and phone calls. Music vendors may charge inmates \$20 - \$30 dollars for cassette tapes, while sometimes taking over six-months to fill an order. Companies such as Consolidated Phone Services, Securus; Western Union; J Pay; Ace Vending are some of the key vendors. Other investors and “profiteers”

include Wells Fargo and Corrections Corporations of America to name a few. It is a billion dollar business.

**SS: Can the Vigil really make a difference?**

JC: Yes, we believe it will strengthen the efforts of petitions, lobbying/ contacting legislators and other forms of demonstration. When people didn't shop in 2006, several massive companies, such as Circuit City, Linens N' Things and K.B. Toys went out of business, while others scrambled to improve their business practices. We believe this will hold true with the prison providers, as this is big business as well. In addition, the decrease in revenue would send a clear signal to companies that "...though we do not have the choice to spend elsewhere, we still have the choice to not spend at all."

**SS: What are the Consequences or the risks?**

JC: Any time one executes something potentially effective; there is the possibility of a push back. Corporations will attempt to scare people into complacency or threat of permanent loss, while some may not want to risk the short-term loss of their luxuries. But the reality is that a corporation cannot sustain itself as is without the willing participation of the community dollars. Nor can they make threats if they are losing control or money.

**SS: What has the Vigil accomplished thus far?**

JC: The Vigil is off to a steady and promising start. In April, we had almost 300 people participate - saving an unofficial, yet estimated \$30,000. We launched an informational website with resources and tools that can be accessed at both [www.VigilForTrueJustice.org](http://www.VigilForTrueJustice.org) and [www.VFTJ.org](http://www.VFTJ.org). New supporters include The Human Potential Reclamation Movement - of the Adler Institute, which has hundreds of organization affiliates and by Tio Hardiman of the Interrupters / Director of Cease Fire.

**SS: What's next for the Vigil?**

JC: The Vigil is taking it to the streets. We're helping several community groups and schools to mobilize the people in their communities to save their money and to stop "spending" it on incarceration. We are also looking to re-invest the anticipated \$30,000 - \$60,000 we hope to re-direct, with key partners in creating jobs for ex-offenders, restorative justice and support for victims groups, teaching entrepreneurship, creating youth mentorship, community development and continuing work on drafting much needed legislation, as well as alternative sentencing for long- and short-term offenders. The Vigil plans to continue twice a year, each year. The plan is not to rest until education, restoration and reform generate more revenue and prosperity than incarceration. For more information please contact the Vigil for True Justice 3929 S. Prairie Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60653

We at *Stateville Speaks* are extremely interested in your opinion and thoughts regarding the Vigil, please drop us a line and tell us what you think, as always, we support all causes that support you and your loved ones.

## THE PRISON NEIGHBORHOOD ARTS PROJECT IN STATEVILLE C.C.

The Prison-Neighborhood Arts Project (P-NAP) is a new arts and education project starting at Stateville. P-NAP will offer 2 non-credit classes, taught by faculty/artists from area art schools and universities. Together, students and faculty will create works of art over the course of a semester.



Visual art and creative writing produced in these classes will be exhibited in neighborhood community centers and galleries.

Art and literature has always been a tool to discuss challenging topics and push the boundaries of our thinking. The goal of P-NAP is to foster this kind of critical thinking and creative language that can communicate the wealth of knowledge and particular perspectives that students at Stateville have about the world around us.

Poetry-Writing and Visual Stories classes will be offered for the duration of a semester (15 weeks). See course descriptions and schedule below.

### COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

**Poetry-Writing:** Poetry is language maximally charged with meaning and power, and words are a poet's instrument. Learn to jazz, slow jam, sizzle your words. Students read poetry from all over the world, and listen to music that inspired poets. This course will be co-taught by Barbara Barg, Chicago School of Poetics; Anthony Madrid, University of Chicago; and Nadya Pittendrigh, University of Illinois, Chicago.

**Visual Stories:** There are many ways to tell a story and visual art is one of them. This class will explore several different forms of storytelling—from books to portraits. Throughout art history, artists have used portraiture to not just represent the artist, but to explore stories about her or his life. Other artists have created scrolls, timelines or comics to represent ideas and histories that challenge prevailing conventions. Students will study works of art that tell stories about places and people. We will work with collage, book arts and drawing to tell our own stories and analyze the world around us. Project assignments will be given throughout the semester, all exploring the idea of storytelling. The course will be taught by Sarah Ross, School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

We will keep you updated with more information as it becomes available.

*Stateville Speaks* is generously supported by Cynthia Kobel  
& the Kenneth and Harle Montgomery Foundation

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

In a continued attempt to answer the numerous questions we are asked at *Stateville Speaks*, we are using this space to get “back to basics” and remind our readerships what we can, will try to, or cannot do. Our number of subscribers and the quantities of letters that we receive have expanded beyond anything we could have imagined and we can only hope that this is because we are focusing on topics that are considered important and informative to you, our readers. While we may be slower in answering some of our correspondences, it is no means a reflection of how important they are to our newsletter. We feel your personal experiences and perspectives and the inability to ascertain needed information is the driving force behind this paper and our work.

Unfortunately, I must again remind you that we are not affiliated with any law school and are therefore limited to the amount of legal information that we can acquire. For that reason, we are unable to work on any individual cases. Please, do not send us your case files or your appeal applications. It is both expensive for you to do so and for us to return them (as we did when we were sent originals). Again, this is by no means a substitute for professional or legal assistance, but a means to compile as much information, from as many reliable sources as possible, based on the questions we receive from you, our readers. Thus, let us revisit the basics of *Stateville Speaks*.

## **Q: How can I start receiving *Stateville Speaks*? What if I can't afford it?**

A: Simply write us and tell us you wish to receive it. It is free to inmates, but we ask for a \$10.00 donation if you can afford it, but certainly not in lieu of your other needs. The suggested fee helps defray the cost of printing and postage and is really directed at those on the “outside”. We ask that if you transfer to let us know so we can update our list and if you are finished pass it along so someone else may read it.

## **Q: How often is *Stateville Speaks* issued throughout the year?**

A: Our goal is three times year, spring, fall and winter to correspond with our three semesters. We would also like to do some additional, special editions, like the JHA edition this summer. If it is off schedule it indeed most likely we are running a little behind, however we do know that we have had our whole subscription rejected in some of the prisons. So feedback after the newspaper is received is important, so we at least know you received it.



## **Q: What is the process or guidelines for submitting my work to *Stateville Speaks*?**

A: The main problem we have is with the length. We get some really well written letters, stories and essays but, they are simply too long. We often wish we could share them but our space is so limited. We ask that they be no longer than about 1-1 1/2 pages typed or about 2-3 pages hand written. We also ask that you write in more general terms. We are all extremely interested in the general conditions and culture at your prison, but it may have less appeal to your fellow readers when it becomes too narrow. Since we are unable to print all the excellent submissions we attempt to choose those that have the largest mass appeal.

## **Q: Does *Stateville Speaks* help with personal legal matters or individual cases?**

A: No, and we are not affiliated with a law school. We neither have the legal training or the resources to take on individual cases. We can certainly download case laws if they are accessible and we pounce on every lawyer we can to help us clarify some of the rulings, proceeding and laws. Again, they can explain in general terms, but not in the specifics.

## **Q: So what is the goal of *Stateville Speaks*?**

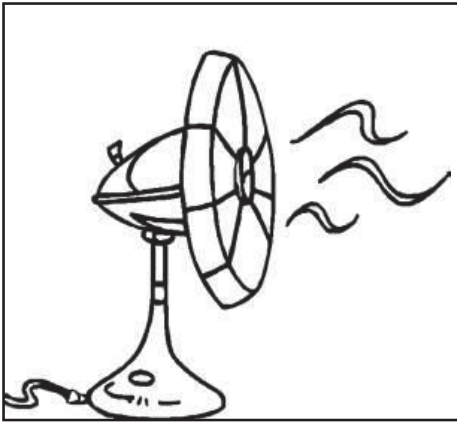
A: It is simply a place where you can voice your opinions; share your experiences, whether it is the accomplishment of a GED, or the indignities of racial slurs. It is also a place to share your essays, artwork and poems. You are educating all of us about life on the inside. In return, we try to give you as much information about legislation and policies that may affect you. We attempt to seek out and inform you of any services or programs, both on the inside and for those coming out. We also use all the information we gather to enlighten minds, through education, that serious changes in our justice system need to transpire, from those on the outside as much as those on the inside.

## **Q: Where can I send correspondence to?**

A: Send all correspondences and submissions to:  
*Stateville Speaks*  
c/o Justice Studies  
LWH 4062  
Northeastern IL University  
5500 N. St. Louis Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60625-4699

Please do not send originals, as we cannot always return them

## UPTOWN PEOPLE'S LAW CENTER FILES CASE CONDEMNING CONFISCATION OF PRISONER'S FANS DURING HOTTEST SUMMER EVER



2012 was one of the hottest summers on record in Illinois. Cell houses throughout the Illinois prison system are poorly ventilated, and generally hold two men in spaces designed for one. When the outside temperature reaches 95—as it did repeatedly this summer, temperatures inside cells on upper tiers at Stateville Correctional Center, Menard Cor-

rectional Center, and Pontiac Correctional Center can reach 120 degrees and more. As was reported a month ago, prisoners have died from this heat.

In anticipation of this deadly heat, in June, prisoners were told they could buy extra fans. Many did. All fans are approved by the Department, and can only be purchased from the prison commissary, at a significant markup. Each purchased fan has an accompanying property contract and is considered to be the personal property of the purchasing inmate.

Then on July 17th, with no warning, the Department reversed course, and announced that it was confiscating all “extra” fans.

On August 22, 2012 the Uptown People's Law Center filed a complaint in the Northern District of Illinois on behalf of two named prisoners, with the proposal of class action applicability. The complaint claims that the Department of Corrections illegally confiscated the inmates' property without just compensation. They allege that this conduct

is in direct conflict with multiple provisions of the United States Constitution, including the contract clause in Article 1, Section 10 and the 5th Amendment.

For further comment or to obtain a copy of the complaint and its accompanying exhibits please contact Alan Mills, Nicole Schult, or attorney Kenneth Flaxman, who will also be joining the Law Center in representing the plaintiffs in the fan/typewriter case. Outside inquiries can be sent to the Uptown People's Law Center at [uplchicago@gmail.com](mailto:uplchicago@gmail.com).

### COMING NEXT ISSUE

- An in depth interview with C.U.R.E. Illinois and the Saints of Humboldt Park.
- Updates on the soy lawsuit, Burge class action suit, and the elder bill.
- And much more!

---

## PRISON CONFISCATIONS CAUSING HEAT RELATED DEATHS

So far this summer at least 2 prisoners in Pontiac and 1 prisoner in Menard have died because of the extreme heat in their unventilated cells

We at the Law Center have recently received dozens of letters from prisoners at Stateville, Menard and Pontiac, complaining that the Department had instituted a new policy of banning all typewriters (typewriters which prisoners had purchased at the prison commissary), and banning any prisoner from having more than one fan.

Then yesterday we received a call from a guard at Stateville, complaining about the very same thing. He refused to give his name, but the details that he had strongly suggested that he was in fact a guard at Stateville. The guard said that when this new policy was announced at roll call, the guards objected, stating that it was completely unnecessary, and would only cause disruption in the prison. As to the typewriters, he said the guards suggested that the prison simply place a seal on all typewriters (as is now done with tvs and radios) so that it would be readily apparent if anyone opened a typewriter and tried to disassemble it. Their suggestion was ignored by

the administration.

As to the fans, he noted that in the Spring, the Warden had circulated a memo advising prisoners that they could buy additional fans to help with the summer heat. Now, in the midst of the hottest summer in decades, this policy was reversed. When the new policy was announced at roll call, the guards suggested waiting until October, when it wasn't so hot. Again, this was ignored.

He also stated that since the administration began confiscating these items, the tension at Stateville has increased dramatically, and there are many more fights. The guards are very concerned that prisoners will take out their frustration on the guards that are carrying out these new rules. Needless to say, given that we spend most of our time suing guards, I found this call very strange. He agreed, but said he was not doing this on his own, that he was calling with the approval of the Union. He said the guards were desperate, and thought that when the guards and the prisoners actually AGREE on something, the administration should pay attention. He asked that we assist in getting the word out.

We feel that the fans are a particularly

urgent matter. According to articles in the press, two men have died in the last month at Pontiac, and one at Menard, all three deaths were apparently heat related (although we do not have names, or medical records). We have been told that the temperature in some of the cell houses has exceeded 120 degrees on hot days this month. None of the prisons are air-conditioned, so just imagine living in a closed cell, with very little air flow, with at least one other person, during the last few weeks of temperatures in or above the 90s.

As to the typewriters, an inmate wrote directly to Swingtec, the manufacturer, and received a reply that the typewriters could easily be adjusted to no longer pose a safety threat.

The fans and typewriters are both purchased by the inmates from their own funds. They are personal property. IDOC defends these policies on the grounds that the parts of these machines could be used as weapons, but when it's 100 degrees out, I think I would be very reticent to take apart my fan. It seems as though if someone needs a weapon, they will find a way to obtain one.

# STATEVILLE SPEAKS T-SHIRT DESIGN CONTEST ENTRIES

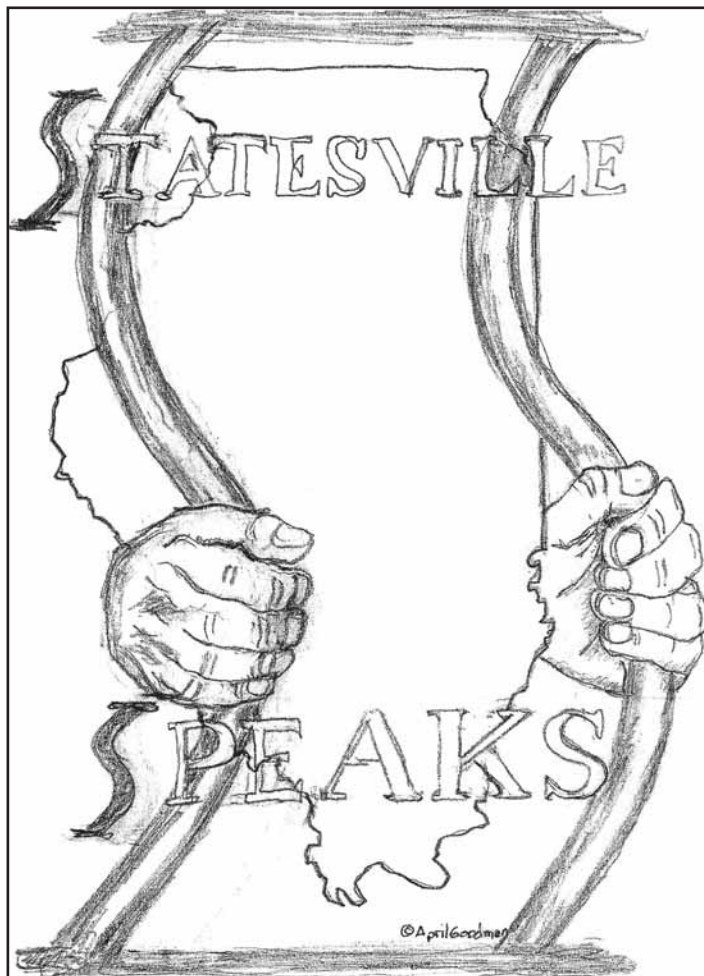
*Stateville Speaks* would like to thank all of you who participated in our first ever T-shirt contest. While all of them are excellent, we chose “**Mass Incarceration**” by Alan Vega, as our winner because sadly, yet pointedly, it reminds us of the “mass” practice and acceptance of incarceration in this country. Mr. Vega expressed concerns that his work may be construed as anti-American. Perhaps some may feel that way, but, we at *Stateville Speaks*, like many others, agree it is forlornly honest. Thank you again, for such inspiring work.

## FUTURE ART SHOW

Due to the volume of untapped talent among our readers, *Stateville Speaks* is considering commissioning a future art show. Please, do not send us anything yet, just if you may be interested in doing so. We will let you decide if this is something we should do. When and if we proceed we will certainly announce and give you time to prepare and submit. Any and all ideas are welcome.



WINNER - Alan Vega



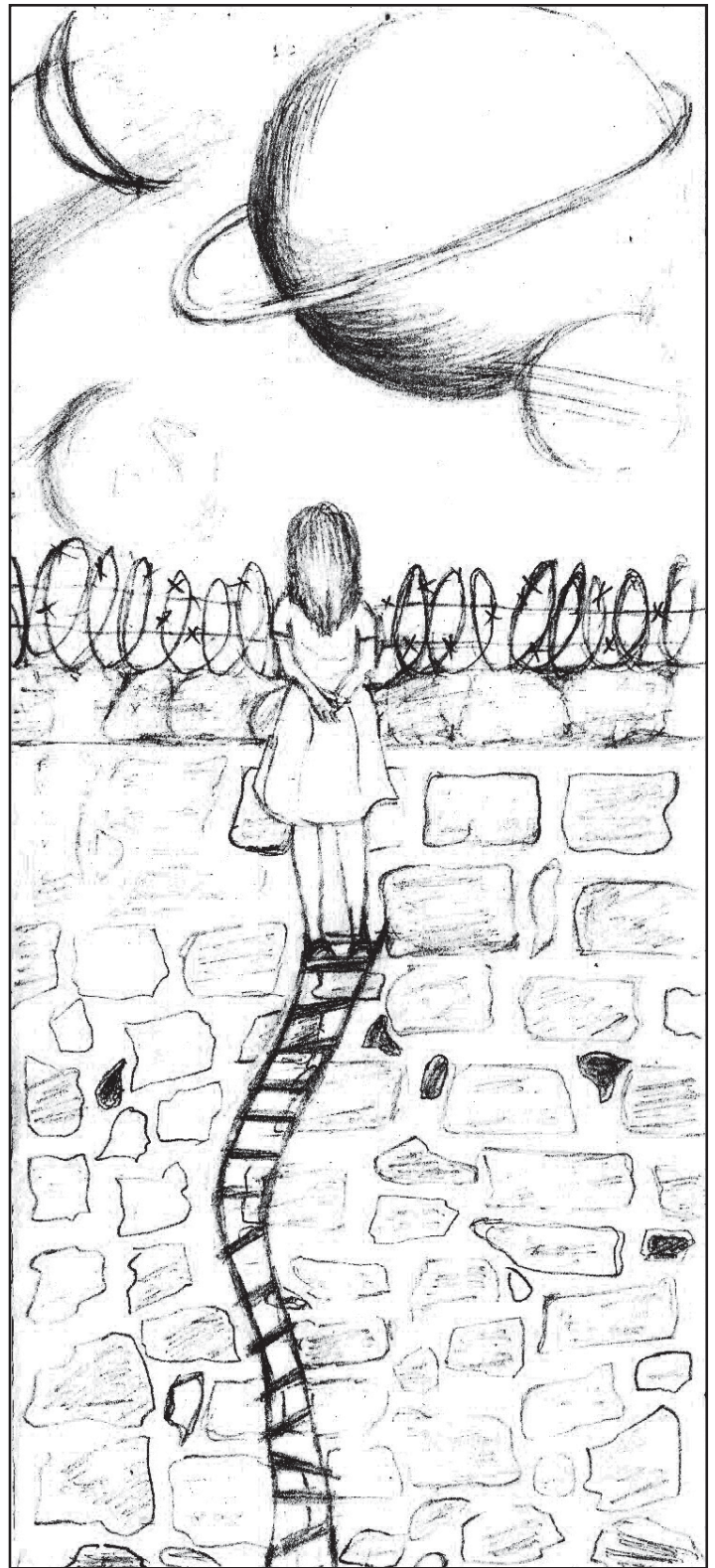
Honorable Mention - April Goodman



Honorable Mention - Johnnie Veal

NOTE: For the entry by Arkee, see the back page.





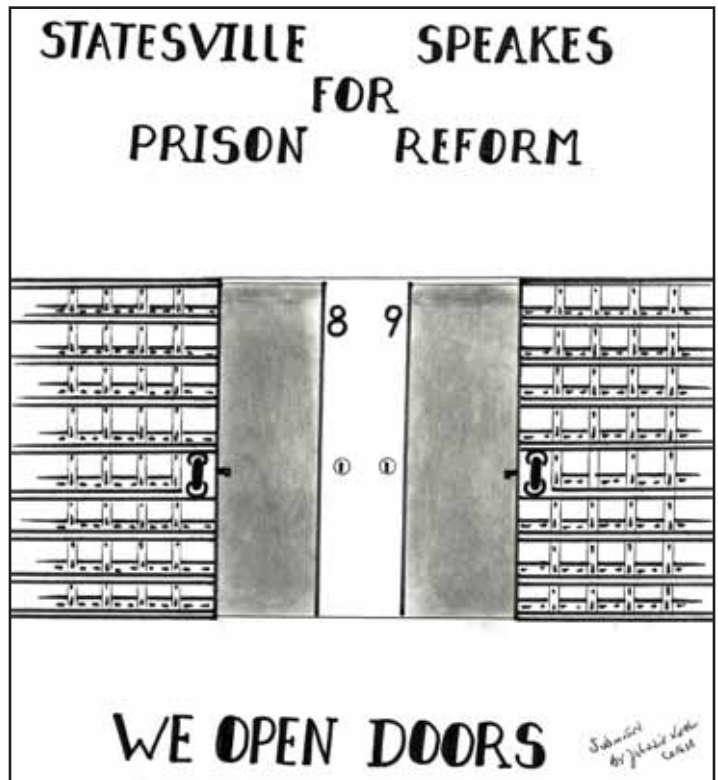
Top Left: Patrick Tullis  
Bottom Left: Alan Vega (entry #2)  
Right: Pearl Tuma

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

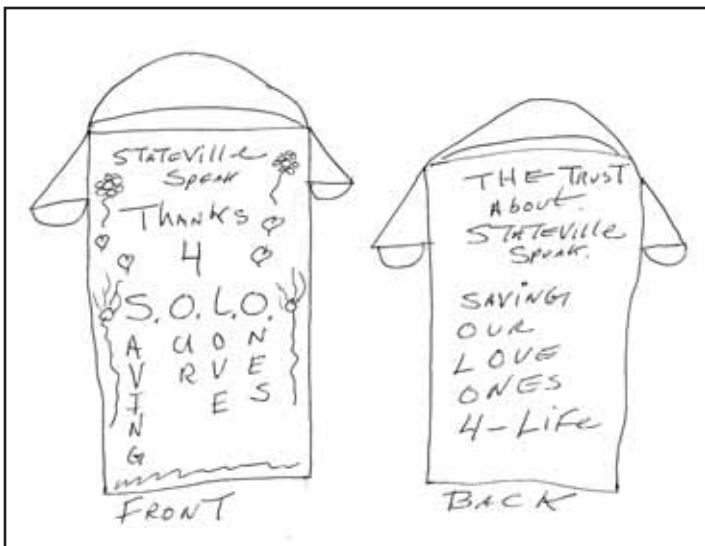
DESIGN CONTEST (CONTINUED)



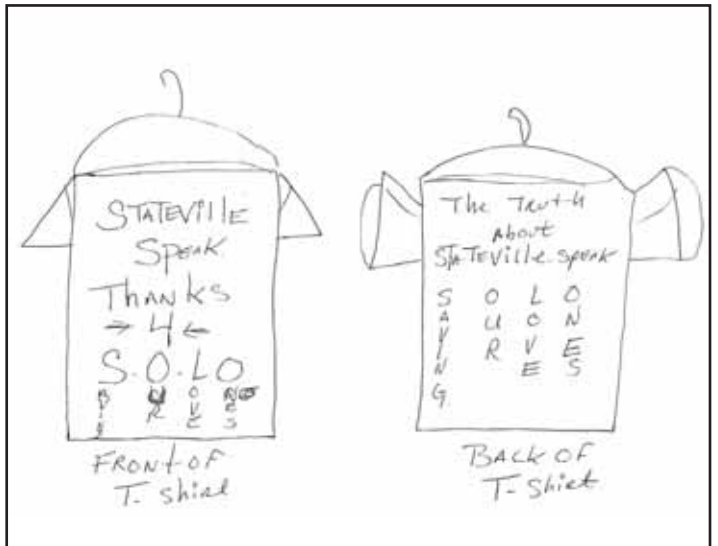
Carl Moss



Johnnie Veal (entry #2)



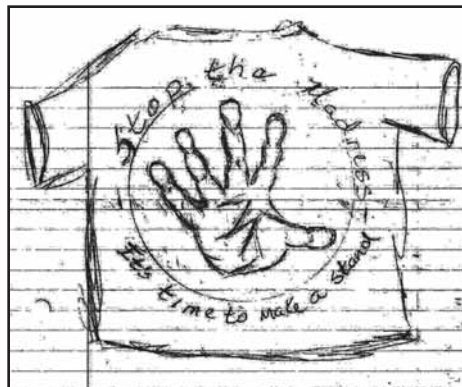
Solo Harris (entry #1)



Solo Harris (entry #2)



Kenneth Turner



Martin Cabrera



Malik Johnson

# THE REAL ISSUE

by Keith E. Bennett

While I sit alone with the confines of this 6 x 9 prison cell, it's mind boggling to listen to fellow inmates complain about the quality and quantity of food, the hardness of both the pillow and mattress, commissary prices or how many photos and magazines they are allowed to have, along with a number of other complaints that hold no real significance or are just flat out fabricated.

I have only three complaints: The noise fellow inmates make, day and night, without any respect for those trying to sleep. And the attitudes of fellow inmates- as if life and prisons are just a game... But most importantly: The emptiness I feel within without the love and compassion of a woman, the emptiness that comes from not being able to spend the night with my arms wrapped around the woman I love.

If it were not for the love and compassion of a woman, man would never have become civil. To strip man from the most important influence in his life is to me beyond cruel and unusual – not the quality and quantity of the free food.

Placing man in an environment stripping him of his manhood is not only forcing the majority into homosexuality, but is being purposely used to do so. I refuse to sit here and sugar coat what I witness within these walls on a daily basis. Fellow inmates, either on the down low, or out in the open are engaging themselves in activities



Keith E. Bennett

that not only spreads diseases within the prison, but also to the streets upon their release. Some beautiful lady is awaiting her man at the gate without any knowledge of what he was doing within these walls. If there is any issue that any relevance or real significance it would have to be the above.

The majority of fellow inmates have women who support them while imprisoned- some have more than a couple. I myself don't even have one, but I know for a fact if I had a woman who supported me through all my failures, I would not return the love she has shown me by bringing home a disease.

Children and adults alike within this world, who have never committed a crime, suffer daily from thirst and hunger. For me to sit and complain about the food that keeps me alive after the crimes I've committed seems selfish. But to take a disease home- that would not only be selfish it would be flat out thoughtless and extremely stupid.

Why it is nobody complains about not having the privilege of conjugal visits? The privilege alone would not only prevent the spread of disease but would also force fellow inmates to change their attitudes and behaviors with the knowledge of knowing that any infractions caught would prevent them from spending time with a woman- the most beautiful and compassionate creature walking the planet. In my opinion- this is the real issue!

## EDITORIAL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

tails for submissions in this issue. We are not looking for perfect spelling or grammar, just some honest dialogue and insight.

There is some hopeful news with a slight decline in our readership as we witnessed both "C" numbers granted parole by the Prison Review Board (PRB) and those that completed their sentences. We say, best wishes, stay strong and we are delighted to "lose" our readership this way.

Finally I would like to thank everyone that contributes to make *Stateville Speaks* a learning experience for us all. Our thanks to publisher Cynthia Kobel and the Kenneth & Harle Montgomery Foundation for their generous funding donation and to executive editor Bill Ryan, who is, believe me, always

working. We especially want thank our Justice Studies Chair Cris Toffolo for her total commitment and Justice Professors Kingsley Clarke, Rolanda West and Maria De La Torre and English Professor Tim Barnett for engaging their students with the newsletter. Thank you to attorneys Jean Snyder, Aviva Futorian and Alan Mills for giving us a clue on the complexities of sentences and time served, how parole and Executive Clemency works and about our precious, but always threatened First Amendment Rights. Thanks, Sal Barry for your wonderful layout and to Arkee, because *Stateville Speaks* would not be the same without an Arkee 'toon.

As always, thank you, our readers for your patience, candor and your confidence in letting us be your voice.

## WE WANT TO KNOW

**Language Barrier?** Are you or someone you know is experiencing problems or special issues do to a language barrier, or have so in the past? If you or someone you know is either currently or formerly incarcerated, and English is not your primary language, please contact us at *Stateville Speaks*.

**Disabilities?** *Stateville Speaks* is particularly interested in those inmates that have any disabilities, or special needs, whether officially recognized or not. We are particularly interested in those that are affected with hearing disabilities and use sign language. Please contact us.

# SUPREME CT. RULES UNCONSTITUTIONALITY OF JLWOP



In June of 2012, the Supreme Court finally made a ruling on Juvenile Life without Parole (JLWOP) in which they stated its unconstitutionality due to its violation of the 8th Amendment rights against “cruel and unusual punishment.” Though this 5-4 decision does not release anyone from prison or abolish JLWOP, it will eliminate the possibility of the mandated sentence still being handed down

in some states. Now a judge or a jury must consider the age before such an unconditional sentence is handed down.

According to the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth there are 2570 youths currently serving LWOP in the United States in state prisons, with 36 serving in federal custody. In contrast there are only 7 youths serving that sentence in the rest of the world. We

are, however, the only country in the world that will let a child die in prison, without the possibility of parole. The states of Alaska, Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Montana, New Mexico, and Oregon do not have mandatory laws, while the rest of the states do, though New York, Maine, New Jersey, Vermont, and West Virginia and the District of Columbia do not have any youth currently serving LWOP.

In a stinging contrast, Illinois has 103 youths currently serving LWOP, where we could sentence them as young as 13 years old. An overwhelming number of those serving JLWOP are of color (72% African American and 10% Latino). While they may be written off as the “worst of the worst” 25% of them were not principles in the crime committed.

This ruling comes some 7 years (2005) after the Court abolished the death penalty for juveniles and 2 years (2010) after they abolished LWOP for crimes other than murder. Unfortunately, to many it does not go far enough as age is still used arbitrarily. A judge or jury can still hand down a life sentence in Illinois for a 13 year old, yet the youngest they could ever be declared emancipated is at 16. Furthermore, I would ask any expert to explain exactly what magical sense of reasoning occurs to the mind of a developing youth once they reach the age of 18?

## THE LOVE OF \$

By Mr. Patrice Daniels

American corporate crony capitalism is rife with greed, monopolization and economic exploitation. (1% owns 70% of the economy.) It also seeks to reinforce the de Facto effective permanence of marginalizing the poor working class citizenry. The disenfranchisement of millions is indeed, the offspring of diehard capitalism in its rawest form, where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

The question that I repeatedly pose is “What’s so bad about communalism?” Since when did words like shared wealth or equality become blasphemous?

Any objective economist without an ideological ax to grind or philosophical point of view to advance would have to concede, if they are honest, that capitalism in its 21st century form is doomed to fail. There’s no future in the almighty dollar. It even continues to depreciate as I write this essay or commentary.



The film “Wall Street” got it wrong. Greed IS NOT good and before I am cast as a Marxist socialist, let me say this: I am not a fan of Karl Marx. I am a champion of common sense. Common sense says that mobilizing wealth and resources under the umbrella of corporate capitalism and “free market” economics means that those not able to compete equally with those interests will undeniably suffer as a result. The vast majority of the planet’s population falls into the suffering category-and it is on their behalf that I espouse the views that I do.

## THE MUSIC STOPPED

By Vincent Galloway

On any given day or night you would hear the music of freedom-the sounds of typewriters; litigators keeping the hope of freedom alive and meeting deadlines in the State and Federal Courts.

On July 17, 2012 the Tact-Team from the State rushed cell house-C in Stateville and removed us all from our cells. When I returned to my cell it had been ransacked and my typewriter was taken. I learned later that the Warden had ordered it.

Warden’s Bulletin 2012-51 was posted on the institution channel on July 23, 2012, about the removal of all typewriters. It said all typewriters were being removed from all maximum security prisons. Inmates in maximum security prisons are the ones who have appeals and need typewriters to file them. The State says it has limited resources, yet inmates will be doing more time without the appeals that could have been typed and filed.

# PRAYERS

## WE THANK YOU

By Priest Eugene Pryor Sr.

We thank you Lord God, heavenly father for your faithful providence which we have enjoyed and for thy gracious provision of fellowship with one another and with thee. Teach us to receive thy gifts with Thanksgiving, that with grateful hearts we may enjoy the gifts which have come from God, who together with the son and the Holy Ghost are one God and one Lord.

\*\*\*

## O' LORD

By Priest Eugene Priest Pryor Sr.

O' Lord, the Captain of my salvation, strengthen me inwardly and outwardly that I may be vigorous with spiritual purpose and disposed to every virtuous and gallant undertaking. Grant that I may do valiantly, in despite of slothfulness or timidity and that neither my fear of ridicule nor my love of popularity may make me seem to like what is not right. Be thou pleased also to fortifying my spirit so that I may meet life, hopefully and be able to endure everything which thou may be pleased to send me.

\*\*\*

## LORD LET THERE BE

By Priest Eugene Pryor Sr.

Lord, let there be a gentle spring within my heart where those who need serenity and comforting may find a cool, sweet plentitude. But, Lord, before they find the flow of crystal water, may they hear its music in my voice and know the spring is there.

\*\*\*

## GRANT ME O' LORD

By Priest Eugene Pryor Sr.

Grant me O' Lord, the royalty of inward happiness and the serenity which comes from living close to God. Daily renew in me the sense of joy and let the eternal spirit of the father dwell in my soul and body, filling every corner of my heart with light and grace. So that bearing about with me the infection of a good courage I may be a diffuser of life and may meet all ills and cross accidents with gallant and high-hearted courage, giving God thanks, always, for all things.

\*\*\*

## FATHER, BEFORE I CLOSE MY EYES

By Priest Eugene Pryor Sr.

Father, before I close my eyes I would look back over the day to see if I have used it well. Whatever came, did I turn it to good? Whatever opportunity arose, did I see it as a service to God? If my answer is yes, that is the praise of joyful lips; but if uncertainty close my mind, let it become readiness to greet the 'morrow and serve God better. So during the night watches my meditation shall be sweet.

# MEDICAL OVERSIGHT MAY BE ON THE WAY

Medical related issues are by far the largest complaint that we receive from those in the care of the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). Complaints of inadequate health care, even neglect, at the hands of medical contractor Wexford Health Services has been argued for years, including the hotly debated Prison



Reform Committee headed by the late Eddie Washington back in May of 2009. The complaints have persisted and may have even increased in numbers. Finally, relief may be on its way for those receiving virtually unaudited healthcare with very little examination, with the introduction of Illinois HR1248.

Filed by Representative Greg Harris (13th D) and Co-Sponsored by Representative Kelly M. Cassidy (14th D) this bill would simply demand oversight of the IDOC's mental and medical programs. Prompting the introduction of this bill may be attributed to many factors surrounding prison medical accountability, including the numerous lawsuits filed by attorney Alan Mills of Upton People's Law Center, the recent comprehensive report on the state of medical care in prisons, by the John Howard Association (JHA) and numerous reports "of poor health care in prisons" by Rob Wildeboer of WBEZ 91.5 Chicago. Over the years Illinois Prison Talk, the National Alliance Against Racist & Political Repression (NAARPR), *Stateville Speaks* and Illinois Institute for Community Law, along with countless other organizations and individuals have also fought to illuminate and bring changes to the medical care and accountability in the Illinois prison system. Perhaps, the time is now.

## SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED HR1248

Directs the Auditor General to conduct a management audit of the Department of Corrections' implementation of a comprehensive medical and mental health services program for offenders.



# STATEVILLE SPEAKS ESSAY CONTEST: STOP THE CYCLE OF INCARCERATION



Noting that *Stateville Speaks* was created by publishing entries for a poetry contest we thought it would be thought-provoking to revisit that experience and host another writing contest. This time though we are looking for an essay regarding your experience with the justice system and incarceration. This will give you a chance to share your knowledge from a very unique perspective. We will publish the top three submissions in an upcoming edition of *Stateville Speaks*, one that we hope to share with some of the students from Chicago Public Schools (CPS).

**Note of caution:** Please do not discuss your innocence or guilt without understanding the possible consequences of doing so, submissions are not confidential. Whatever you write is not protected by attorney-client privilege.

**Background:** Stopping incarceration, preventing recidivism, especially the cycle that is involving our youth is a topic in many conversations and we would like you to be included in them. Thus, we have established this contest to allow you to tell us about your experiences from your unique perspective. Beyond the cathartic aspects of such writing we believe your voice should be heard and your ideas considered in the framing of the solutions. It is important that a larger group of people hear about your awareness and expertise. Our readership includes people who help design and run the system, so by participating in this contest you might be able to help them understand the system as you see it.

**Purpose:** To write an essay on what outside influences either played a role in you being incarcerated, or what may have prevented it? We would like the essays written with young

adults and children in mind. What advice would you give them so they, themselves, do not become incarcerated? What changes in your neighborhood might prevent someone else from the same fate? Some of you are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles or grandparents. All of you are sons and daughters and were members of a community and thus you each have a unique story that needs to be told.

**Topic Options:** You may choose to write about the big picture or a specific issue:

- 1) Overall, what will it take to stop the cycle of incarceration?
- 2) Specifically, what can parents/guardians do to keep kids out of the prison pipeline?
- 3) Specifically, what could schools do to retain and engage more students?
- 4) What changes or enhancements does the community need to make?
- 5) What systemic/legislative changes need to be made (i.e., funding for after school programs, alternatives to gangs, less punitive and more rehabilitative responses, etc.)?
- 6) If you were out/when you are out, what can/would you do to help keep your neighborhood youth from being incarcerated?
- 7) If you were advising the Governor on what should be done to break the cycle what would you propose?

**Rules:** If you are a current inmate, or were released any time after January 1, 2012 you may submit an essay for this contest. Essays should be no longer than 1000 words and may be typed or handwritten, but please make sure they are legible. We cannot return any work, so please send or keep copies. Essays should be sent to

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

Please write "essay contest" on the envelope. The deadline for this contest is March 1, 2013.

## IN MEMORIAM

On 3/20/12 I had the telephone call that anyone incarcerated doesn't want to hear. My 79 year old Mom passed away. She was my Georgia Peach. Born and raised in the segregated South, Waynesboro, GA on 2/15/33. Her family migrated to Chicago for a better life.

I am the baby of six and she was there for me in more ways than I could count. She was a mother, a grandmother, and great grandmother. She lived to see a black man become president.

My regret was I was not by her side during her last days. She went peacefully in her sleep and all the relatives were able to see her and she is resting in peace. My brother held the phone up to her ear on 3/13/12 and I said my goodbye!

I just wanted to share some of my story with you about my Georgia Peach, Janie Snead (1933-2012).

\*\*\*

*Stateville Speaks* would like to extend our condolences to Eric Snead and his family for the passing of their beloved mother, **Jean Snead**.

\*\*\*

The staff, here at *Stateville Speaks* wish to send our condolences to **John Rossi** on the passing of his beloved sister, we are truly sorry for your loss.

\*\*\*

*Stateville Speaks* sends our heartfelt sympathy to DeMarcus Hillsman and his family on the passing of his queen and mother, Mrs. **Sonia Hillsman**. We are sorry for your loss and the harsh conditions you endured.

\*\*\*

Though late in doing so, *Stateville Speaks* wishes to give our condolences to **Eddie Walker on the passing of his beloved mother** at the age of 92. We extend our sympathies to both you and your family for your loss.



## STATEVILLE SPEAKS

STAFF • FALL 2012

**Publisher:** Cynthia Kobel

**Editor:** Gayle Tulipano

**Consulting Editor:** Bill Ryan

### Editors

Donald McDonald, Aldwin McNeal  
& Ananiel B. Rakemeyahu

### Assistant Editors

Stanley Howard, Jeanene Clay,  
Vincent Galloway, Renaldo Hudson,  
Tom Odle, Mychal Thompson,  
Ronnie Carrasquillo, Theresa Heater,  
Margaret Majos & Ron Kliner

### Women's Issues

Millie Lee & Janet Jackson

### Cartoonist:

 Arkee

**Layout & Design:** Sal Barry  
\*\*\*

**Mailing Address:** Send submissions  
and correspondences to:

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

Please do **not** send originals.

## BETTER FRIENDS

By Michael Billups

It's not just about us and its sure hell not about me.  
It's not all about you or anyone else, so what do you think you see?  
You gossip about everyone's life, but say nothing about any of yours.  
You put your brother's stuff all in the streets and drag it all over the floors.  
You judge your friends left and right, when we all do things that are wrong.  
You never pray for or edify, you never encourage to be strong.  
You're just out for blood my friend and to make them all look bad.  
How pitiful that is my friend, how low and very sad.  
So what do you think see my friend, are you the attitude police?  
Are you the ultimate judge, my friend, the one who "keeps the peace?"  
Are you the better friend, the one that everyone knows?  
Or are you the kind that belittles his in order for himself to grow?  
Maybe you're just full of pride, someone who's out for self.  
That wouldn't even give some time to assist or even help.  
Or maybe you're that rare good heart that seeks love-unity.  
If so my friend, let's join in peace and be better friends indeed. "Be Blessed".

## THE MEANING OF ISLAM

By Irving Madden

The word Islam is devised from the Arabic root "SLM" which means, among many things, peace, purity submission and obedience. In the religious sense, the word Islam means submission to the will of God and obedience to his law. It is only through submission to the will of God and obedience to his law can one achieve true peace and enjoy lasting purity. Islam is not another "ism" like Judaism, Hinduism, Marxism, etc. Every religion of the world has been named either after the name of the its founder or after the com-

munity and nation which that religion took its birth, i.e., Christianity from the name of its prophet Jesus Christ. Buddhism is from its founder Gautama Buddha, Judaism, the religion of the Jews, from the name of the Tribe Judah and so forth. Not so with Islam. Islam does not convey any such relationship for it does not belong to any particular person, people or country. It is universal. It is an attributive title. Whoever possesses this attribute he may belong to any race, community, country or clam is a Muslim.

## SPECIAL THANKS

Thank you to **Illinois Prison Talk** (IPT) [www.illinoisprisonstake.com](http://www.illinoisprisonstake.com) for your support and dissemination of *Statesville Speaks*, in addition to your keen observations and tireless reform efforts.

## SUBSCRIBE TO STATEVILLE SPEAKS

*Statesville Speaks* is free to inmates that cannot afford it. The \$10.00 subscription fee is appreciated and accepted from those that can to help defray our publishing costs. *Statesville Speaks* can only continue toward positive reform with your support.

I WANT TO SUBSCRIBE TO *STATEVILLE SPEAKS*

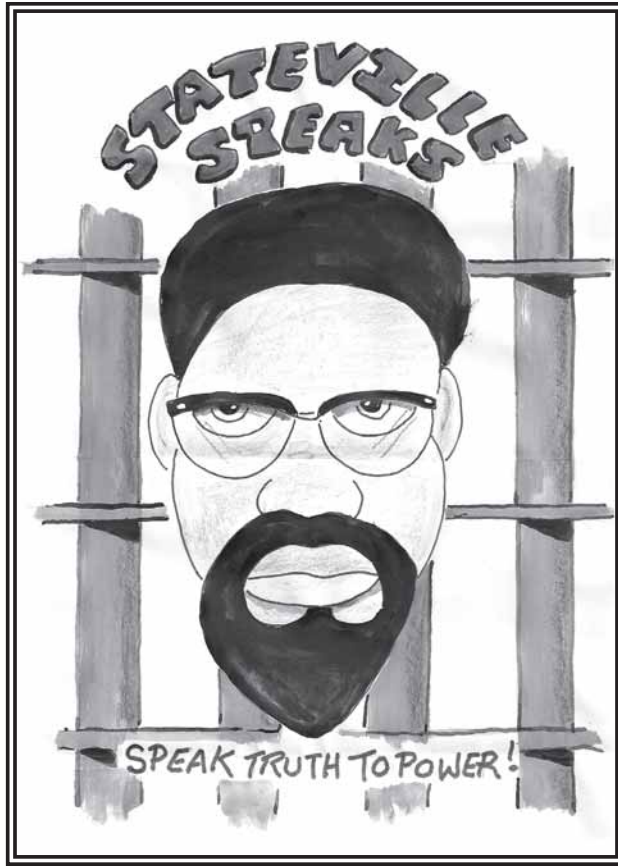
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

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

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL (for e-mail subscription) \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this coupon along with check or money order for \$10, to: S.S. Subscription, 2237 Sunnyside, Westchester, IL 60154



BY ARKEE

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