

STATESVILLE SPEAKS

Voices from the Inside • March 2012

THE PRISON REVIEW BOARD: ONE YEAR AFTER ADMINISTRATION CHANGE

By Cynthia Kobel
Statesville Speaks Publisher

There are about 275 men and one woman who have been locked in Illinois prisons before determinate sentencing was enacted in 1978. They are referred to as C# inmates because they all have a C at the beginning of their prison identification numbers. They are still eligible for parole (that is, to get out early for good behavior), and they rely upon the Prisoner Review Board of Illinois to release them from prison.

The Prisoner Review Board (PRB) is appointed by the Governor of Illinois and confirmed by the State Senate. The Board is comprised of 15 members; however, at this time there are only 13 members. This is a quasi-judicial body with its "primary focus on public safety," its mission states. A Board member is paid \$85,000.00 a year and given the use of a car. Of the sitting and confirmed members of the Board, 83% have law enforcement or prosecutorial backgrounds.

The PRB meets once a month to decide whether or not to give parole to these men and one woman. Usually, 15 C# cases are heard a month at the PRB offices in downtown Springfield, Illinois. The process begins with one board member going to a prison and interviewing a C# inmate. Then the State's Attorney's office interviews the family and friends of the victims in the case. The next step is an opposition hearing conducted by the State's Attorney's office in downtown Chicago. Most of the hearing is open to the public. The State's Attorney's representative writes up an opposition letter to send to the PRB; the State's Attorney's office has never supported parole for any inmate.

The third Thursday of the month, the PRB meets in what is called an en banc, and the PRB member who interviewed the inmate seeking parole presents his/her report from the interview with the prisoner and the whole board votes on whether to release the inmate or to keep him in prison. There is also



the opportunity for the Board members to vote as to whether they will hear the inmate's case the following year or not to hear the case for another two or three years. This is referred to as a multi-year set. In the past year a majority of the cases have been given three-year sets, meaning that a member of the PRB sees no way that he/she would parole a particular inmate in the next three years. Recently, the Legislature passed a law allowing the PRB to vote for five-year sets.

In 2010 only two men were paroled. So far this year only five men have won parole. In 2009, 143 cases were heard and eight men were paroled. Since the departure of Chairman of the PRB Jorge Montes and the installation of Chairman Adam Monreal, and the inclusion of four recent appointees, all with backgrounds in law enforcement agencies, the Board has released fewer inmates and given more three-year sets, with two even getting unprecedented five-year sets.

According to statistics put together by the John Howard Association of Illinois: C# prisoners are among the best behaved in the system and they are all 50 years of age or older; the average age is 63. Many of the C#s have exemplary records and are highly trusted by wardens. Those released have a 3% recidivism rate. Keeping a C# in prison costs the state approximately \$70,000.00 a year. As they age, the dollar amount will only rise and there will be an increase in health care costs per C#.

Lawyers and concerned citizens believe that the Board is placing too much emphasis on the original facts of the crime – which are often misrepresented and cannot be changed and they are not putting enough weight on factors that are in the inmates control – the inmates accomplishments while in prison, his recent disciplinary records, his family support, his parole plans and other

SEE PRISON REVIEW BOARD, PAGE 13



THIS PAST DECEMBER, the Tamms Committee and Tamms Year Ten signed Christmas cards to be sent to the men at Tamms Supermax prison. Students from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago helped organize an outstanding turnout of friends, family and supporters for those at Tamms.

Photo by Lenny Gilmore

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NEIU HONORS MERITS OF *STATESVILLE SPEAKS*

It has been a little over two years that North-eastern IL University has been working on *Stateville Speaks*. While most of the people that came across the newsletter saw the importance and the merits of this project, many within the University were not even aware of it. Most of this work has been done with very little fanfare, at least until now. This past October, publisher and chief supporter of *Stateville Speaks*, Cynthia Kobel (and the Montgomery Foundation) was honored by the NEIU Foundation Organization and

awarded the prestigious Wentworth Prize. This top honor is given to acknowledge both the generosity and the value that their contribution makes to both the University and the community at large.

We are delighted that Ms. Kobel has received some recognition for her decades of oftentimes unpopular work, on behalf of prison reform. Additionally we are also pleased that the University recognizes the importance of the *Stateville Speaks* and in fact has embraced it.

ACHIEVEMENT CORNER

Congratulations to Martice S. Hanible on the publishing of his new book, *To Kiss The Soul Of A Woman*. The book, a collection of beautifully crafted love poems was published by Midnight Express Books and can be readily ordered from Amazon Books.

Joe Dole has written and published an essay for the Anne Frank Center, Prison Diary Program. As usual, he has captured and conveyed the horrors of imprisonment, especially in the isolation of being in the solitary of supermax, serving a natural life sentence.

"I'm in a sea of madness during an eternal perfect storm of despair and heartache

for the duration of my breaths, constantly conscious of the fact that nearly the entire country despises me without knowing anything about me other than I am a prisoner. I've survived thirteen years so far, just forty or fifty to go."

Please, send us your accomplishments, lofty or not. If it's important to you, it's important to us. Let us know what you are doing.

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hope...redemption...change

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to this latest edition of Northeastern Illinois University's Stateville Speaks. Once more I thank you for your readership and for your patience, as we continue to work through the sometimes unforeseeable production problems we encounter.

There has been a major change since our last newsletter, namely the appointment of S. A. Godinez as the new Director of Corrections, replacing interim Director and subsequent Assistant Director, Gladys Taylor. We can only hope that with his vast experience in corrections, both inside Illinois and other state and private venues he will bring with him the foresight and confidence needed to bring about some direct and necessary changes to this broken system. Thus far, we have seen some excellent appointments with Joni Stahlman as special assistant and Debbie Denning as chief of programs. It is our understanding that Denning has been adding as many programs as possible with a severely limited budget. It is also our understanding that all the important warden positions that have been filled have been done so with those interested in positive programming. We also hope, in the near future, to secure an interview with the Director so that we may disseminate to you, our readers, any important changes or future ideas that may be in the works.

At first glance not many other changes have appeared to occur. We get letters, oh, so many letters with most of the same ongoing issues, such as inflated commissary rates, abundance of soy in the diet, (and lack of alternatives to those that have soy allergies) and lack of programs, just to name a few. Just when you think that couldn't get worse, the costs of medical co-pays were increased. We truly hope no one is forced to make a serious medical decision based on a poor attempt by the State to offset healthcare costs.

We have been receiving more and more complaints about environmental issues, such as poor air quality and lead particulates during renovations, cloudy, foul-tasting water and mold. These potential serious conditions are often overlooked as the effects may take years to manifest and there are so many eminent issues that need addressing, such as the

lack of heat in winter. Another serious threat is with the loss/ lack of electricity, particularly in summer, thus no fans to move air in cells with no windows, causing both inhumane conditions and potentially harmful or deadly heatstroke.



While the conditions may not have improved, there is some good news to report. Illinois State Legislator Arthur Turner (9th District) Art Turner introduced two pieces of legislation HB 3899 for Good Conduct Credit and HB 3900 which would create the Fair Notice of Sentence Act. We trust this will be only the start of the changes that are needed to move deserving people out of prison. Additionally, we are hoping for an overhaul of the woefully, ineffective Prison Review Board. And while changes are slow to be enacted we are noticing a shift in thinking among people, who, many for the first time, are discussing the need to address our failures, as a society. No longer is it considered a "criminal problem", or a "prison problem", but a societal problem.

The evidence of this readiness was seen even at the many events held at Northeastern that reached past our academic community and into the community at large. Here we discussed the need for better legislation to keep people out of prison, a procedure for releasing those that are ready to re-enter and programs to make that successful. At an award ceremony given by the University, in honor of our publisher and chief supporter

Cynthia Kobel for her commitment and charitable contributions to Stateville Speaks, it was wonderful to see such outright support for our newsletter. It was equally wonderful that it was done with a giant blow-up of the latest issue of the paper as a backdrop. The importance of this work was indeed realized.

Additionally, there seems to be more interest of adding programs both in prisons and for those re-entering, as we have seen with both the Alternative Education Research Institute (AERI), and the collaborative efforts of Former Inmates Striving Together (F.I.S.T.) and Illinois Institute of Community Law and Affair that are beginning a training program this spring. We will keep you posted on any and all programs as we become aware of them.

Getting so many letters from Menard, we attempted a tour this past year, but we were repeatedly denied, though we will keep trying. However, would like to extend our thanks to Warden Sheryl Thompson for giving us such a candid and lengthy tour of Dwight. While they too have their share of problems and face the same budget constraints, we were favorably surprised at the amount of programming as well as the overall positive culture of the prison. We were equally impressed with the service dog training program, where we witnessed smart, happy dogs, on their way to being of great service to a person in need. The pride of their handlers was evident and with good reason- kudos for your hard work and patience.

Due to the volume of mail we get, we are starting a frequently asked questions (FAQ) column, with our goal being able research and answer your most pertinent questions. While we will still answer personal letters to the best of our abilities, we are seeking much better, in depth answers to those questions. Thank you to NEIU English Professor Tim-

SEE EDITORIAL, PAGE 18

STATEVILLE SPEAKS HOSTS PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE PRISON SYSTEM

By Charlie DiMuzio

In hopes of attracting new attention from the students and faculty and shedding some light on the problems that exist within our system of justice, Stateville Speaks hosted our first event at the main campus, a panel discussion, on problems surrounding our prison system. It was a huge success.

The spring's panel, entitled "The Truth About Our Justice System," centered on four panelists, all former Illinois prison inmates who were incarcerated for extremely long periods of time, one for almost thirty years. Each of the four—Hattie Bush, Brian Nelson, Joe Schmitt, and Ruby—allotted time during the discussion to share their individual experiences with the audience and answer questions posed to them, and much of what spectators heard was surprising. More accurately, these stories were tragic and, at times, disturbing.

"Prior to Tamms, I never had to see a psychologist or a psychiatrist. I was never on any kind of psychotropic medication or other drugs. Then I went to Tamms. Within a year and a half, I was on medication for depression and anxiety disorders, because you're in a box. It's gray, and there's nothing...and day after day, it will beat you down", said former inmate Brian Nelson while discussing his time at Tamms. The entire panel contributed a great deal to the night, but Mr. Nelson's words were especially captivating. The audience learned that he was only to serve twelve years for his crimes, but remained wrongfully incarcerated for sixteen more, many in a maximum security prison. In there, Nelson rarely encountered another soul outside of a small handful of guards. "There are no programs, there's no school, there's no church, everything you do you're chained hand and foot, and you're treated worse than an animal."

Both Mr. Nelson and Hattie Bush also explained at great length the difficulties of solitude and rehabilitation. While Ms. Bush told listeners that certain drug and educational programs were available to her at Dwight Correctional Center (very limited availability), the audience also learned that rehabilitation in facilities like Tamms does not exist at all. Nelson indicated that a limited GED program is essentially all that is available to the inmates there and also noted



Stateville Speaks interns who helped organize the event, (left to right) Adam Shacter, Matthew Derrig and Charlie DiMuzio

that even with this program life after release is still tremendously difficult, especially while on parole. "How do I get a driver's license, so can go get a job if I can't leave the house, how do you relate to someone about being in a box for thirty years?" Mr. Nelson's words brought almost half the room to tears, and made it clear that the rehabilitation programs in Illinois prisons are not getting the job done.

This is why one panelist, Joe Schmitt, (see May 2011, Stateville Speaks) created Formerly Incarcerated Standing Together (F.I.S.T.), an organization that attempts to aid former inmates with the transition back into society. "You have to know who you're advocating for... we have to find a way to make it work." Mr. Schmitt explained that most people fresh out of prison often do not make it very long without reoffending. Without opportunities for employment and forced to live in poor neighborhoods, many ex-offenders must commit crime in order

to survive, a large part of the reason behind drugs, gangs, and other similar criminal activity. To counter these overwhelming re-entry problems F.I.S.T. has facilities (though limited) that allows them to take in inmates fresh out of prison, provide temporary shelter, and attempts to find them employment. F.I.S.T. is one of the few groups that is able to provide this type assistance to people coming out of prison.

These conditions that people like Brian Nelson face while incarcerated are simply intolerable. To be affected in such a way for the rest of one's life is a far heavier punishment than fits the crime. Still, this man, along with the three other individuals on the panel, were brave enough to sit in a room full of complete strangers and talk about the most difficult times in their lives. More than that, all of these individuals are trying to help others from the prison system in any way they can—counseling, getting jobs, finding a place

SEE NEIU PANEL, PAGE 10

GODINEZ APPROVED AS NEW DIRECTOR OF CORRECTIONS

After his appointment by Governor Quinn, the Illinois Senate unanimously voted in Salvador A. Godinez as the new Director of Corrections for the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). He is the third such Director appointed in that many years, replacing acting Director Gladys C. Taylor, who will return to her previous position as Assistant Director.

In 1973 Godinez started with IDOC as a reentry counselor within the Juvenile Division before becoming parole and assessment counselors and Assessment Unit Administrator. In 1981 he joined the staff at Stateville C.C. and was appointed as Assistant Warden of Programs and later named Assistant Warden of Operations at the same facility.

He joined the Nevada Department of Corrections in 1989 to be the Warden of the newly constructed Ely State Prison before returning to Illinois in 1991 to become the Warden of Statesville C.C. In 1995 he

became the Deputy Director within the Michigan Department of Corrections, before taking a position as facility administrator for Wackenhut Corrections Corporation in 1997. In 1998 he returned to IDOC as Administrator of Juvenile Field Services, before re-joining Wackenhut Corrections Corporation.

Godinez returned to Illinois in 2001 as Deputy Chief of Juvenile Probation in the western suburbs in addition to Supervisor of the Community Alternative Units, which oversees both home detention and electronic monitoring. He was appointed Chief of Operations for IDOC in 2003, and additionally that of Chief of Staff in 2005 before taking the position of Cook County Department of Corrections in 2006.

Godinez earned his bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice in 1973 from the University of Illinois, Chicago and his master's in 1978 from Chicago State University in Corrections. •



REENTRY FORUM AT NORTHEASTERN

This past fall, the Alternative Education Research Institute (AERI), a not-for-profit organization that specializes in developing curricula to help unite and effect change in economically underserved communities, hosted a forum on the challenges of reentry. The goal of organizer and moderator Dr. Rolanda West "...was to create a space for reentry practitioners to get together and discuss some of the issues surrounding successful prisoner reentry." The event entitled Re-examining Reentry: A discussion about the politics and pitfalls of prisoner reentry was comprised of a panel of several experts including Rafi Peterson founder of Project Restore Industries, community leader and mentor, among many other accomplishments, G. Sequane Lawrence, co-founder of Prim Lawrence Group, an organization involved in community economic development and reentry programs, including work at Sheridan C.C. and George Gomoll, placement director of Taylor Business Institute, dedicated to working with Chicago's underserved and offenders. Other panelists included Sandee Kastrul, president of i.c. stars, a non-profit

leadership and technology training program, Joe Schmitt of Former Inmates Striving Together (FIST) and Gayle D. Tulipano, editor of *Statesville Speaks*, who echoed the great concerns of their readership about the absence of programming, job training and life



skills offered to inmates both in prison and on reentry, and the uncertainty they face.

Special guest speakers also included U.S. Representative Danny K. Davis, representing the 7th Congressional District of Illinois, community organizer, activist and educator and outspoken prison reformer, Illinois Representative La Shawn K. Ford of the 8th District. According to West, "We also included local politicians and policy makers to the table to have an open and honest dialogue about the challenges in providing reintegration services. I find that the event was successful

in that we were able to use the information provided in the forum to move forward with plans to influence legislation in the area of prisoner reentry."

Since the October 2011 Reexamining Reentry event, AERI has planned additional forums in Los Angeles, Portland and New York City. AERI has continued to work with community organizations in developing correctional and post-correctional education program and plan to implement a new Empowerment Series with organizations in Los Angeles and Chicago beginning in the spring of 2012. They are also sending a research delegation to Caracas and Higuero, Venezuela in the summer of 2012 to study the prison and drug policy reform in the midst of social revolution in a comparative analysis of the effect of criminal justice policy on people of African descent.

This very candid, lively event was open to the public and proved once more the great concerns over the absence of programs for people leaving prisons, so that they too can lead, productive and rewarding lives.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

In an attempt to get answers the numerous questions we are asked at Stateville Speaks, we are compiling a list of questions directly from our readership and the letters that you send, many of them frequently asked.

Unfortunately, all too often, even after extensive research we do not have the answers. Adding to the confusion is that many of the rules and most certainly the culture of each prison is directed by the individual warden, thus many procedures are not standardized among the various prisons, even those sharing the same classifications.

We hope to ascertain answers from IDOC, lawyers, activists, clergy, legislators, educators and of course from the inmate and families to bring awareness of the procedures that govern our incarcerated citizens.

While this is no means a substitution for professional or legal assistance, our objective is to compile a document built on as much information, from as many reliable sources as possible.



WHAT IS “MERITORIOUS GOOD TIME” AND “SUPPLEMENTAL MERITORIOUS GOOD TIME” AND HOW DO THEY WORK?

By Nora Capron

The Illinois Department of Corrections defines meritorious good time (MGT) and supplemental meritorious good time (SMGT) as, “the discretionary time (up to 180 days) that the director may grant to an eligible inmate based on his or her behavior while incarcerated.” According to the IDOC site, there are three different types of “good time,” but not all inmates qualify for these special considerations. In addition to meritorious good time, the IDOC also offers some inmates Statutory Good Time and Earned Good Conduct Credit. Statutory Good Time refers to the percentage of time an inmate must serve of his or her sentence. These percentages (50%, 75%, 85%, or 100%) are determined by statute as well as by the crime committed. Inmates can lose some of this “good time” based on their behavior while incarcerated. Earned Good Conduct Credit refers to “time earned by an inmate for participation in education, drug treatment or Illinois Correctional Industries programs.” As with Statutory Good Time, not all inmates qualify for this privilege. (Inmates convicted of violent and Class X crimes are not eligible.) According to the Illinois Department of Corrections website, “Inmates earn one-half day off their sentence for each day of participation in such programs if they suc-

cessfully complete the programs (Example: if an eligible inmate completes a drug treatment program that is 30-days in duration, he may be awarded 15-days off his sentence).”

In a report published by The State-Journal Register in December of 2009, DuPage County State’s Attorney Joseph Birkett criticized the liberality with which MGT has been awarded to inmates in Illinois. According to a story published by the Associated Press in December 2009, a supposedly secret early release program called “MGT Push” had released 850 prisoners earlier than normal under the direction of former Illinois Department of Corrections director Michael Randle (Yeagle, “Report: Early Prisoner Release Not a Scandal”). This story infuriated Birkett, who interpreted the purpose of MGT as a credit, “intended to be awarded to those people who demonstrate through their behavior that they merit those credits.” Birkett spoke critically of this program for allowing inmates to serve substantially less time in prison than their initial sentences indicated. According to a report conducted by the Associated Press in 2009, an inmate convicted of a year-long sentence could be released in as little as two weeks.



In January 2010, following negative publicity after about 200 prisoners had gone home on electronic monitoring, Governor Quinn halted the MGT program. According to a series in the Bloomington Pantagraph, the end of the early release programs has severely strained state spending. In 2009, the good-time credit program reduced the daily prison population by nearly 8,940 inmates, a reduction IDOC will not benefit from without the MGT program (Deitz). Since Quinn stopped the MGT program, the state’s prison population has risen from about 45,000 to about 48,000, according to IDOC. According to Malcolm Young, director of the Program for Prison Reentry Strategies at Northwestern’s Bluhm Legal Clinic, “stopping early release is further overcrowding state prisons and costing the state millions” (Yeagle, “Report: Early Prisoner Release Not a Scandal”). Data from the Illinois Department of Corrections show the state’s prison system has about 50 percent more prisoners than the prisons were designed to hold, with 25 of the state’s 28 prisons operating over capacity (Yeagle, “ILLINOIS PRISONS: Standing Room Only”).

As of July 2011, the issue of whether prisoners should be allowed MGT is still being debated among both citizens and lawmakers alike. According to the Illinois Department of Corrections website, this system is still under review. Until further notice, no prisoners in Illinois will be granted meritorious good time or supplemental meritorious good time.

POLLUTION IN RURAL AREAS/OLD BUILDINGS: A CAUSE FOR CONCERN FOR ILLINOIS INMATES?

By Shannon Badal

Pollution to our environment can have a serious impact on our health and living standards. It can be caused by numerous, everyday occurrences. From the second we start up our cars we are expelling exhaust into the air. Large factories using heavy machinery are also emitting exhaust fumes into the air we breathe. Coal plants, natural gas and oil for heating are another source of pollutants. Cars, factories, and homes are just a few common types of pollution happening on a daily basis, especially in largely populated areas. Rural areas also have pollution problems, yet very few people are aware of them.

Rural pollution has to do more with agriculture. Crop farms spray heavy chemicals or pesticides on their plants to keep insects from eating them.

The problem is that these pesticides eventually run off the plants and are absorbed into the soil. Therefore, the chemicals are spread throughout the surrounding land through soil and groundwater. Livestock farming also contributes to the rural pollution. The large scale animal farms give off an enormous amount of waste yearly. The waste runs off into the multiple water deposits causing contamination. Both, pesticides and livestock farming contaminants run off into the water deposits that we use to drink.

Much of the water we drink comes from rivers, lakes and underground aquifers. In most urban areas we purify the water before we consume it. However, not all water goes through full purification. Some water goes straight to wells that people in rural communities drink from. According to some of our readers, the well water that they drink is not sanitary and has caused some to be sickened. Another concern with the water in many of the prisons is with the amount of lead leaching in from the lead pipes that carry the water supply. All homes and buildings before 1986 have water pipes constructed from lead. The longer tap water sits in these lead



pipes the higher the percentage of lead forms within the water supply.

Another source of lead is also found in paint. Before 1978, much of the paint used in homes and buildings contained lead. Many old buildings are being renovated to become up-to-date with the new living standards. Most of these old buildings have lead pipes and paint containing lead on the walls. As the remodeling process happens, paint is sanded out the walls spreading dust profusely through the building. Lead is very dangerous when too much is consumed through the air; it may even cause death. As of April 22, 2010, the EPA announced a new law called Renovation, Repair, and Painting (RRP). This law states that one person from the renovation companies must be certified through the EPA to remodel the old building; otherwise it is illegal. We have received complaints from inmates that remodeling work had been done without precautions from paint particulates. Same law abides to mold. Mold removal is very serious as they releases spores into the air we breathe causing numerous health problems and severe allergic reactions. When mold is removed it needs to be done in a special way

so that it is not able to spread. Remodeling old buildings is a job for an expert only.

As we consider all of the agricultural pollution, and those associated with aging structures we should also think about the communities surrounding them and the people living within them. Many of our Illinois prisons are located in the rural areas of the state. There is potential for animal wastes and pesticides are running off into the rivers and wells that provide drinking water for our inmates. The Right-To-Know law states that the operator of the community water supply is to notify all users of the supply when the water is contaminated. If this is a law, then is this being done and are inmates being timely informed if their water supply is being compromised? If we assume that someone is regulating the pollution surrounding the Illinois state prisons and the water and air quality, then we would hope to gain access to those reports. After much research, we have not found any evidence of anyone looking out for the pollution affecting our prisons. Stateville Speaks receives many complaints about the environmental conditions within the prisons and we will continue to look farther into it.

ILLINOIS NEEDS COST-EFFECTIVE PRISON REFORM

By John Maki

Executive Director, John Howard Association

On November 28, 2011, Governor Pat Quinn announced that his administration had reached a deal with the legislature to keep open seven state facilities he had threatened to close due to a significant budget shortfall. On Quinn's proposed list were two correctional institutions: IYC-Murphysboro, a minimum-security boys' facility with a population of approximately 60 youths, and Logan Correctional Center, a medium-security adult prison with a population of almost 2,000 men.

Despite this last-minute deal, Illinois' budget is still deep in the red, and we are likely to hear more about possible closures in the near future.

The John Howard Association (JHA) is Illinois' oldest prison reform organization, and the only group that monitors the state's juvenile and adult prison systems. While JHA believes Illinois should have a smaller prison system, we must first address prison overcrowding. Currently, the Department of Corrections (DOC) houses almost 50,000 inmates in a system designed to hold a little more than 33,000. Without a reduction in Illinois' prisoner population, JHA believes that closing any prison will likely exacerbate DOC's overcrowded conditions, jeopardize the safety of inmates and staff, and ultimately cost taxpayers more money.

Fortunately, states across the country have shown that it is possible to reduce prison populations safely and cost-effectively through sentencing reform, rehabilitation and alternatives to incarceration. . This includes some innovative programs in Illinois that need support.

In particular, JHA recommends that Illinois' elected officials consider the following actions:

- Enact a safe replacement for Meritorious Good Time, the early release program that was suspended in 2009 and led to an increase of almost 4,000 inmates.
- Increase the number of programs that inmates can use to earn time off their sentences.
- Advocate for the statewide adoption of Adult and Ju-

venile Redeploy Illinois, an efficient and cost-effective state-funded program that helps counties to use community service to treat low-level offenders.

- Implement RANA (Risk Assets Needs Assessment), a diagnostic tool mandated by the Illinois Crime Reduction Act that will help DOC prepare inmates for release and reduce their likelihood of returning to prison.



- Punish technical parole violators with alternatives to incarceration. Illinois has a recidivism rate of more than 50 percent. There are approximately 13,000 inmates in DOC who are incarcerated not because they were convicted of a new criminal offense but because they did not fully comply with the conditions of their mandatory supervised release.

- Expand the use of electronic monitoring as an alternative to incarcerating low-level, non-violent offenders.

- Create the possibility of parole for elderly prisoners. Almost 6,500 inmates in DOC custody are 50 years or older—known to be an age that makes it unlikely they will commit another crime.

- Invest the resulting savings in community-based programs for youths and adults that reduce crime and decrease recidivism. As Illinois' Sheridan Drug Prison and other states like Texas have shown, the only way to sustain prison reduction is through diversion and reentry programs that provide treatment and job training. Evidence shows that these programs are not only less expensive than incarceration, but they are also more effective.

There is no single approach to safely and cost-effectively reduce the state's prison population. But we know when states combine initiatives like the ones outlined above, we can control crime, decrease our prison populations, and cut the crippling costs of incarceration.

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

VIGIL FOR TRUE JUSTICE

APRIL 1ST – 30TH: ARE YOU READY TO STAND?

The State of Illinois spends more than \$1.3 billion on adult incarceration, and has a prison population of more than 50,000 people. By virtually any measure, however, our prison system is a failed system.

Our jails are badly overcrowded and getting worse. Prisoners are caged like animals, often for more than 23 hours a day. Health care is sub-par, and often simply unavailable when needed most. Our recidivism rate is higher than the national average. Education, re-entry and job-training programs have been almost entirely eliminated. Prisoners are unprepared and ill-equipped to reenter society. Many are potentially more dangerous upon their release than when they were originally incarcerated. Despite – and to a large extent because – of “tough-on-crime” legisla-



tion, the war on drugs and harsher sentencing policies, the situation is worsening while the crime rate is showing minimal improvement.

Efforts to remedy the situation with

petitions, sit-ins, sit-outs, testimony at legislative hearings, rallies, meetings and other efforts have, to date, been largely ineffective. The Legislature has done little other than to study the problems while continuing to ignore or dismiss recommendations, cut allocations, and turn their backs to the problem. Meanwhile, shamefully, they have allowed the continuation of many unfair practices from which certain entities within the prison-industrial complex gain multi-million-dollar profits – always at the expense of prisoners and their families. Telephone rates, for example, as well as product prices in prison commissaries and vending machines, are significantly higher than those charged the general public on the “outside,” producing millions

SEE VIGIL, PAGE 11

EX-CON RUNNING FOR COUNTY BOARD

The purpose of *Stateville Speaks* is to give a voice to our imprisoned citizens. Additionally, we attempt to gather and disseminate any helpful information we can and support any legislation or policy changes that reduce the rate of incarceration and improve conditions to those that are already in. While we all have our political opinions, and fierce ones at that, rarely do we discuss elections, that is, until now, where we announce, that Joe Schmitt, founder of Former Inmates Striving Together F.I.S.T. (see S.S. May 2011 edition) will be seeking a seat, this year, on the Lake County Board.

What makes this so extraordinary is that three years ago Schmitt, as many of you know, completed his second class X sentence for drugs, and he founded the F.I.S.T. to help ex-offenders to connect with mainstream society. This organization has helped countless ex-offenders with food, clothing, shelter, and job placement by dealing with their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. F.I.S.T. partners with the community in public service projects to show the citizens that ex-offenders have value, can be rehabilitated and contribute to the community and has received awards and many accolades for this effort.

Though this has been an excellent example to both ex-offenders and the com-



munity at large that with time and hard work all things are possible, Schmitt, is ready to take this to another level by entering the political arena as the Republican Candidate for Lake County Board Member District 9. This district encompasses the entire downtown Waukegan area. Waukegan is the county seat for Lake County, Illinois and is the 9th largest city in Illinois

A County Board member is responsible for enacting local ordinances as well as administering them. They approve budgets, oversee spending and hire county employees, all county departments including the Sheriff's office, the jail, the 19th Judicial Circuit Court, the Health Department, County Parks, high-

ways and 25 other county wide departments. Lake County Illinois has an annual budget of \$487.8 Million Dollars and is ranked as the 31st wealthiest county per capita in the United States. Lake County elects 21 Board members from its 21 districts. The total population of Lake County according to the 2010 census is 703,452 people.

In the March 20th primary he is unopposed and will face the winner of a 3 way race in the Democratic Party primary in November's General Election. Schmitt has the support of the Lake County Republican Party as well as that of The Waukegan Township Republican Organization.

Information about Joe's campaign can be obtained by viewing his website at <http://joeschmitt.us>. Or by writing to: Joe Schmitt, 446 N. Sheridan Rd. Apt #1, Waukegan, IL 60085. He welcomes any support to help an ex-offender show that much is possible when we set our sights high and “Strive Together” to achieve our lofty goals.

Schmitt is also voter registrar as well as an election judge in Lake County and wants to remind those incarcerated that “they have the right to vote as soon as they are released from custody. They just have to make sure their voter registration is current. Ex-felons can vote even while they are on parole.”

NEW LEGISLATION

Two new House Bills were introduced by Illinois State Legislator Arthur Turner (9th District) in December of 2011. One is 3899, which amends the Unified Code of Corrections –Good Conduct Credit and the other is 3900 which creates the Fair Notice of Sentence Act. A hearing may be held in the General Assembly as soon as February 2012 and we encourage you, your friends and family to contact your/their legislators for support

HB 3899 SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED

Amends the Unified Code of Corrections.

Provides that the Director of Corrections may not award good conduct credit for meritorious service to an inmate unless either:

1. the inmate has served a minimum of 60 days of the sentence in a secure county corrections facility or Illinois Department of Corrections facility or in both such facilities; or
2. the Director in his or her discretion determines that an award of good conduct credit for meritorious service which would permit release in advance of an inmate having served 60 days of the sentence in a secure county corrections facility or Illinois Department of Corrections facility or in both such facilities will further correctional goals without appreciably or predictably increasing risk to public safety, and would be consistent with best practices and the purposes of the Code.

Establishes criteria for which an inmate may be awarded good conduct credit for meritorious service or for participation full-time in substance abuse programs, correctional industry assignments, or educational programs or for passing the GED test while incarcerated.

HB 3900 SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED

Creates the Fair Notice of Sentence Act.

Provides that in any criminal case in which a court imposes a sentence of imprisonment of one year or more on a defendant after conviction of a felony offense, the court may at its own discretion or upon the request of any party in court complete a Fair Notice of Sentence containing specified information.

Provides that the clerk of the court shall attach a copy of the notice to the mittimus or documents

to be transmitted to the Illinois Department of Corrections and shall place a copy of the notice in the court file.

Provides that when the Department receives a mittimus or court file information to which a notice is attached, the Department shall maintain a copy of the notice in its records including the sentenced inmate's master file and notify the State's Attorney, the court, and the parties identified in the notice of certain changes in the inmate's release date.

Provides that the Illinois Department of Corrections shall update, correct, or modify the contact information of individuals to be notified as shown on the notice upon a request provided to the Department and approved by the State's Attorney of the county in which the inmate was sentenced. Amends the Unified Code of Corrections to make conforming changes.



NEIU PANEL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

to live or by setting exemplary examples. These are four people that live their lives by helping those who cannot help themselves. An honorable example for all, they are the people with the least opportunities doing the work that the most privileged in our country refuse to do.

The panel was a huge success, as Stateville Speaks was able to bring together a large group of students, teachers, and community members with ex-inmates to explain to them the often horrific conditions of many, while incarcerated, but also the lack of

opportunities once released. Lacking functional release programs, ineffective rehabilitation programs, denying housing and educational opportunities for self-improvement, so people can find jobs and decent housing when they get out of prison - are all serious problems. In order for these issues to be resolved, people first need to know that they even exist. People need to know the truth about how our justice system really works and start discussing what needs to be done to change it. I believe this panel served as a prime example of how to get the dialogue started. •

ENTREPRENEUR TRAINING FOR EX-OFFENDERS

Former Inmates Striving Together (<http://fistinc.org>) and The Illinois Institute of Community Law and Affairs (www.illinoisinstitute.net) have partnered to form S.T.E.E.P. an Entrepreneur Training Program for ex-offenders.

This will be a 12 week program taught by seasoned trainers from the business and education fields. They seek to have mentors in place to assist class participants with the program.

Their goal is that by the end of the program you will have written a viable business plan, understand the appropriate financial planning and record-keeping tools, and have an idea of how to effectively execute the plan.

Entrepreneurship is a formidable way to "Break the Chains of Recidivism". Be your own boss, have pride of ownership, make a difference in your community. "As you grow it would be our hope that you would hire other ex-offenders and further enhance the viability and value of ex-offenders in mainstream society."

If you are going to be released from custody before June 1st 2012 and wish to apply for the Fall/Winter Classes in Cook County or if you wish further information about this program or either of these ex-offender support organizations please write to them at:

F.I.S.T. Inc
213 W. Water Street
Waukegan, IL 60085
847-672-9924 (no collect calls)

Illinois Institute for Community Law and Affairs
3629 Prairie Avenue,
Chicago, IL 60653
312-593-6998 (no collect calls)

S.T.E.E.P.
Support Train Equip Entrepreneur Program
Supporting formerly incarcerated individuals in the quest for entrepreneurial endeavors

Revonne "Salem" Monroe
President and Co-Founder
PARALEGAL CONSULTANT GROUP, LTD.
Graduate of R.I.T.E., an ex-offender entrepreneur program
Co-Founder of S.T.E.E.P.

Are you tired of carrying the X on your back?
Learn how to start your own business and
be your own boss!

ILLINOIS INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY LAW & AFFAIRS

VIGIL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

of dollars in unjustified revenues to companies providing those services and products.

What Can We Do?

Frustrated by years of futile efforts, several organizations whose purpose is to help prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families have arrived at a new and refreshingly different strategy: Doing nothing whatsoever.

That notion gave birth to the basic idea behind the Vigil for True Justice, in which reform advocates, concerned citizens and frustrated taxpayers simply stop, observe and think about the futility, lack of effectiveness and counter-productivity inherent in the Illinois system of mass incarceration.

The Vigil for True Justice will be a 30-day moratorium on spending, from April 1st to April 30th, during which prisoners, ex-prisoners, their families, friends and others take a month-long "time out" from using prison phone systems and making vending machine and unnecessary prison commissary purchases. The purpose is to make a strong statement to prison administrators, companies who have monopolistic advantages and the public at large that we are not going to pay for this broken system any more, and want a true and fair

justice system that productively serves society. Remember, this is one time when doing nothing could change everything.

In concert with this effort, our organizations will actively lobby the Legislature for action on several key issues: Meritorious Good Time (HB3899); Alternative Sentencing; Electronic Home Monitoring; Step-Down Programs for Reentry; Job Placement Programs; Family Services; and Fair Pricing for Products and Services.

This program is unique in many ways, but one significant difference is that neither needs nor asks for funding contributions; we want you to keep your money in your pocket. Those pledging participation in the program will, however, be asked to spread the word and invite at least one inmate, family member, friend, citizen, voter, taxpayer or supporter to join the Vigil.

There will be an actual rally, or march, to kick off this program publicly, to be held on March 30, time and place to be announced. You don't have to be there to participate, however, and remember that no one is expected to donate money. We ask only that you join us in this important effort.

Your suggestions and ideas for strengthening the program are welcome. Contact Vigil for True Justice, c/o James Chapman, 3629 S. Prairie Ave., Chicago, IL 60653, or email vigilfortruejustice@gmail.com. You can also find the Vigil on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

ESSAYS & INSIGHTS

ISSUES THAT WERE NOT MENTIONED IN PREVIOUS ARTICLES

By John, Menard Prison

1.) Lifers' Jobs in Industry

Why are Lifers being denied jobs in the industry knit shop in favor of short-timers? Are Lifers expected to just rot away into oblivion sans of any means by which to support ourselves? If we are in need of shoes, clothes, to pay the medical co-pay, T.V. repair, buy a new T.V., etc., we must attempt to save our monthly \$10.00 state pay, if and when we are so fortunate as to receive it. Why are the needs of Lifers being ignored in favor of treating us as if we do not exist? Why can nobody see that it would be more beneficial if Lifers are permitted to obtain jobs in the Industry in order to receive the ability to survive by means of a good paying job? Instead, though, we (Lifers) are having to live day-to-day being expect to work only the jobs which pay little to nothing; \$10.00 to \$20.00 extra each month, which is added to the \$10.00 state pay we already receive as unassigned convicts; if and when we are not on lockdown. Jobs such as kitchen workers, Commissary workers, Gallery workers, Ground crew workers, etc., etc. Why are Lifers not being permitted to work in either the Knit shop which pays upward of \$250.00 a month, or to work on Garbage truck which pays upward of \$150.00, or in the Slaughter House? If, for example, a jobs pays \$20.00 here at Menard, the state pay which we are supposed to receive as unassigned convicts is then being used as part of the pay we are supposed to receive for working. People working in such meager paying, menial jobs are only being paid the difference between ten dollars state pay we already receive, and what jobs are supposed to pay; e.g. if a kitchen worker jobs pays \$20.00 per month, there's only an additional \$9.20 thus added to the \$10.00 unassigned state pay. Why are we being taken advantage of here? Lifers and long term convicts are those that are most in need of such good paying jobs, as we are more likely to have family and friends pass on and leave us having to fend for ourselves whiting a prison system that seems to not care.

2.) State Pay

Why are we always losing our unassigned state pay of ten dollars whenever the prison is put on lockdown--even after the perpetrator(s) of the occurrence are identified

and apprehended? Does this act of denying us our state pay not seem arbitrary punishment? YES! What have the innocent done to deserve losing their state pay due to a lockdown of which they had no part in causing? Nothing!



Other than stay out of any trouble and not becoming involved in any transgressions. So, in essence we are arbitrarily being punished just for nothing being involved; just for following the rules?

3.) Healthcare

Why are medical needs/concerns continually being ignored as though all are minor issues? Personally, I have a cataract presently in my Right-eye which has rendered me with approximately a 20/140 vision (Blind). I am being denied cataract removal/corrective surgery, and being told that, and I quote; "A prison inmate can function just fine with one good eye." But at this time, as I have repeatedly told the eye doctor here, "My right eye hurts, and I often suffer Double-Vision." Thus, I feel my life is being constantly put in danger each time I depart my cell due to having a Blind spot. From all information which I have ascertained, the cataract becomes thicker as it ages, which in turn can likely cause it to detach either the Retina or the cornea due to an unhealthy amount of extra Ocular pressure. Thus it can render one permanently blind. Am I now expected to be a Menard/IDOC Medical Guinea pig, and wait for this to occur?

4.) Lifers' Transfers to Medium Facilities as: Centralia, Pontiac (FARM), Dixon,

Danville, Lawrence, and other medium facilities. Those of us (Lifers), as myself, that do not have violent prison records; that do not have any staff assaults should be permitted to immediately transfer to one of the few mentioned medium facilities, or other similar like facilities. Being forced to live as if we do not exist is like being told we no longer matter; that we are no longer considered human. All the time we are within walls of prisons like Menard or Stateville, etc. Lifers are constantly subjected to an endless, daily barrage of being mentally beaten down, belittled, ridiculed, told this is as good as it ever gets. It is not punishment enough that we have been sentenced to Life without

Parole?

5.) Unwarranted Lockdowns

Why is it that every time there is an occurrence in one cell-house or another, the entire prison is immediately put on lockdown? In the eyes and minds of convicts, this is seen as being punished for the deeds of others. We cannot police our own lest we are punished for involvement. SO how is it right, fair that we are punished for another's' actions in the form of a lockdown and denial of state pay? I think such arbitrary punishment is more a detriment to the function of a prison that a benefit. Just like it is not conducive to a peaceful working prison environment to let convicts just run amuck. It is also neither conducive to a peaceful prison environment to arbitrarily punish the innocent. Nor is it conducive to a peaceful working prison to permit officers to incite/provoke convicts actions by constantly degrading convicts; telling convicts to "shut the f--- up". When you put your foot on the neck of a dog in the corner, does he not come out of the corner to you? Yes! Yet, convicts are expected to accept the daily abuse officers are being permitted to dole out unchecked by IDOC? No! Treat people as you wish to be treated! As a wise man once stated; 'For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.'

SEE ISSUES NOT ADDRESSED, PAGE 15

ESSAYS & INSIGHTS

WHAT IS THE IMPRESSION OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM IN ILLINOIS?

By Amanuel Wade, An Innocent Prisoner

As being convicted innocent prisoner in Menard Correctional center in Menard, IL, I have come to question whether actual justice is obtainable for either the victim or the alleged offender charged and convicted? Or, whether the victim's death or offense is being truthfully prosecuted and that the offender being charged and convicted is the actual offender of the offense. Respectfully, I yield to empathize with victims or crimes, when I say that the prosecution does not care whether they are prosecuting the actual offender or not, well in my prospective, most don't! In today's world, all that truly matter is that someone, maybe not the right one, must be punished for the crime against the victim. In most cases, the prosecuting office is so pressured by the victim, victim's family, society opinions and political ambition to prosecute, that in desperation the prosecution neither need proof in facts to be alleged, but merely the opportunity to convict somebody. What am I suggesting about an opportunity? Well, an opportunity for the prosecution to put forth their best story and in most

cases, best witness they have who was either scared or forced into fabricating a good lie against an offender, however, this ill practice is preformed in some cases by both the prosecutor and law enforcement agents (the police).

Directing your attention to the present day, the main news in Chicago, IL for the past two years or so, has been the case of the police officer who among with the other police officer's tortured innocent and even guilty young men into confessing to whatever leading crime that seemed to be of high priority at the time of their arrest. Some of those young men were co-defendants whom never seen each other before until they either appeared at the pretrial hearings, trial or eventually in prison. Many of those cases have now been overturned due to present conviction of the leading police officer!

However, the major concern in regards to such a practice is that the voice of the people (the prosecutor) goes along because it not only fogs the grief and memories of the victim and the victim's family

SEE IMPRESSION, PAGE 15

PRISON REVIEW BOARD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

factors that make a candidate a good release risk. The seriousness of the offense must be considered, but with each passing year of incarceration, it should carry less, and not more, overall weight in the release calculus.

Another problem that is recurring concerns late-breaking concerns about an inmate's gang status at the institution. When an inmate is adjusting well, has a strong parole plan, and is beginning to gather support on the Board for release, it is not uncommon for the Department of Corrections to raise concerns about the inmate's so-called gang status based on information in a secret "gang file". This information is virtually impossible to challenge and it is often cited by Board members as a reason for rejecting an inmate up for parole. Unless C# inmates are given full access to this information well ahead of the date for the hearing, the Board should not be permitted to rely on it.

With the majority of parole hearings, the Board will go into an executive session and during this time the Board will discuss reports from the State's Attorney's office, reports from the Illinois Department of Corrections and Board members' personal opinions. This information is not privy to the public, the lawyers or the inmates. Anything can be said at this time and it cannot be disputed.

It is especially difficult to get a fair hearing for someone who has killed a police officer. In a recent hearing for a man who was convicted of killing a policeman, when he was a teenager, 31 on-duty police officers from Chicago arrived by chartered bus, paid for by the Police Memorial Foundation. The officers stood in the small boardroom, in full uniform and with guns on their hips. They are there to protest the parole. Although Chairman Monreal stated in a meeting with lawyers who represent C# inmates that he was not intimidated by the show of force, it is hard to believe that other Board members are not intimidated.

In the past, a PRB member stated that he would never parole a prisoner who killed a police officer. Steve Drizin, Clinical Professor at the Blum Clinic at Northwestern University Law School, pointed out that in such cases "...the PRB should operate like a court of law; if a Board member could never vote for the release of someone who killed a policeman, that member should recuse himself from voting. If the Board is to have any semblance of fairness, members who have prejudged cases should not participate in the vote. And their non-vote should not be held as a no vote."

"With most of the Board comprised of former enforcement employees, it is very difficult to get a fair playing field for the C# prisoner. The Governor should create a fair and balanced board by appointing members who have criminal defense and juvenile justice backgrounds," said Aviva Futorian, President of the Board of the John Howard Association. "In addition to providing greater balance on the Board," says Futorian, "the most pressing problem is that C#s are penalized when Board members don't show up at the en banc hearings – the absence equates to a no vote. Instead of requiring inmates to obtain a majority of the full Board's vote, the law should be changed to require a majority of those Board members who are in attendance in order to win parole."

There is no doubt that the prison system in Illinois, as in other states, should be looking at the over-crowding of the prisons and looking for solutions that would be safe for the public. Each dollar that the State expends on keeping the elderly and the rehabilitated in prison, is less money that is available for other pressing public issues like public education and health care and crime prevention. At a time when other states are looking for ways to cut correction costs by making changes to their parole systems, Illinois can no longer afford to keep the status quo. •

ESSAYS & INSIGHTS

BRING PAROLE BACK

By Carol Warren

Many things are happening right now, like how the governor is abolishing the death penalty. Too many inmates have been put on death row, and then found innocent years later. Also, there are many who are too fast to incarcerate and letting politics rule over the justice system. This results in not only the incarceration costs of these persons, but the law suit of wrongful convictions. This can result in millions in tax payer dollars.

We now also have a murder registry. The governor signed that all convicted murderers must register for ten years upon release, which is a safety measure for John Q. Public.

With these long awaited turns being made in the state towards the justice system, which is broken, now is the time to reconsider and reinstate parole in all cases.

A copy of the New York Times article, dated February 18, 2011, shows the governor of Maryland, Martin O'Malley's, budget proposal this year calls for increasing parole. Given rising incarceration costs, this is a wise policy decision. Too many people who no longer pose a risk to public safety are being warehoused for years at great expense to the tax paying public.

They found that the murderers, whose time served resulted in life or whatever amount of years, were least likely to reoffend. Between 1999-2003, out of the 368 paroled who were in for murder, after three years, only six received new felony charges.

Why keep wasting tax payers' money, especially since Illinois now has a ten year registry?

It is time for a change. It is time for parole to be back for all. It is time to stop warehousing people and put our tax money where it belongs.

MONSTER GUARDING ME

By T. Lee Dibble II

Yesterday a prison guard, an employee of the state of Illinois hired to protect the public from dangerous criminals, stood outside my cell with a prideful look in his eyes, and boasted to my cellmate and I how he, while serving his latest tour in Afghanistan as a US soldier, shot and killed two human beings... or as he so candidly put it, "got two of 'em for ya'," like this was something I was in to. Sensing that he captured my full attention with his unsolicited revelation, he then proceeded to display the full range of his bloodlust by further bragging about how on one of the Afghan men, whom he killed, the "turban had spun off his head" as his head exploded from the bullets he put in it. I was speechless.

Regarding the American Criminal Justice system, most citizens believe that everyone gets a fair shake; only guilty people are in prison, the system is fair, and all that dreamy shit. Let's see, I make a mistake while on drugs when I was 19 years old, I'm thrown away with a life sentence in prison. But the man in the prison uniform, who is supposed to be guarding society from me, is bragging about killing two human beings with pleasure!?! That 19 year old kid (whose mistake was being with the wrong people at the wrong time) doesn't even exist today, and to think, this boastful murderer is guarding me. The public is being fooled. The actual monsters are out there among society guarding them from men in prison, such as myself, who wake up each day making conscious efforts to prove the "monster" label wrong and rehabilitate myself in a place that offers nothing but negativity.

I'm doing LIFE for a 30 second lapse of good judgment while on drugs, and this dude in a prison guard uniform is bragging to me on the other side of these bars about killing two human beings?!?! Are you serious?! Who's guarding society from the prison guard???

CELEBRATING ME

By Corey A. Taylor

Persecuted and punished for holding true to ideals of freedom and justice. My captors expect me to stay bound to the old me, the one convicted twenty years ago. The ramblings of a processed mind suggest that whatever's inflicted upon me I've done worse to others. And those sworn to uphold the law break it in the spirit of trying to break me – for crimes committed. In spite of all the "retributinal" acts brought on by the part-time moral crusaders I keep on keepin' on. Only the divine can touch what's truly essential and he'll never give that power to man, he'd abuse it.

When the bandits in badges see me exercising or engaged in constructive activities designed to uplift, or when they feel the impulse to validate an otherwise invalidated manhood, their focus shifts my way. I'm the boogeyman that needs ghost-busting or the in-house domestic terrorist that must be neutralized. All because I'm maintaining a fire that's not supposed to survive under these conditions designed to kill it.

I reach for the source when my peers succumb to the weakness of fraternizing with the dude whose foot's on my neck. It ain't

easy being free born and resisting all principalities that seem to suggest otherwise. Now I know exactly why the caged bird sings: There's freedom in choosing your own song – even in cages.

All the fabricated disciplinary charges in the world; All the denigrations and castrations you can summon won't make me live down to your expectations. I've been tried, tested, and proven time and I stand upon an unassailable foundation: Principle.

I know you'd love to reduce me to the subject of my crimes or at least make me wallow in a lifetime of guilt. But, the fact is, as a child, I did childish things. Now I'm the "man" you see defying your impositions of who I should be, how I should be, the way it's going to be. Watch my wings take flight and transcend the mind-dwelling and slinging you can't seem to resist. Keep your slingshot poised to hurl them rocks while I simply will them to the side far and wide. My greatest and only enemy lies within: You're not worthy of being called my adversary or foe. So fall back chumps, while I continue to do this moonwalk across the landscape called life & time. Many are called... but few are chosen.

IMPRESSION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

be prosecuting alleged offenders by their ill-given and false assertions of guilt, but also prompts their future promotions and benefits.

In Alton, IL, where I allegedly committed my offense of murder, the same practice of closing and prosecuting my case was exercised in the same fashion as stated above. But oddly enough, this practice in Alton is historical as is in other places in Illinois, because namely speaking, one of my cousins in the mid 1990's as he was walking home one night past a grave yard was arrested and wrongly charged with murder. Though he was lucky enough to hire a good attorney and private investigator to grant him and his co-defendant's the release of their detention, however, there are many others who weren't so lucky, such as me.

Moreover, I do not write all of this to undermine what the victims and the victim's families have gone through, but to bring awareness that some of us who are wrongfully convicted of such crimes are victims of crimes and unconstitutional rights. This justice system is flawed and has been for years, but there's no keen concern to systematically change the practices of the entities of the prosecutors office and police force from performing such policies merely to convict the wrong offender.

In close, what can we say about our justice system where there's innocent individuals imprisoned of some of the most horrific crimes imagined, yet there exist no resolve nor concern directed towards corrective measures to rectify their (our) convictions. Should we place confidence in our justice system? Maybe, maybe not! I guess the one who is on the opposite side can only answer that question. However, I do dare to state that, "because Lady Justice had a blindfold upon her eyes, should you as well?" It just may be me today who is suffering because practices of police physical and mental coercion and the prosecutions inclined and purposeful will to prosecute knowing such underlining practices exist. But, do understand that it could be you, a loved one or someone you may know next time suffering from such practices of believed justice. Nevertheless, this is the impression of our justice system in Illinois however untruthful you think it may be...

ISSUES NOT ADDRESSED

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

6.) Tobacco brought back on commissary

When are people going to understand that convicts need different forms of release of stress and tension? Even people in society have ways of releasing stress,

ways which are not offered to convicts. I fully comprehend that the Bill which was passed has banned all tobacco



products from all State and Federal office buildings but, since when and how does a prison fit into the category? A prison, for lack of a better term is my home... even if it is against my will. But why is Illinois continuing to act so differently than Missouri and California on this same issue? Even though, they too, both banned tobacco products, they also saw the light and put tobacco back into their prison commissaries. What better form of bringing in revenue than to put back tobacco into prisons? What better way to bring down stress than to bring back tobacco?

POETRY

By La'Shawn Wilson

DYING TO LIVE

Every day is a blessing
When I open my eyes and breathe
Nevertheless, I suffer internally
Just picture my dying need

Last night wasn't so kind
As I lay still with my eyes wide open
Thinking about all I've lost
But holding on to dreams and hoping

Trapped inside this cage
Where souls ache and cry
It's hard for a person to stay strong
When every day a part of them dies

Tomorrow doesn't look good at all
Already considered to have gone astray
Could it be my dreams in life
Have already been taken away

I wish I knew the outcome
But pain won't let me feel
All I know is keep it alive
For inside I'm...Dying to live

DYING SOULS

In the mist of night
I turn to face the walls
From paths I have forgotten
Shattered dreams and memories call

I brace myself, so I'm ready for the ride
Especially when I realize, we're dying inside
Yeah...I said dying
For this, I cannot lie
I can sit in a crowd at any time
And visually hear the world cry

Cards, checkers, chess, plus the dominoes
Baffle my mind's perception
To be amongst these "dying souls"
Contemplation of the situation
Brings realization of what this ride will bring
Only dedication and obligation will expose my means

So, I sit on my bed and envision the stars
While I dig within and mend my scars
Documentation of a life given a role...(to me!)
It's true, unfair, and cold
You only live once my friends, so resurrect your dying souls

LETTERS

Mr. Ryan,

How are you? I pray that my letter finds you well. I have a situation that I would like to inform you and the Illinois tax payers about. I'm an inmate in Menard Correctional facility. For 6 months, I've attended a vocational school program entitled constructive occupation, which the Illinois taxpayers pay for yearly. The program offerings include the following: wood working, plumbing, electrical, machine operations, surveying, brick/block laying-masonry, and general home repairs. I've been in this class for 6 months and I could give the head instructor 3 days out of the 6 months that he actually attended this class and taught us something. There were 2 guys who were there for over a year, who had completed this class. They were later given a certificate of completion that I could describe as straight out of the crackerjack box, a toy. I have a friend who is in another Illinois prison who completed this same class, and she sent me a copy of her certificate. This certificate contained the school district from the community college in that district, as well as signatures from both the chairmen of the board and the president of that college.

These 2 inmates later upon receiving these bogus certificates for their completion of this class did file paperwork/grievances, but were constantly laughed at by staff as if this whole thing was a joke. These 2 inmates were later told that the vocational program is no longer with a school district,

and that if they ever went to a job sight, have the employer call the Menard voc. school instructor who will then verify their completion of this class. What a joke.

But my question is, how can the taxpayers' dollars constantly, every year pay for a program that really doesn't exist? If this class doesn't have a school district to acknowledge the completion of this class, it doesn't exist. Just something to make you and the rest of the taxpayers aware is happening.

Also, do you have any address that I could write to who will send me materials to take college classes through the mail? Thank you so much for your time and assistance, and thanks again for sending me the Stateville Speaks papers.

Respectfully Sent,

Maurice Hardaway

P.S. If you could, can you call to verify if the voc. school is still with a school district?



To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter, along with thousands of other men and women imprisoned all across the country, to ask you to reconsider your support for the sentence of life without the possibility of parole; what we in prison call "the other death penalty."

The truth is life without parole is the death penalty, but much more protracted and cruel nature. I am on death row now, but I haven't received the procedural safeguards those sentenced to death by execution are guaranteed. Instead, I am condemned to death by incarceration without any heightened scrutiny of conviction, or the circumstances surrounding the crime for which I was sentenced to this lone, slow death.

Surely, everyone in this country should, at least, have a chance at rehabilitation, a chance to remake their life. It is a part of our cultural heritage.

In your future dealings with crime and punishment, I ask that you consider a different approach, one that allows for the possibility that all humans retain within themselves the spark of redemption. Life without parole is ultimately, a denial within humanity. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ted Knox

cc: The other death penalty project

Dear Stateville Speaks,

In Chicago, the police are allowed to initiate adversarial judicial criminal proceedings against the accused in felony cases by filing a felony complaint that triggers an arrest warrant and usually accompanies a bond.

The initiation hearing is more than likely not transcribed and there is normally no way to accurately reconstruct what transpired at the hearing to charge the defendant and to issue a warrant for his arrest.

The complaint and the supporting affidavit for the arrest warrant in most cases are insufficient on its face and do not establish probable cause.

The decision to charge is connected to the arrest warrant and the states attorney or his assistant states attorneys do not endorse the felony complaint nor appear or acquiesce in the officers actions that deprive the trial court of its jurisdiction over the people of the state of Illinois in the original proceeding.

Furthermore, the defendant is denied his Six and Fourteenth Constitutional Amendment rights to counsel upon the initiation of adversarial judicial criminal proceedings, whether by way of formal charge, preliminary hearing indictment, information or arraignment, marks the commencement of the criminal prosecution to which alone the explicit guarantees of the sixth amendment are applicable. (See Kirby V. Illinois)

When the defendant is arrested on the felony charge that triggered an arrest he is denied his Six and Fourteenth Amendment rights to counsel at the police station lineup.

Then he arraigned on the charges filed by the police in the initial proceeding.

After he is indicted on the charges initiated by the police, if he's lucky his lawyer will file a motion to quash his arrest and suppress evidence. If his lawyer does not move to quash the arrest and suppress the evidence the claims are defaulted pursuant to the state law regardless of a denial of fundamental fairness, due process of law, equal protection of the law or the miscarriage of justice.

The defendant then finds himself pursuing the issues on collateral attack with only hope and a prayer that he prevail on the claims in federal court.

- Vernon Tolbert

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

A subscription to *Stateville Speaks* cost only \$10. Please let us know if you moved, so we can update our records.

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

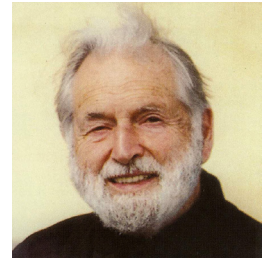
Submissions considered for publication should be no more than 1-2 pages and should address general issues and concerns--not individual cases. Let us know if we can use your name or not. We are looking for submissions for our women's section and IDOC staff section. **Please do not send originals as we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



FOR THOSE IN NEED OF PRAYERS

Please write to:

Father Peter Mary Rookery, O.S.M.,
International Compassion Ministry
20180 Governors Hwy., Room 310
Olympia Fields, IL 60461-1067



MEET MINISTER PHYLLIS HUGGINS

Minister Huggins has been active Prison Fellowship Volunteer since 1997 and has completed the Auxiliary Chaplain Program of the Cook County Sheriff's Office in 1999 and has served faithfully in this capacity for two years. A former Adult Extension Study student at Moody Bible Institute and a former Board Member of St. Leonard's House Ministries, she is highly acclaimed for her service work. She is also a trainer with Prison Fellowship Ministries and her work in the ministry includes recruiting churches for Prison Ministry.

Some of her many former volunteer services include, chaperoning children visiting their mothers at Dwight and Kankakee Correctional Centers, worship services with Chaplains for Christ Cook County Jail Division 10, Dare to be Different Project Cook Country Jail Division 4 and a former chaplain for the Cook County Jail Boot Camp.

Minister Huggins is a mentor to Grace House which is a transitional home for female ex-offenders and was honored for her work with the "Walk With Me Program". She is also a motivational speaker for St. Leonard's House, which is a transitional home for male ex-offenders; and pen-pal to many men and women who are incarcerated.

She and her husband, Gregory Huggins Sr. started a not-for-profit organization called "Becoming a Voice and not an Echo Ministries", geared toward helping those behind prison bars. Their son, Gregory Huggins Jr. is also a minister.

If you would like a pen pal, a Bible study lesson, or a just someone to correspond with, please feel free to write the Ministry:

Becoming A Voice and not an Echo Ministries
P.O. Box 436999
Chicago IL 60643-6999

"He has showed you O man what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Listen! " The Lord is calling to the city.

- (Micah 6:8-9)

SEEKING MUSLIM GUIDANCE

We get many letters expressing the need for additional programs, training and prayer services for our incarcerated Muslim brothers and sisters.

Stateville Speaks is looking for practicing individuals or groups that are both knowledgeable and willing to answer letters from our readers and help them with any faith based questions they may have. Please contact us so that we may publish your information in our upcoming edition and help fill that void.

STATESVILLE SPEAKS WOULD LIKE TO THANK OTHER SUPPORTERS:

N.E.I.U. Justice Studies Department
www.IllinoisPrisonTalk.org
N.I.V. mission

IN MEMORIAM

THE LEGACY OF A GIANT CALLED SHORTY

Jerome “Shorty” Freeman died on January 6, 2012, leaving behind his wife, Renee and four children and so many friends and family.

Every human being has a start date and an end date. However, who that person is in life transcends far beyond their christening and passing. The name is only a handle – something to be called. A person’s accomplishments and the standards by which one lives are the elements that have a lasting effect upon the lives of the people one comes in contact with.

Our community has a history of allowing others to decide who are leaders are whether it be through the media or by other means of control. However, natural leaders are born and always rise to the top. True leaders are chosen not created. Jerome “Shorty” Freeman was chosen by the people. He adapted to that role naturally because he was born to be who he was. God makes no mistakes. He recognized his destiny and accepted his life’s calling bravely and honestly. He was a fair, quiet, deliberate man who rarely revealed his emotions, but actively stood by his beliefs.

I had the privilege to witness how he evolved from the infamous “Shorty Freeman” to the community activist “B.J.” This transformation was not an easy task. It is easier for people to remember who they think one is than to realize how one expands his life. Instead of wasting his time trying to convince people about his vision for his children and the young brothers and sisters of the community, Jerome Freeman chose to allow his work to speak for him.

How many lives he saved can never be measured nor can how many young people’s attitudes were changed by his example. But we do know that we all benefitted from him being among us. He leaves giant footprints for us to follow.

WE ARE, INDEED, OUR BROTHER’S KEEPERS. I truly miss you, brother. - Highsmith



Jerome “Shorty” Freeman (left) with Statesville Speaks publisher Cynthia Kobel.

Curtis Deloney, 88 years old was killed recently in a car accident on 71st Street and South Halsted. According to the family they were told that the police were chasing another car and when Mr. Deloney tried to avoid the high speed police car and collided with a light pole. He died shortly after being transported to the hospital. Police have never owned up to responsibility, nor acknowledged a high speed police chase.

I have put the family in contact with a lawyer that may be able to assist them. Curtis Deloney is the father of Christine Deloney and grandfather to Chicago Police Torture victim Javan Deloney, who is incarcerated at the Menard Correctional Center, serving a sentence of natural life. Please keep the Deloney family in your prayers.

- Mark A. Clements

Angel Colon - Stateville Speaks would like to offer our condolences to the family and friends on the passing of Angel Colon at Illinois River C.C. from diabetic complications. Mr. Colon was a long-time residence of the Lakeview neighborhood in Chicago.

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.

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



EDITORIAL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

thy Barnett, along with his summer grad students for getting this off the ground, starting with this issue. This will take time, but the sooner we get started...

I would like to thank Justice Studies Chair Cris Toffolo for bringing Stateville Speaks to NEIU and for her staunch commitment to this project. In addition, thanks to Publisher Cynthia Kobel, Consulting Editor Bill Ryan, Professor Kingsley Clarke and the rest of the Justice Professors, along with the English Department for their support, as well as help from Bashir Siddiqui and Ryan Johnson in the Justice Studies office.

And I want to thank you, the readers, for your honesty and giving

us an unedited look at life on the inside. While each semester brings a new round of students, some who never really delved beyond the mainstream portrayal of the prison system, we know that they leave here changed, more knowledgeable and sensitive to the problems you face.

Finally, to those that have received late responses from us, I apologize for the delay. I learned the hard way, after spilling coffee on a large sack of mail, it would be returned to me by IDOC, marked “foreign substance”. So once more I would like to thank you for your patience and hope that our bugs are worked out, at least for a timely delivery of the newspaper, both on our end and that of the IDOC. Thank you for your readership and allowing us to be your voice. •

GET THE FACTS ON EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY FROM SOMEONE WHO KNOWS

In the State of Illinois, Executive Clemency refers to the Governor's power to grant reprieves, commutations and pardons, after conviction, for all offenses on such terms as he thinks proper. In other words, "clemency" is an umbrella term that can include:

Reprieve: a temporary postponement of punishment without reference to such issues as due process or the guilt or innocence of the accused.

Commutation: a reduction in the severity of a punishment, shortening the length of sentence or changing it from death to another lesser sentence. Commutation is appropriate for a person in prison seeking to be released early.

Pardon: forgiveness of a crime and the penalty associated with it. This relief is usually granted in order to restore civil rights such as the right to hold public office, participate in a jury, own a firearm (by the granting of a FOID card), etc. It is usually for persons who are not in custody or on probation and want to be "pardoned" for their offenses.

Expungement: refers to a process whereby records pertaining to a case are removed or destroyed, as if the offense never happened. After expungement, the records are no longer available for anyone to access, even by a court order. In Illinois, the Governor may only recommend an expungement to the county court after the granting of a pardon. Some forms of expungement are also available directly through the county courts.

Why you should apply for a Pardon?

An arrest or criminal conviction in your record can prevent you from getting a job and/or advancing your career. Or even worse, if

you are not a U.S. citizen, you can face deportation and be forced to return to the country where you were born. Even if you received probation only, you are still considered a convict just as if you had gone to prison. All felonies will remain on your record and can only be removed with the governor's pardon.

If you have turned your life around but your past continues to haunt you, you can start the process of cleaning your record by retaining our firm to file an executive clemency petition.

The Governor's forgiveness restores all rights and privileges you lost as a result of your convictions and will perhaps make it possible to get a job, go to school, and move on with your life.

JORGE MONTES, the former Chairman of the Prisoner Review Board (PRB), is in a unique position to help you with your clemency petition. Using his unparalleled experience on the PRB-over 16 years on the board-he will assist you in preparing your case for clemency and represent you at your hearing before the Illinois PRB.

Why not allow the most seasoned lawyer in this area of the law to assist you in securing the relief you need to move on with your life?

For more information, contact:

Jorge Montes
831 N. Ashland,
Chicago, IL 60622

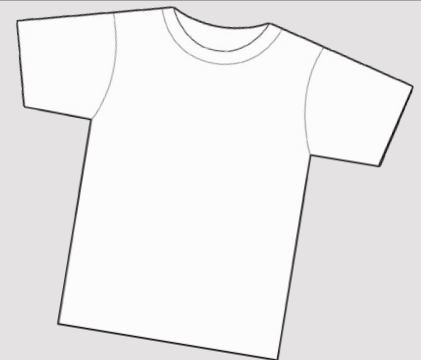
Phone: 312-850-9844
Website: MontesAssociates.com

T-SHIRT DESIGN CONTEST - DEADLINE EXTENDED

Calling all inmate artists, cartoonists, satirists, poets, and essayists! Enter our contest to design a *Stateville Speaks* T-shirt & possibility of a logo for *Stateville Speaks*. Goals of the Contest:

1. Increase awareness and start a dialogue about prisons on campus; and
2. Raise money, from the sale of t-shirts, to help defray our costs at the paper.

Submissions DUE by August 1, 2012. Please send only a copy as we will be unable to return originals. We will run the best entries and announce the winner in our Fall 2012 issue.



SUBSCRIBE TO *STATESVILLE SPEAKS*

Stateville 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. *Stateville Speaks* can only continue toward positive reform with your support.

I WANT TO SUBSCRIBE TO *STATESVILLE SPEAKS*

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

POLITICAL 'TOON



BY ARKEE

Statesville Speaks
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5500 N. St. Louis Ave.
Chicago, IL 60625-4699