

STATEVILLE SPEAKS

VOICES FROM INSIDE... A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER JUNE 2006

The Creative Writing Issue



If Only Part One

Joe Dole

there and my street education began. I began to stay away from home and abuse as much as possible. Returning late one night I heard my mother's boyfriend selling something at the door for \$100. I couldn't tell what he had sold but that was more money than I had ever seen so it piqued my curiosity. After a few weeks of snooping around, I figured it all out and started my career in the cocaine trade.

I began by stealing small amounts that I hoped he wouldn't detect were missing and catching some of his customers on the street before he got to the house. I'd be sure to sell it for a lot less so they'd keep their mouths shut. I spent most of the money at fast food joints. Not much time passed before I started to catch the eyes of the older kids who hung

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I grew up in dozens of hovels in numerous ghettos throughout the city of Chicago. My mother was single but doesn't deserve the title single parent because it takes more to be a parent than giving birth. I never knew my father. I'm not sure my mother did either.

My earliest memories are of trying to stay clear of the multitude of men in my mother's life and of trying to get enough food to quiet my stomach enough to fall asleep. I went to school until halfway through the 3rd grade when after one of our many moves I did not get re-enrolled.

So my formal education ended

hope / change / redemption

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The Creative Writing Issue

INMATES AND OFFICERS FROM ANY DOC PRISON CAN SUBMIT ARTICLES TO STATEVILLE SPEAKS

A MAN WITHOUT A SHADOW

Donald McDonald



His eyes opened slowly. White light singled his thoughts into focus as his mind reeled with questions. "What, where, how," he thought as his head slowly stopped throbbing from the bright hospital lights and blinding white screaming walls. A face with brown friendly eyes stared down at him. She had dark smooth skin, a motherly yet business-like smile with concerned wrinkles creasing her forehead.

"Are you okay, Sir? Do you know where you are, or what day it is," the nurse asked sending his head throbbing again. "You were in a car crash on the expressway. Your test show that you have no obvious injuries. But you did hit your head pretty hard on the steering wheel. The car was registered to a Sheila Fard. We've been trying to contact her but we can't seem to locate her. Could you tell me your name please?"

"I," but before he could finish, pain lashed out across the front of his brain attacking his head. "I, don't know. I, I can't remember anything," the stranger whispered in an futile attempt not to anger the pain demon molesting his head.

"Okay, just relax then, the loss of memory is probably temporary. Let's give it a few days and see. Your doctor's name is Kaun. She will be up to

see you once we move you to your room some time soon," said the nurse as she thoughtfully disappeared from above him.

Wishing the pain away, the stranger to himself fell into a dreamless sleep. No images or memories came. He was without a present. He was a tree without roots, empty, he just was . . .

Later that night, as consciousness found him, he remembered the pain from the last time he opened his eyes and tried to slowly open them so as to not alert the demon again. This time there was no pain; not much light either. He thought it must be night as he also remembered the nurse's words, but nothing else. Panic seized him as it dawned on him that his mind was a blank photograph. He had no past, no present. He tried to probe his mind but no images would come. He had no mother, no father. He was homeless. He could remember no birthday or even his name. Oh, he could think of many names, sure, he just couldn't think of his own.

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"If Only" Cont...

out at the corner. Once they discovered I was selling they got mad. When they confronted me I was terrified. After the first hit I was on the ground crying. They said if I ever sold on their block again the beating would be worse. When I whined that all I wanted was to get some food, the leader took pity on me. After that I started selling for him and spent most of my time with the gang. For once I felt welcomed and each time they asked me to do something, it was always something I was able to do, not requiring any book smarts. For the first time I knew what pride was. I was proud of my accomplishments, never reasoning whether they were right or wrong. They always felt right and garnered me acceptance. The first time I contemplated right or wrong was after my arrest for murder and a sentence of 20 years in prison.!

you to say. You don't close your eyes and see nothing. You can imagine the faces of your family and friends. You know who to love and who to be afraid of. You have your experiences and those of your parents and their parents to help you decide what to do. If I never get my memory back, all that will be lost to me forever."

The voice was quiet for a minute and said thoughtfully, "Yeah, that's one way to look at it. But maybe you don't want to know your past. What if you don't like it. I know I don't like mine. Nothing but hardship, pain and suffering."

"But at least it's your hardship and pain," said the stranger. "Why be a blank slate. People need a foundation to build on. A compass to judge which direction to go. Even a man in the desert needs his shadow to tell him which way to travel, or how much time he has to get there. If I can't remember, I'm just a man without a shadow, a stranger to my self and everyone I meet."

Suddenly an alarm started sounding down the hall and the two stayed quiet as busy feet rushed back and forth in the hall. "Code Blue," a female voice sang out trying to match her voice with that of the alarm. Two people stopped outside their door and spoke to each other in hushed hurried voices; neither of the two in the room could understand what was being said.

"Well," the voice said, "I guess you have a point. But if you don't have a past, that doesn't mean you can't go on from today. It just means you go forward from where you are now."

"It's more to it than that. Take an empty glass, for instance, anyone that comes along can fill it with whatever they want. Now take a person without a past, he's just as empty. Then some one comes along and fills his mind with whatever he wants. The empty person can become a thief, rapist or murderer. A hollow person can be taught anything by anyone. Not being aware of his past, he has no moral gauge to prevent him from acting according to that person's

will. Like children raised with abusive parents. Often times they wind up abusing their own. Or the kid on the street, some clown tells him to hang with him, teaches him to steal and how to do drugs. But with a past and deep roots, he has a compass to direct his conduct. He doesn't follow the example of anyone that comes along. Or a television program doesn't become his teacher."

Slowly the stranger's dark mind started to flash with light. At first he saw little dots, then flashes. Gradually his brain formed shapes, then pictures, then known pictures. He recognized faces from his past, names, then his name. Light entered his world with a warmth that made tears form in the corners of his eyes.

"Twan, my name is Twan Fard," he said to the voice with elation and pride. Twan finally looked over to the man in the bed next to him. On his left side, he saw a middle-aged, salt-and-pepper-haired, ebony-complexioned man staring at him as if for the first time.

As Twan smiled to himself, and turned on his side and slowly started to fall asleep. The man's voice was silent. Twan's dreams finally had direction. |

A Man with No Shadow Cont...

"Who am I, where am I from?" he asked his self quietly in the dark hospital's bed. "Not my bed."

"Well, now that's a good question, isn't it," a strange voice said falling out of the darkness from his left.

Momentarily surprised, he told the voice, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to wake you. I was just thinking out loud."

"You didn't wake me, but I am interested in your question.

"Who am I," said the descending voice. "That seems to me to be the question that everybody is concerned with these days. Everyone seems to be more concerned with who they are more than who everybody else is."

"It wasn't a philosophical question. I was in a car crash and can't remember who I am," replied the stranger.

"I'm sorry to hear that, but maybe, just maybe that's a good thing," said the voice.

"A good thing, that's easy for

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The Creative Writing Issue

Rest

Andre .D. Patterson, N.I.V.



He sat hunched over his desk staring at the book for what seemed the longest time. He scanned the titles of the various texts and magazines he had stacked next to him, making sure they were all read, kind of hoping he had overlooked something. But he hadn't.

This was the only book left in this tiny room that he had not yet devoured. The only one he had been trying to avoid since arriving here. When he finally opened it, fear gripped him. Before he could decipher the first words on the page, an ominous feeling, as of pending death, struck him. He jumped quickly from his chair, knocking it to the floor and turned around defensively. His eyes surveyed the small space in which he lived. Everything was dark except for the dim light he used to read and the thin strobe spilling from under the crack of the door. He took note that this only exit and entrance into the room was firmly secured.

"What are you so frightened of?" He said nervously, picking up his chair. Nobody can get to you in here. He sat back down.

Once, someone had broken in next door and stabbed his neighbor in their sleep. No one claimed to have seen anything. A few days ago, he had gotten into an altercation with a couple of guys notorious for violence and vindictive grudges. But that's not why he was paranoid. Maybe it wasn't paranoia that he was experiencing, because whatever this anxiety, this emptiness, this inexplicable emotion was that he had been feeling, it had been plaguing him

for months now, ever since the drugs had run out. Ever since liquor had run out. Ever since choice had run out.

He stood outside the liquor store with a fifth of gin tucked under his arm and a cigarette dangling from his lips. He closed his eyes as he took in that first drag, opening them as he exhaled, watching the smoke disappear into the atmosphere like a phantom apparition.

"Here we go again." He sighed deeply as he began the arduous journey back toward his fourth "residence." Three months ago his life had taken a dramatic turn, and not for the better. Consequence had caught up with him; all of his ambitious negativity had come around full circle and smacked him in the face. Now he was walking around in a daze, or more like a drug and alcohol induced stupor, not knowing what to do. The cops were looking for him. His face was plastered on every newscast, in every news publication. Still, he ran.

Please do not attempt to approach suspect if spotted. He is believed to be armed and dangerous. Please contact your local law enforcement agency.

Armed? Of course. Dangerous?? In his opinion, that was up for debate. Yet, even he wasn't convinced either way. At one point in time, he would have thought this stigma a compliment (as sick as it may seem) to be considered dangerous.

Ever since being ostracized at home and shunned in school, he sought out an identity that would bring him to the forefront and allow him to blend in. Out of every identity he'd encountered growing up, this is the one he had decided to

forsake his own for. This is the one that he decided to forge himself with. Once committed, there was no turning back.

Even now, as the doubt tried to creep up from his belly and consume him, he took a long hard swallow of liquor to push it back down, then another for the depression. Being a fugitive had taken him places he never thought he would go; introduced him to people he never thought he would meet; stirred up emotions he never thought he could feel. He had no place to go, no place that he could really call home. Essentially homeless, he never knew, with certainty, where he was going to sleep for the night. His family had forsaken him, urging him to turn himself in. Some nights he would find himself in some grimy motel at some remote location; other nights he found himself curled up on a friend of a friend's floor, fighting roaches and rats for territory. Nothing was ever guaranteed.

He had been drinking heavily since 16. Now, his alcohol consumption had reached an all time high. But it wasn't enough to keep his conscious at bay. He and liquor had enjoyed a monogamous relationship for years, until he was introduced to PCP. Now there was no one without the other. They plagued him deeper and deeper into a pit he couldn't see the top of.

To be continued in the next issue of Stateville Speaks... |

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Your Move

Part One

Jeffrey Boswell

It was a very pleasant day in June, almost 66 degrees. I was in a small park on Lake Shore Drive, waiting to meet a dear friend of mine, Pam, for dinner and maybe a movie. It was around 6:00. The sunshine was wonderful & the light breeze was a comfort. I was enjoying both. My cell phone beeped as I sat on a bench overlooking a small pond with a few ducks seemingly enjoying the day as much as I was. The call was from Pam, explaining that she was running a little late but that she should be there by 7:00. With a little time to kill, I was sorry I hadn't brought a book along with me. Surveying the small park I observed two gentlemen engaged in a game of chess. I wandered over. I hadn't played the game in years, but I did appreciate the challenge the game gave one's mind. No sooner had I approached the table and the game was at an end. A young man with a smooth pink face and choirboy eyes, which gave him an innocent demeanor belied by a disquietingly eager smile that came and went like the flickering of a serpent's tongue, was saying "checkmate." The other gentleman looked upset and said he had an appointment to keep and rushed off abruptly. The young man looked up at me with a sly smirk and said, "Care to indulge?" and pointed to the chess board that was already set up to play. Not recalling him resetting the pieces was strange, yet it was a fleeting thought, because the chess set captured my attention. The board itself was mirrored, like it appeared to be made out of marble, transparent and gold squares. The pieces were gold and platinum. The pawns were like little scorpions. The rooks,

knights and bishops all had wings on their backs, faces half flames, half human. The queen had wings and a veil covering her face. The king had no wings and no face. I was mesmerized by the exquisite board and pieces and, feeling challenged, like this was no ordinary game, I sat without thinking and said, "Why not? I have time." The young man's smirk was gone and his eyes now reflected an age-old wisdom as he said—"yes, time"—as though the word itself held an extraordinary meaning to him. His voice seemed to be deeper as his gaze rose upon me, eyes unwavering: "Ahhh, the game of the gods," he said as he pushed a scorpion-like pawn (kp to 4).
"Your move, sir."

And once again his eager smile came and went with the flickering of his tongue.

To be continued the next episode of Stateville Speaks... |

If Only

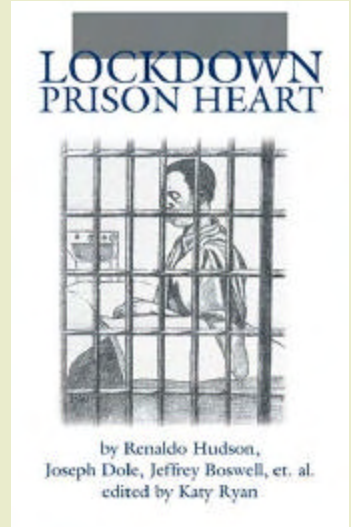
Part Two

Joe Dole

My time spent in prison was the most positive experience of my life. It was a life-altering moment that led me to leave a life of crime behind. I met with a counselor to discuss my goals and interests and to make a blueprint for rehabilitation. The next week I was enrolled in G.E.D. classes and received my diploma 2 years later. In the following years I was assisted in picking my courses to work toward a college degree in my field of interest. I received my bachelor's degree in six years. A Pell grant paid for it all.

Once I was enrolled in school and had an eye on the future I turned my attention towards the necessities of the present. I got a job working in the factory

Lockdown Prison Heart



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making minimum wage. This allowed me to send money home to support my child as well as buy necessities at the commissary and start a small savings account.

I was shown respect and compassion at all times, and this in turn

Continued on page 7...

JUNE 2006

The Creative Writing Issue



The World We Make

Angel Torres

We make the world in which we live
By what we gather and what we give,
By our daily deeds and the things we say,
By what we keep or we cast away.

We make our world by the beauty we see
In a dark cell with songs or words we preach,
In a butterfly's wing, in the pale moon's rise,
and the wonder that lingers in midnight skies.

We make our world by the life we lead,
By the friends we pick, by the books we read,
By the pity we show in the hour of care,
By the loads we lift and the love we share.

We make our world by the goals we pursue,
By the heights we seek and the higher view,
By hopes and dreams that reach the sun
And a will to fight till justice is won.

What is the place in which we dwell,

A cell or a palace, a heaven or hell
We gather and scatter, we take and we give,
We make our world—and there we live. |

Where Have You Gone, Black Man?

William Jones

The black man is an endangered species due to the simple fact that he makes up 42% of the prison population. Eight out of ten people murdered in the US are black. Tens of thousands of black males have the AIDS virus in the US and millions through the rest of the world. Crack use in the black community is at an all-time high. The number of black males who graduate from high school is at an all-time low. Unemployment for white males is 7% and for black males is 15%. Where have you gone, black man? I can't say for a fact where you are, but I know for a fact you had some help getting there. |

Unadulterated Truth

Jonathan B. Bartlett

Dark and lonely nights
Visions of archaic sites
Dreams behind every bend
Always in search of your true friend
Words too deep to ponder
So in lackluster squalor you wander
Walking through life like it was a peach
Never getting involved with negative speech
They have ways of seeking you out
Every time you swear this is your last bout
But what is life if not a game?
And who are you without your name?
If life is too short for a regret

Then why even fret
If existentialism holds true
Then most likely we're stuck like glue
If we were all just thrown into the mix
Most likely life will be too difficult to fix
Is the answer in a higher power?
A deity that looks down on us from the tallest tower
Is love the essence of creation?
Or is that just a romantic's imagination?
Some are in love with the idea of love
Foolishly they call it a blessing from above
Those who idealize relationships
Who write poetry about lips and exotic trips
When will they come to grips with the situation?
And admit to themselves that it was never love but infatuation
Are you so afraid to be alone?
Are you truly willing to accept anyone in your home?
Maybe I'm too simple to understand
However the idea doesn't seem too grand
If half-hearted love is what you've succumbed to
Then you're only getting your due
You will have no sympathy from me
Long ago my heart was set free
This is your life and you have to live it
I just hope they make a love first aid kit
My premonitions will come to pass
I'll offer a prayer up for you at Mass
Learn to say no
Your desires are your worst foe
You will not always be a belladonna
Nor will you always have the face of a Madonna
What will happen when you start to get lines in your face?
Will you still look beautiful in short skirts and lace?
I know you listen with half an ear
And most likely you're still too young to care
However, read this again in ten years
Then let's see if it has its desired effect - to bring tears. |

If Only Cont...

taught me to be compassionate and respectful to others. For the first time in my life I watched the news and followed current affairs. I developed my own opinions on matters of religion, morals and my future. I looked forward to accomplishing something positive with my life.

When I left prison I was alone again but I was prepared and with my savings could support myself until I found a job. I now take an active part in society and cannot imagine ever breaking the law again. I'm saving for my own house, share custody of my son and help out with numerous charity groups. Life is good.

Part Three

Per instructions, this entire story is a work of fiction. Part 1 is fiction because I made it up. It was not my life but some version of it is reality for thousands of kids across this country. More unfortunate though is that Part 2 is also fiction and in today's "correctional" environment cannot be a reality for anyone. In a time when education is nonexistent in maximum security prisons and continually stripped away in others, when Pell grants are no longer available to prisoners, when jobs are almost nonexistent and pay only pennies per hour, when inmates are not allowed to save any significant amount of money or keep an inheritance because the state will seize it to pay for the "costs of incarceration," when first-time felony offenders can be sentenced to life imprisonment or death, when there are no second chances, when upon conviction someone is stripped of his claim to humanity and made an outcast and labeled a monster, Part 2 is not a possibility.

My question is this: How can society expect people to change after living through a version of Part 1 without being given the tools of Part 2? They can't, and without a serious shift in policy the recidivism rate will continue to be as unconscionably high as the current rate of 55%. Millions more will be lost and considered animals. |

Young Brotha Black Strugga

Martice Hannibal

I keep hearing you young black power figures in these cells and on them streets, talking about how you hate white people cause of what they did to your ancestors. Talking about black struggles and what they have been through
Yet and still you're the major one who's hatin you!!
Talking bout how they treated us in the past
How they disrespected our mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers
How they killed us, robbed us, decapitated our bodies and hung us.
But every word that comes out your mouth, young brothra, begins with nigga,***** and mother*****
Disrespecting your mother every time you disobey
Disrespecting your father when you disown him,
Disrespecting your sister when you call her *****s and whores
Knocking her up leaving her to raise a child alone and
Disrespecting your brother when you kill him, most of the time over nothing
So what do you know about the struggle, young brotha?
What do you know about our ancestors not being allowed to go to school, then fighting and losing their lives to pave a way for you to go to school, but now you choose not to,
What do you know about our ancestors fighting to change the status quo, of black folk stamped upon by white folk?
Our ancestors telling the world that we are indeed some of the most respectful civilized folk the world has ever known
How in the name of the so-called cool, you're acting uncivilized and proving those European folk right and proving our ancestors wrong.
So before you start talking about how you hate everybody else
for what they've done to us
You must re-assess and check yourself for what you're DOING to US!!!
Cause other than that, young brotha, you're only being hypocritical|

Out of Reach of My Dream

Jerome Franklin

All the day my mind is bombarded by colorful thoughts of fun times and a life worth living. Elation fills my spirit as I'm reminded that as long as blood runs warm in my veins the fantasies of my mind can be a certain reality.

But as I ride these clouds of euphoria I am abruptly dropped to the cold hard ground of reality. These bars don't resemble home's door, these concrete walls don't hold the pictures of familiar smiles. The dangling razor wire is certainly not a pretty decoration, and guard in the tower with the gun is waitin'.

I dip my cup within my soul to get a sip of refreshing joy but it has all just been dried up like a piece of lard hated by the sun. My eyes fall to the east but there is no help. I look to the west and still I see no one. So, now I look upland. I wonder is it a smile or a frown that is unperceivable by mortal me. I guess I will find out if my fantasies become a reality. |

I Apologize

Anthony Spaulding

I apologize.
I know I caused a lot of strife, agony, and turmoil
But that's not who I am today.
Molded I am from my election in spirituality
that awakened my eyes to see that my past life was wrong.
But I would not be the same man right now without it.
I apologize for not filling the expectations my parents thought I should have accomplished.
I was the ultimate pessimist, and turned into an optimist of criminality.
Now my strategy is to apologize, apologize, apologize.
I won't disguise the demise of that primal figure.
It's gone and a new millennium has arrived
Where I apologize for my faults. |

Justice

I. Redell

Is it my constitutional right to be judged by a jury of your peers? Who has been where I've been, done what I've done, wanted to cry but couldn't find the tears.

Yet here I sit locked in their confines, still free in my mind
Unleashing my rage from a cage!
Thoughts spilling like the days of my life over a page!
Experiences combined with the emotions, mixed with feelings and all fueled by a government where no justice exists. Just us!!

All this time I was led to believe that Lincoln freed the slaves;
And that Martin and Malcolm paved the way for a better tomorrow and brighter days.

Yet here I sit on a modern-day plantation where brothers work for less than the minimum wage. Then it's back to the cage!
Only to do the same thing tomorrow.

I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired!
I'll be glad when judgment day hurry up and come,
so I can show the Almighty who was the one.
Let them see how it feels to eat snack size meals,
Be surrounded by steel.
Let them be judged by a jury of my peers, share my fears,
taste the salt of my tears and be sentenced to my years
Now that's justice. }

The Breaking Point L.M.L.

It isn't a rumor, but it is a fact,
Prison's overcrowded because of meth and crack.
Their addiction keeps bringing them back.
Humans are warehoused and overpacked,

Double, tripled-celled or in a dorm,
While legislators debate on reform.
The addicts – homeless, mentally ill,
Those who raped, robbed and killed,
Some who sold drugs, who lost their will,
All together the prisons fill.
People with issues not being addressed,
Piled all together in one big mess.
Living off slave wages of state pay,
Without family or friends there's just no way
To pay for food or hygiene needs
And cost for legal petition pleads.
They charge us two dollars three separate times
To see a doctor on their med lines.
We must buy kotex and toilet tissue
If we run out of our state issue.
Feedings are soybean and skimpy servings of food,
Keeping people in a negative mood.
Prices on commissary go up every week,
Charging us more than it costs on the street.
Prisons are warehouses for those who
Are often guilty but innocent too. }

To My Mother

Lloyd Saterfied

To my mother, who was by my side in good and bad
To my mother, who made me happy when I was sad
To my mother, who comforted me when I was alone
To my mother, who showed me rightness when I was doing wrong.
I will always love you and will never let you die from my heart.
So keep your love strong while we are apart. }

The Difference I'll Make

Willie (By Maine) Hughes

Unity is the state of being one,
like thoughts in these lines of my poem.
Struggle is to exert energy, strive for the struggle of my brothers & sisters because black is my pride, love an intense affectionate concern for passionate attraction and cannot be faked.
Not with these 3 words—Unity, Struggle,

and Love
Part of my agenda which will make the difference I'll make.
If I had a chance to be in society again I would get a few good men & make a stance
then sweep the community, weed out all of the wanna be's. Then when that's taken care of I'll deal with the Unity.
Cause home is a word that's stressed everyday.
Life is what was given to us by ALLAH.
Loyalty is what's in our hearts and grows in a special way, so keep your eyes peered to this poem, and you'll see the difference I'll make.
Here's a question 'bout corruption and a White-man's plan of destruction.
Of getting a Black Brother caught up in his world of Injustice: Is a white or black man in a black gown really to be blamed? I don't think so. That's just our excuse for failing in the game.
The things we chose to be about and the things we chose
to be a part of deals with these 3 words—Unity, Struggle, and Love }

N.I.V.

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