

STATEVILLE SPEAKS

Voices from the Inside • Spring 2013

TAMMS AND DWIGHT PRISONS CLOSED

QUINN SHUTS DOWN TWO PRISONS DESPITE LOCAL PROTESTS

By Gayle Tulipano
Stateville Speaks Editor



On January 4th Governor Quinn, with remarkable conviction and courage, closed Tamms Supermax Prison. The process took four months longer than anticipated, due to a lawsuit filed on behalf of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), local residents, down-state legislators and the lengthy arbitration process.

Though union members and local residents waged an outspoken and tenacious campaign to keep the prison open by citing safety concerns, Quinn, noted for being extremely pro-labor and union simply could not justify keeping Tamms open--especially from a financial standpoint. The majority of the men transferred were sent to Pontiac C.C., followed by Menard C.C. and Stateville C.C.,

with a few going to other facilities. Even after the last prisoner was transferred, almost every prison conflict was somehow tied to the Tamms closing, though there has been nothing beyond rhetoric to support this.

Getting much less press, though equally stunning, was Quinn's commitment and follow through to close the women's maximum security prison at Dwight. The women from this facility were moved to Logan C.C., (located in Lincoln), while the men that were housed there were moved to Lincoln C.C. The cost of repairs needed on the series of older structures was the main reason cited for the closure. Warden Sheryl Thompson was also transferred from Dwight to Logan.

While the closures are applauded by many, they come with concerns, mainly with

the heavy movement of prisoners within the system and not enough movement out. The current system is operating at about 35% over capacity with just over 49,000 prisoners. There has been little movement since Meritorious Good Time was suspended in 2009, until just recently.

Finally, it appears that the first trickle of inmates may be leaving under the guidelines outlined under SB2621. Though only a few dozen have been released so far, this is a way, in addition to non-violent status and education credits, for prisoners to control their own early release by good behavior. Considered a comprehensive plan that is earned and not awarded, we will wait to see if it at least granted with some uniformity.

ESSAY CONTEST DEADLINE EXTENDED TO AUG 1, 2013.

In fairness to those that may have not received the last issue of *Stateville Speaks*, or received them late, we have extended the essay contest until August 1, 2013. Although the staff at many of the prisons have kindly forwarded us your transfer status, it still takes time to receive this information. We have been extremely busy keeping up with the prison closings and heavy volume of transfers. We should know by now that nothing is in real-time and we always need to allow for extra time on everything. We are sorry for any inconvenience and look forward to more amazing essays.

STATEVILLE SPEAKS ESSAY CONTEST: STOP THE CYCLE OF INCARCERATION

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

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

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



Purpose: To write an essay on what outside influences either played a role in you being incarcerated, or what may have prevented it? We would like the essays written with young adults and children in mind. What advice would you give them so they, themselves, do not become incarcerated? What changes in your neighborhood might prevent someone else from the same fate? Some of you are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles or grandparents. All of you are sons and daughters and were members of a community and thus you each have a unique story that needs to be told.

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

- 1) Overall, what will it take to stop the cycle of incarceration?
- 2) Specifically, what can parents/guardians do to keep kids out of the prison pipeline?
- 3) Specifically, what could schools do to

retain and engage more students?

- 4) What changes or enhancements does the community need to make?
- 5) What systemic/legislative changes need to be made (i.e., funding for after school programs, alternatives to gangs, less punitive and more rehabilitative responses, etc.)?
- 6) If you were out/when you are out, what can/would you do to help keep your neighborhood youth from being incarcerated?
- 7) If you were advising the Governor on what should be done to break the cycle what would you propose?

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

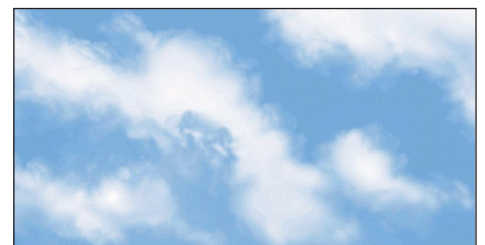
Stateville Speaks
c/o Justice Studies
LWH 4062
Northeastern IL University
5500 N. St. Louis Ave.
Chicago, IL 60625-4699

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

IN MEMORY

Stateville Speaks would like to extend our condolences to Marlon Johnson on the passing of his beloved Grandmother. We are extremely saddened by your loss.

The staff at *Stateville Speaks* would like to send our sympathy to Leonard Kidd over the passing of his loving Mother. Please accept our heartfelt sympathy; our thoughts are with you.



FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to another edition of Northeastern Illinois University's *Stateville Speaks*. In an extraordinary move, and much to the delight of human rights activists, Governor Quinn finally closed Tamms. Though he received some political bruises for doing so, ultimately he knows he did the right thing. Having made the drive just once, I must say the logistics in doing so were very, very difficult. While the visit itself was lovely, the isolation of the prison was just that, isolating. Though it created a few jobs in an impoverished community, surely the burden created for the families of loved ones outweighed them. We can only hope that the transfer of the men at Tamms will allow them much more interaction with family and friends so they may begin to heal from this segregation gone awry.

While most applauded the closing of Tamms, some were perplexed at the closing of Dwight. Having old structures, needing expensive repairs roof repairs and mold remediation, fiscally it may have made sense. However, having the most programs and a close proximity to family and friends, we can only hope that the women from Dwight will prosper at Logan. Though these prisons were closed, nothing has helped lessen the overcrowded prison system, though we hear it is happening, though slow as it is.

There have been a lot of rumors swirling since the closures. There have also been many complaints prior. Has the heat at Pon-

tiac been fixed? Has the electric at Menard been addressed? Is there limited recreation at Lawrenceville? And, have the full meals at Graham been re-instated? Please write us and let us know how you are all doing in your new facility. While there is a lot of great legislation pending and lawsuits filed, they too take an extraordinary

amount of time to move through the system. Still active are the fans, typewriters, soy, medical, Burge cases. Kudos for new legislation introduced by Senator Patricia Van Pelt and Representative Art Turner Jr. to up the ante for companies that hire those with criminal records, very bold and so critical in helping to secure a job on reentry.

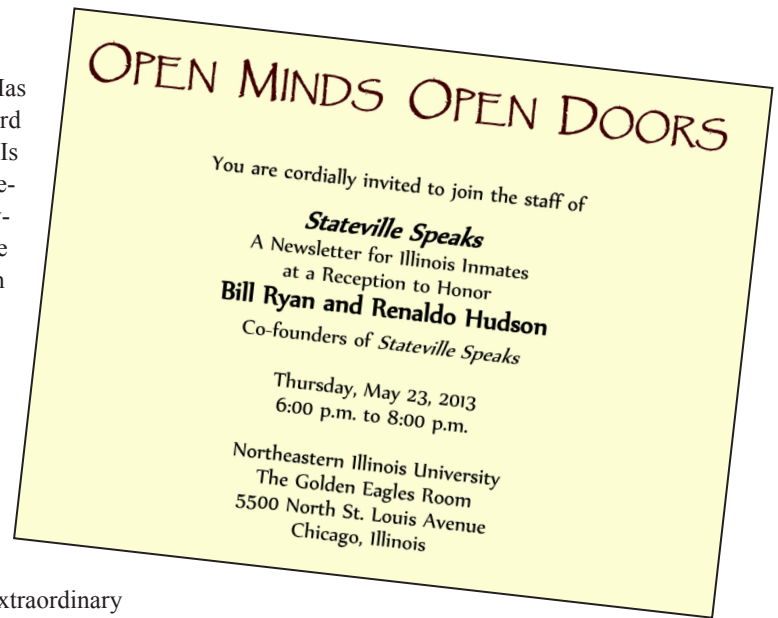
We are also receiving complaints regarding poor communication due to language barriers and issues from those with disabilities, particularly hearing impairments. Let us know.

Please note, due to the closures, heavy movement and lost *Stateville Speaks* Newsletters, we are extending the essay contest until August 1, 2013. We have a talented readership, so please keep them coming.

Special thanks to Justice Studies Department Chair Cris Toffolo for her total commitment to *Stateville Speaks* and changing the injustices of our system, even if it's dauntingly one student at a time.

As always, please let us know what is on your mind, and we will do our best to publish your work, answer your letters and keep you apprised of anything that may affect or interest you.

Thank you for your readership and as always, thank you for letting us be your voice.



I APOLOGIZE

by Robert West

If ever at any time my words or any nuances of mine have offended you I am sorry for that and please, forgive me!

I wish for you to know that I'm striving to contain my problems and unfortunately I am still struggling to keep my sanity while aware of

- a) my elder sister is a dope fiend;
- b) my younger brother being a recluse schizophrenic;
- c) my sister prostituting herself for crack-cocaine;
- d) my ailing Mother suffering from geriatrics, mental issues and she's pulling her hair out with worrying;
- e) I'm stuck inside a penitentiary cage for 60 years @ 50%;
- f) the rest of my family doesn't want anything to do with me because I burned down all my bridges by stealing from them;
- g) I've damaged many relationships by either my treachery or sabotage;
- h) while I was free in society I betrayed God;

- i) I've been locked out of the world now for over two decades with no interruptions or support;
- j) I haven't seen, smelled, or felt a woman in over twenty calendar years;
- k) every moment in every day I'm battling my greed, lust, envy, pride, laziness, idolatry, and
- l) in nearly a half a century I haven't accomplished anything with my life, other than self-destruction.

So if there are some words or ways about me that you might have misunderstood, I then accept responsibility for all of my faults.

Again, I extend to you my humble apology, and I ask that you please take into account that my nuances arise because I lose focus of my pain sometimes. I am deeply sorry if you felt I had been unfair to you at any time, or if my character defects offend you, I'm just disgusted with myself, not you.

For more essays and letters, see page 8.

ORGANIZATIONS TO HELP THE INCARCERATED

We at *Stateville Speaks* try to be a source of information, especially to those incarcerated, where it is often the most difficult place to obtain any information. Living in a country that touts itself as having a free and democratic society and claims to be superior to other nations, we often wonder if having a government that imprisons more of its own citizens than any other nation is indeed something that makes us “number one”? Perhaps equally unconscionable is by the sheer design of the prison system, once in the system, it’s almost impossible to stay out. In addition, most of the funding goes directly to warehouse people in prisons, instead of to help those with education, programs and needed services. That’s why when we run across organizations such as the New Saints of Humboldt Park and CURE IL we take notice.

THE NEW SAINTS OF HUMBOLDT PARK

The New Saints of Humboldt Park began in 2003 as a small group with a goal of helping people who had alcohol and drug problems. This group was originally called the “Twelve Step Program”. Under the direction of Rory War (advocate) and Enrique Pardez (program director) this organization has continued to grow and be a positive influence in both the community and the people they serve.

Rory, one of the founders of the Twelve Steps Program, realized that while helping people with their substance abuse problems, that they had other underlying reasons for that behavior. A large problem was the lack of community and family support to ex-convicts, thus making it that much harder to succeed. This lack of support was a great contributing factor for the recidivism rate because of the cycle of failure and return to substance-abuse, which ultimately returned many back into prison. Seeing the need for support, the Saints decided to expand their organization by taking people in the community to go see their loved ones who were incarcerated. The idea of the name comes from a man who called them Saints for traveling far just to help the prisoners in jail by bringing their families to visit them.

The Saints choose the Humboldt Park community because they saw the need for their services and supported them in implementing them. The first seven years were supported by receiving monetary aid from ex-convicts and a few companies. They are now beginning to receive donations from many more “mainstream” individuals and companies who are aware and appreciate the work that this organization does.

The Saints want to be clear that although

some of those within their organization have been incarcerated they are contributing hard to help other people to also take control of their lives. They believe in transformation and they want to be able to provide assistance



to former convicts by giving them the resources to have a second chance, and to build a better future for themselves, their families and community. The Saints primarily concentrate on helping area youth (with a focus on 17-24) since they believe that the youth are the future of our country. Thus far they have managed to open a center for youth that focuses on helping to keep young people off the streets and away from drugs and gangs. The center has many activities that run the gamut between weight training and boxing to gardening classes. One of the Saints main focus is to instill a new way of thinking by encouraging the youth to stay in school and heavily pursue their education to the highest extent.

The Saints have made the connection that many people who end up in prison are there due to addiction and domestic violence. Unfortunately, according to the Saints, much

of the domestic violence is further complicated by gang affiliations, leading to gang fights, so it is important that these youth understand the bigger picture. Many of the youth, though skeptical about being able to

move away from the cycle, work with the Saints who stay on them to change their mentality and to show them that they are the only ones that have power over themselves. Thus, if you control yourself, then no one has power over you, and you will not do anything that you shouldn't be doing. Some of the rules that must be met by the ex-offenders are that they have to be clean of drugs and report to them at least once week.

Enrique, an ex-convict himself, is a perfect example that you can change and stay out of prison. Enrique committed a crime at an early age of his life and was sentenced to 75 years. He was sure that he might never get out of prison. But, after spending 31 years in prison Enrique had an angel on his side, a law student at Northwestern University who decided to take his case and help him. Enrique has been out since 2008 and is embracing his second chance. And with his second chance he uses it as an opportunity to help those in. He encourages people to never lose hope, stating, “Hopelessness means expecting nothing to change.”

In addition to their work at the center, the Saints were very active in their opposition to Tamms Supermax and supportive of efforts to close it down. For more information, contact:

New Saints of Humboldt Park
1428 N. Western Ave.
Chicago, IL 60622

Thank you to Illinois Prison Talk (IPT) www.illinoisprisonstalk.com
for your support and dissemination of *Stateville Speaks*.

CURE ILLINOIS

Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE) is a self-described grassroots organization which originated in Texas in 1972 and by 1985 went national. Currently there are 43 state chapters, the District of Columbia, a chapter for Federal inmates and many international chapters as well. It is the largest criminal justice reform organization in the United States and the only one that is recognized by the United Nations (UN). Illinois is one such state that has its own chapter.

The mission of CURE is that "We believe that prisons should be used only for those who absolutely must be incarcerated and that those who are incarcerated should have all of the resources they need to turn their lives around. We also believe that human rights documents provide a sound basis for ensuring that criminal justice systems meet these goals." In an effort to understand the resources it offers its members, both behind bars and to their advocates, we sat down with the President of the Illinois chapter of CURE, Madeleine Ward.

One of the goals of CURE is to provide our members with both the information and tools to both understand the current criminal justice system, but to advocate for changes as well.

Stateville Speaks: Tells us more about CURE and why our readers should be interested?

Madeleine Ward: Simply stated, a major goal of CURE is to provide our members with both the information and tools to not only understand the current criminal justice system, but to advocate for changes as well.

SS: Please explain what information or tools CURE offers its members.

MW: If you or your loved one is incarcerated, you feel helpless. The incarcerated have little control over their day to day lives. Prisoners are the most isolated segment off our society. A prisoner even loses his right to go to the bathroom when he wishes. It is easy to be discouraged and most families are afraid to get involved because of repercussions to their loved ones. I know, because I have been there. I also believe that if the criminal justice



system is to improve, we need to speak up about the problems. We treat animals better than we treat human beings. We try and address the problems at two levels. One is to address the individual inmate's problems, the other is to make systemic changes by strategic partnering, lobbying and letting our elected officials know about the problems to help illicit change.

SS: Tell us about the big picture and the overall objectives.

MW: We explain how to use the systems available to file complaints about legitimate concerns. Part of the problem is the lack of transparency within the criminal justice system. If the public knew they would not allow it to happen. Most of the public's only exposure to criminal justice is the news or TV shows depicting the most heinous crimes, all they want is to see the perpetrator punished. The truth is the vast majority of prisoners are just like the rest of the world, who either made a mistake or was unjustly convicted.

We advise loved ones not just to contact the prison administrator, but to talk with their legislators and ombudsman to be certain that they understand the human side of the problems. Ask their friends and associates to contact their local legislators. Let them know what is happening. Also, write letters, call or e-mail editors and challenge inaccurate reporting.

Remember prisons are a big business; more money is spent on the criminal justice system than higher education in Illinois. Vote: Do your part to elect leaders who understand criminal justice issues and support constructive policies. Join. Join your state chapter of

CURE. We need your voice. Volunteer to help out.

SS: What specific support services do you offer?

We are interested in the needs of individual inmates. We are well aware that if one person is having a problem several other people are usually experiencing the same issues. We are better able to address these problems if we are aware of them. We encourage you to write and let us know if you are facing any systemic injustices.

SS: There is both a national and a local chapter for both organizations. What does each of them do?

MW: We are in international organization with chapters in many countries. CURE International is recognized by the UN.

It is like many organizations, the state chapters are responsible for issues within the states systems; FEDCURE is responsible for Federal issues; the special issue chapters are responsible for the issues nationwide in both the federal and state systems. All our chapters operate under the umbrella of International CURE. We believe in "Freedom, Equality, Justice and Dignity" for all.

S.S. CURE has a very progressive attitude regarding the abolition of the sex registry. Can you expand on that?

MW: Officially, "CURE takes the position that sex offender registries be abolished. Present laws have rarely assisted in prevention of an abusive situation. Approximately 90% of all sex offenses are committed by a family member or close acquaintance. Recidivism rates of convicted sex offenders are less than 5%, certainly mitigates against the efficacy of the tremendous expenditure for the registries." Registration results in severe collateral consequences such as unemployment, homelessness, and often physical and humiliating attacks on registrants, their property, and families.

SS: We get so many inquiries from inmates about to be released after serving time for

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

IN MEMORIAM: DR. FRED “BOBBY” GORE

Dr. Fred “Bobby” Gore’s life is an inspiration to all who knew him and knew of him. He fought for the end of the oppression and poverty that affected so many blacks in the Chicago area. He was a leader, spokesman and community activist. His life was marked by the achievements he made in fighting for the youths of Chicago.

Bobby died on February 13, 2013 after a long fight with lung disease.

Bobby Gore was born May 11, 1936 in Chicago to Fred Gore Sr. and Susie Franklin Gore. He was the third child born to this union. His parents and his brother Jesse Gilmore, preceded him in death. His sister Josephine Gore survives him, as does his devoted wife Etheal Dixon-Gore and his sons, Frederick, Marvin, Eric and Donovan and his daughter Etheal Jr.

Bobby attended Medill Elementary School and went to Cregeir High School. Despite the fact that he had polio as a youngster, Bobby excelled at baseball while in high school and received several awards for his athletic ability. Bobby went on to achieve a higher education, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Doctorate of Divinity.

Born into a segregated world, he experienced the disparities between the races, keeping black people separate and unequal. Born with a fighter’s instinct, Bobby would not accept the status quo. The inequities led him into the role of a community activist. He took on the issues of equal pay for equal work, fair housing and quality education for all.

Seeking ways to inspire civic change, working in the only arena for black activism, Bobby joined a gang. As a member of the Vice Lords, Bobby sought to right the wrongs that plagued the black communities. However, the negative connection that surrounded community gangs would not lend itself to the good that Bobby hoped to inspire through his affiliation. He therefore changed the focus and moved from a forerunner of the Vice Lords to founder and leader of the Conservative Vice Lords.

Bobby’s life was about saving people. His work with CVL would transform the lives of youths. His work with CVL included extensive change in Chicago’s Lawndale community. He inspired youths to trade in violence for education. He stood side-by-side with some of our most prestigious leaders, including Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Bobby had the intelligence, charm and dignity to make substantial changes in the community. He guided the younger generation to clean up their neighborhoods and to learn the importance of work. He



received awards and accolades from businessmen and women, politicians and even the police.

He committed his life to the salvation and redemption of those who had gone astray. In 1981, he went to work for the SAFER Foundation, helping ex-offenders reintegrate into society. From SAFER Foundation his work was acknowledged by awards for Employee of the Year in 1982 and Manager of the Year in 1984; he also received an Award of Appreciation for his contribution in advancing the role of blacks and other minorities in the Chicago construction industry. An Appreciation Evening for 35 years of Community Service to the Greater Lawndale Community was a high point in his life. The Torch Award was given to him in recognition of his active participation by the Westside organization.

His work will live on through his accomplishments. He was featured in an article in the Chicago Tribune Magazine section and in a book and movie about the work he did in Lawndale. He was featured in a documentary about gangs in Chicago that continues to be shown on the History Channel.

CURE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

sexually based crimes and are in need of resources, especially housing and programing. Does CURE offer any resources or referrals?

MW: Like most states, sadly no. However we are willing, to the best of our abilities, to help anyone in need, talk to us--we are listening. This is a perfect example of the need for a strong membership. Without it, it is impossible to talk to Legislators about instituting effective changes for those incarcerated and trying to reenter society. Believe it, there is power in numbers. CURE IL would like to harness the latent powers and resources of isolated inmates, friends and family members to help institute that change.

Membership dues are flexiable.

For more information or to join CURE contact:

Madeleine Ward
1911 S. Clark, Unit D
Chicago, IL 60616
Email: madeoday@gmail.com

Subscribe to *Stateville Speaks*.
See Page 11 for details.

THE CHOIR

by Kevin A. Williams
(piano/keyboards for The Choir)

Kasper Robinson, an African American, incarcerated at the Pontiac Correctional Center, is a visionary. The son of a preacher man and well versed in the Scriptures (from Genesis to Revelation) can only do what he was called to do; be a servant to everyone.

It was the year 2004 at the Pontiac C.C. where Kasper had an epiphany after he made strict observations of the inmates, volunteers, staff and I.D.O.C. officials and determined that there was a need to promote spiritual edification in such a way that would fill a void and penetrate the hearts of the people. He formed "The Choir" (an a cappella Christian singing group) with the help and approval of the Head Chaplain Eldon Kennell. Now the Choir would be no ordinary choir. The Choir had to be special, and special it is. Kasper diligently sought out individuals that were innately gifted and filled with the Holy Spirit. So what makes these choir members special? Their 100% dedication to service with love.

When The Choir made its first debut before the congregation at the Sunday service to sing their very first song, everyone listened



intently. The singing began and when the last note sung, there was much applause and shouts of joy. The Choir was a success. It was a new day for Pontiac Correctional Center. The life changing impact that The Choir has made on the inmates, volunteers, staff, and I.D.O.C. officials is beyond comprehension.

We walk, talk, and think in love here at Pontiac because of The Choir.

Since The Choir's inception, it has been advancing greatly. With a prophesy spoken from our brother Randle Jarrett, a Caucasian American, incarcerated at Pontiac Correctional Center, elicited the help from a Pontiac I.D.O.C. official, Officer Anderson to purchase The Choir's first Yamaha E303 piano/keyboard with microphones and speakers. Since then The Choir has received by way of donations additional piano/keyboards and other musical equipment.

Over the years, The Choir has lost some members who have moved on to do their circumstances, but have remained steadfast in the principle and teachings of The Choir's values and talented new members have been added to take up the ranks.

The Choir is a family and a family that lives by definition of true love will always remain a family. Before we depart each other we always say these words, "Family on three. One, two, three, family! HALLELUYAH-WEH!"

CONDEMNED TEEN

by Cory Gregory

Where is the line between juvenile and adult? Current Illinois laws distinguish it as 17 years of age. The United States considers it to be 18. According to psychological experts the brain does not mature into adulthood until our mid-twenties. The reason this question matters is because an alarming amount of juveniles serve an adult sentence- sentences that are often an unbelievable amount of time.

For instance, my incarceration began when I was only 17. Though I was considered a legal adult in court proceedings, in all other matters of society, I was a juvenile. The sentence I serve is 45 years, for first degree murder. Once my "outdate" arrives, I will be 60 years of age.

Mine is not a rare occurrence in the prison experience. A majority being so young that anything under 55 years means guaranteed re-entry into society. But where will they go upon release? Going from their parent's home

to prison, how will they provide for themselves? A better question might be how will they know how to take care of themselves?

This class of prisoner never experienced being an adult, except in court. They never partook in the various obligations of the average citizen, such as paying bills or buying groceries, most never experience employment. In short, they are doomed for failure before they get outside the gate.

Several statistics have shown high success rates in rehabilitating young offenders, violent or otherwise. Yet in Illinois these children begin their sentence in a maximum security prison where no programs exist. The ability to transfer to a lower security prison isn't even possible until they are 20 years short on their sentences. Does it make sense to send those with the highest potential for rehabilitation to a place where none can be had? Everyone I come across believes they should

be punished. They are sincerely remorseful. They also feel they were abandoned and that a second chance should be afforded them. They'll be released on day, regardless of legislative change, but shouldn't our society treat their children better- the rest to the world does, why not America? Why not start in Illinois?

If the appropriate measure is an adult sentence, okay. However, the sentence should reflect the fact that these young people will be back in society, thus allowing them a better chance of success. They should be housed in lower security facilities, so they can take advantage of programs while they are still at the age of the highest effectiveness. It makes no sense to wait until after the window of opportunity has ended.

Many may consider this notion to be special treatment. However, the court took special

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ESSAYS, INSIGHTS & POETRY

THE HEALING HAND

by James Groleau and Steven Ramirez

Echoing in eternity, are the choices that we make,
no one really caring, for it's not their mistake.
Always reaching out for something we have got to feel.
While clutching to the things that we thought were real.

Home is not home when it comes to a living hell,
struggling from within your own prison cell.
Mouth open, screaming without making a single sound.
Every passing minute is a chance to turn it around.

One act affects us all, for together we are connected.
Love they neighbor...no one else is to be rejected.
Broken promises to yourself, becomes your own betrayal.
But the healing hand breaks free from the deepened nail.

By asking forgiveness, soon you too will see.
How spiritual blindness no longer surrounds thee.
Forever untrusting in self, I can now relate.
Obeying all the commands of the only one who creates.

Faith can now be seen, in your soul, through the eyes.
Faith can now be heard, from the heart, through your cries.
No more broken promises, no more days of betrayal,
because you asked for the healing hand to come forth from the nail.

THE TIME HAS COME!

By Fernando, a.k.a. Fernie Zayas

The time has come; for us, "All Human Beings," to really do what needs to be done, so that we can truly become one. To prepare the way, so that our Brothers and Sisters, future Generations won't be led astray. By our every words, actions, examples not only talk the talk, but walk the walk, say what We mean and mean what we say, doing what's right and in the light every step of the way, exactly like it was meant to be, being there for each other in times of need. As we think about it even more with each and every passing day, may our true love for each other be here to stay, in every exact meaning of the word and way. The teachings of life, true character education, the peaceful solution in every situation will always be the better way, as we as one learn and develop in it so that things won't be the same. For the better of us all we must diligently strive to make it be, whatsoever needs to be done to make things better for you and me, for everyone we love to avoid all unnecessary catastrophes. By having each other's best interest at heart, the way it was from the start, in such ways that could be plainly seen, that through true love is the only way that it's going to be, for true brotherly, sisterly love will always conquer all, so let's be there to catch each other in case if we fall, so that we as one will always stand tall. In making it ♥ what it was intended to be, us being one family throughout all eternity.

LETTERS

My beloved friend,

How are you and your family doing? Fine I hope. I need your help. I am currently housed at Pontiac C.C. I have notified I.D.O.C. officials about this heat, no one responds. We prisoners have no heat blowing out the vents this January.

The West Cell House on the odd side Gallery (1, 3, 5, 7 and 9) has no heat and it is extremely cold here, especially at night when the temperature drops. They have heat blowing out on Gallery that includes 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10. Why does the odd Gallery suffer with no heat? A work order was put in to fix the blowing odd side. When I am in my cell, I have my coat on to stay warm, two pair of socks to keep my feet warm and my long johns on to stay war. Still, I am cold unless I stay under my blanket.

This is cruel and unusual punishment. Heat is to be turned on nationwide by October 25th, but in January, we have no heat blowing out of on the odd side of the West Cell House. I utilized the grievance process. I wrote the Warden at the Chief Administrative Office and he never responded. When the sun is out, it's warm, when it goes down, it's cold.

Your friend.

To the Editor in Chief of Stateville Speaks,

I am writing this letter because I am hoping you will publish this in your next newsletter. The I.D.O.C. has been overcharging its inmates at the institutional commissaries since 2006 (published by the Illinois Auditor General's yearly report) by 7%, and just within the last month and a half, has lowered across the board all prices by 7%.

The problem facing most inmates is they believe a class action lawsuit should be filed, but actually this, as an avenue foreclosed to all of us. The remedy is to individually file in the Illinois court of claims to recoup your money as cited in the following two cases:

Tenny v Blagojevich 2011WL 3726281 (decided August 25th 2011)

Jackson v Randle 957 N.E. 2d 572 (decided September 9th 2011)

I hope you will light a path for all incarcerated individuals to help navigate their way through the court system.

Thank you.

Send us your letters for publication!
See Page 11 for address.

THE WINDOWS OF THE SOUL

by La'Shawn Wilson

Look into them carefully,
and watch my true self unfold.
Why and how's this...
because, I expose to you, my soul.

The truth has never lied...no!
And the heart of them always tell,
nothing is hidden inside of you...
and this I know too well.

Look into them again...carefully,
this is a form of respect.
The truth is being told directly,
and what you see you'll never forget.

Oh, allow me to mention,
through yours, I can see you too.
Hold back all you like with words,
your eyes will tell me the truth.

All is not explained here,
yet my story is being told.
The next time you seek the truth, observe!
the windows to the soul.

ONE MORE BREATH

by La'Shawn Wilson

All these years have passed me by,
but I'm amazed at what I have left,
more patience and tolerance, sane and
sound mind,
I do it all with the strength of breath.

Once upon a time, I admit I was blind,
never thought about necessity, or need,
something so natural, unchangeable and fixed,
it's essential to live and a must that we breathe.

Prime example: Hold your breath for a while,
possibly as long as you can,
soon as the oxygen regress from the brain
the body will fall where it stands.

Now compare that scene to similar situations,
that's meant to cause you death,
you'll find there's always life,
where there's a will for...one more breath.

AN ODE TO FREEDOM

by Harlis "Anthony" Woods

You are the lucidity of my dreams.
In my darkest hour your name is
that which I scream, because you
are the cream of the crop.

The only one at the top of
my infatuation which...will...
never... stop.
You put hope on my mind,
and joy on my tongue, you
are the one for me.

I wish I could make you see how
your alluring presence puts me
in ecstasy. So ecstatic your love,
I have to have it, but with my troubled
ways our relationship is very sporadic.

Only rarely do I glimpse the full
potential of your glory.
Do you mourn me? Experience
tells me no, because you know
there are others who will show
you the respect you deserve.

Unlike me, with this...confined...
time I continue to serve. My
hypocritical actions have me sounding
absurd, but don't swerve, because I need you.

I'll give up without you, but with you
I'll give life my all. You are my Queen of
my Kingdom. I serve you, the love of my life,
Freedom.

A PLEA FOR HELP

by Michael Wyatt

There is no surprise that there is a travesty of within the Illinois Department of Corrections when it comes to rehabilitating human life. Men and women that are incarcerated today are no longer looked at as human beings; it is the total opposite. We are frowned upon and labeled by society and certain staff members within I.D.O.C. as hopeless garbage whose lives cannot be rectified.

Little do they know, if given the opportunities and the right resources, a sizeable percentage of inmates could turn their lives around for the betterment of themselves and their communities when they reintegrate society.

There are those in authority who are cognizant of our current situation, but are either unable or unwilling to repair the flaws. We must remain hopeful in our quest for positive change within I.D.O.C., but we cannot remain taciturn; we must voice our concerns and needs in a respectful manner so that our lives can have meaning and purpose. Life is a precious gift from God, and is not meant to be wasted and thrown away.

Convicted felons need to know that their lives still have value and meaning, and they can take a turn for the good. A large percentage of the prison's population is uneducated; that is one of the reasons the recidivism rate is so high. So when an inmate is released to society unprepared, what kind of outcome could be expected?

SHAME ON YOU

by Arkee Chaney

Shame on you Mr. Dope Man for poisoning our people's minds,
shame on the rock you crawled from beneath, a rock infested with slime.
Shame on you, Mr. Congressman, for lying through your teeth,
pretending to represent the people, but filling their lives with grief.
Shame on you Mr. Preacher Man, for concerning yourself with greed,
pretending to represent God, while ignoring the people's needs.
Shame on you Mr. Officer, for shooting that kid in the back. It was
You that said he tried to run, but you shot him 'cause he was black.
Shame on you Mr. Grocery Man, for selling us bad meat, prices so
High we're about to die, but you know people got to eat.
Shame on you Mr. Slum Lord, can you be so bold?
Laying back in a nice warm house, while others freeze in the cold.
Shame on you Your Honor, on your bench you sit so high.
Thinking that you're God Almighty, condemning people to die.
And shame on you too, "Ms. America", so called land of the free,
because when you started talking that talk you sure wasn't talkin' 'bout me.

INMATES, STAFF HINDERED BY LANGUAGE BARRIERS

by Katrina Gardner

At the end of the 2011 fiscal year there were 48,978 inmates in the custody of the Illinois Department of Corrections. Many are from different cultural and language backgrounds. This language barrier presents a problem in effective communication among inmates and the prison staff. The risk factors include violence, negligence, unnecessary disciplinary action, etc. Overall, language barriers seriously affect the quality of life while incarcerated.

Imagine that an altercation erupts and a Spanish-speaking-only inmate is injured. The injured inmate is taken to the medical unit for treatment. The Spanish-speaking individual tries to explain what happened in his native language, while medical staff treats his wounds. He tells the medical personal “Soy alérgico al yodo,”* but there is no one on the unit who understands Spanish. Within minutes the Spanish-speaking individual dies from an allergic reaction.

My interview with a recently paroled ex-inmate gives us an idea of how language barriers cause a lack of communication while incarcerated. The ex-inmate expresses that they “are not provided with a policy of proper protocol when another inmate comes in contact with a non-English speaking individual.” And there are no alternatives for inmates who do not speak English. According to my source, the prison staff depends upon other inmates to translate, even in emergency situations. He says that individuals who are not as proficient in English are all housed together and “left alone to figure out for themselves the rules.” When asked if he was concerned for his safety when having a non-English speaking cellmate, he replied, “Yes, because there is no way of knowing what he is feeling or thinking since I can’t understand what the other person may be saying.”

Another newly released ex-inmate relates a similar experience. He asserts he has witnessed that there are no “designated housing units for inmates who don’t speak English, mostly because of over-

crowding.” When asked what alternatives are available for inmates who cannot speak English, he responds, “I did not see a great many alternatives available to non-English speaking inmates other than finding another inmate or staff member who spoke their native language.” He also claims he witnessed that the prison staff most of who were Caucasian, “dealt with disturbances involving non-English speaking inmates as professionally as they did English speaking inmates.” But he also expressed the need for the agency to have staff on hand trained in any language that is spoken by the resident population to avoid confusion and help the institution run smoothly.

The lack of effective communication can be costly and unpleasant for everyone involved. Miscommunication builds mistrust within interpersonal relationships, creates hostile environments, and affects the safety (i.e., medical treatment) and well-being of the inmates and

prison staff. The Illinois Department of Corrections needs to implement an effective policy to bridge the gap of language barriers. Furthermore, ignoring the problem and “turning a blind eye” leaving non-English speaking inmates to figure out the rules is unacceptable.

The Illinois Department of Corrections should provide a designated unit/facility for individuals who are less proficient in English and recruit prison staff who are equipped, educated, and ready to converse with inmates in their own native language, whenever possible. Furthermore, the agency should provide vocational classes to individuals who are less fluent in English, and eventually move them to general facilities after learning Standard English. This will ensure that the agency is providing proper medical treatment and decreasing the chance of violence, negligence, and unnecessary disciplinary action. It will also be invaluable to them as they re-enter society.

* I’m allergic to iodine.



LANGUAGE BARRIERS MAKES IT TWICE AS HARD

We at Stateville Speaks read and review a lot of legal material. Having no legal background or law school affiliation we often rely on the kindness and patience of reform minded attorneys to help us with some of the legal “translation”. Realizing the complexity of the language of the law we are keenly aware just how daunting it can be for someone to fully understand the consequences being discussed during their arrest, hearing, detainment, trial and subsequent incarceration. We could not therefore, imagine how many of the growing numbers of new immigrants with limited English, family support or financial resources cope, should they find themselves on the other side of the barbed-wire.

Currently, as of the June 2011 fiscal year end, there were 2993 (6%) foreign born inmates in Illinois and 6524 (13%) Latino/ Latina inmates incarcerated. While they may be inclusive or exclusive of each other, it is still a significant amount of people that may have trouble navigating not only the language of the law, but the English language as well. They are becoming the fastest growing group of newly incarcerated. Many feel this is due to the language barrier and lack of legal resources to assist non-English speaking people.

Currently, the I.D.O.C. facilities websites have no listing of classes for English as a Second Language (ESL). Repeated calls to I.D.O.C. were unanswered.

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Publisher: Cynthia Kobel

Editor: Gayle Tulipano

Consulting Editor: Bill Ryan

Editors

Donald McDonald, Aldwin McNeal
& Anaviel B. Rakemeyahu

Assistant Editors

Stanley Howard, Jeanene Clay,
Vincent Galloway, Renaldo Hudson,
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Women's Issues

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Cartoonist: Arkee

Layout & Design: Sal Barry

Mailing Address: Send submissions
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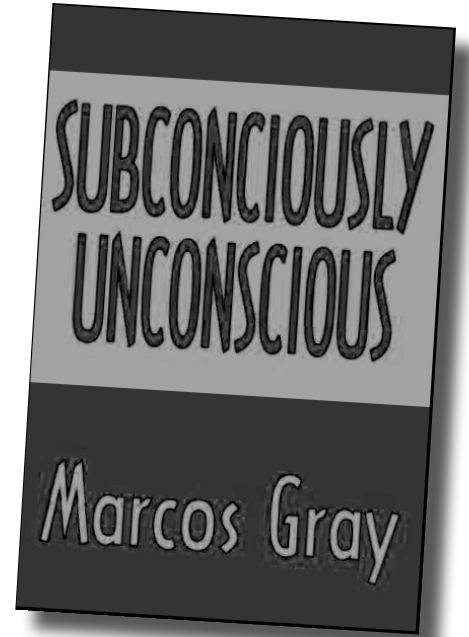
Statesville Speaks
c/o Justice Studies
LWH 4062
Northeastern IL University
5500 N. St. Louis Ave.
Chicago, IL 60625-4699

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SUBCONCIOUSLY UNCONSCIOUS: A BOOK, BY MARCUS GRAY

We would like to give a shout out to Marcus Gray and his book, *Subconsciously Unconscious*. It is an extremely stimulating and fascinating read that lays out many of the systemic issues that denies "Native Africans" prosperity, not just economically, but sociologically as well. But beyond laying out the problems the author, a product of this restrictive environment, offers solutions as well.

In the author's own words, the book "deals with the consistent ways in which politicians abuse our trust, the legislation which decimate our communities and an educational system which teach our children half-truths at best." This book is available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble and E-bay. It is also available by Midnight Express Books, P.O. Box 69, Berryville AZ 72616. The cost here is \$9.95 plus 3.00 for shipping and handling. Published in 2011, it is very current and well documented. I am delighted to kick off my summer read with this book.



TEEN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

The responsible thing would be to sentence them an appropriate amount of years to allow them the chance of becoming a productive citizen upon release. So-called "juvenile life" is until the offender is 21 years of age. Maybe Illinois should have a different sentencing guideline for those under 21 in the adult system. Maybe I.D.O.C. should have different placement guidelines. They will be

back in the world, regardless, so shouldn't they get a fair chance?

EDITOR'S NOTE: Though the Federal Courts ruled that the Illinois law regarding mandatory life sentence for juveniles is unconstitutional, as of press time, they have yet to institute any changes.

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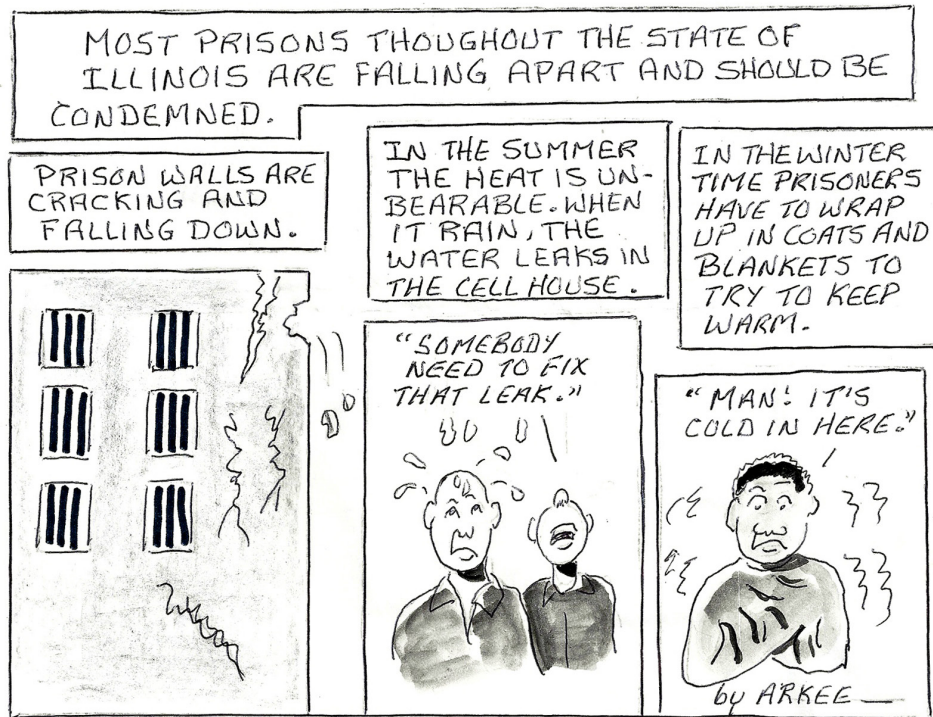
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POLITICAL 'TOON



BY ARKEE

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