

STATEVILLE SPEAKS

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE • SUMMER 2014

IS REAL RELIEF ON THE WAY?

By Gayle D. Tulipano
Stateville Speaks Editor

On July 15, the first hearing by the Joint Criminal Justice Reform Committee was held. The 10 member committee, co-chaired by Rep. Michael Zalewski (D-23, Riverside) and Sen. Michael Noland (D-22, Elgin) includes Sen. Kwame Raoul (D-13, Chicago), Sen. Patricia Van Pelt (D-5, Chicago), Sen. Matt Murphy (R-27, Palatine), Sen. Dale M. Righter (R-55, Mattoon), Rep. Kenneth Dunkin (D-5, Chicago) Dennis M. Reboletti (R-45, Addison), Rep. John D. Anthony (R-75, Morris) and Rep. Art Turner (D-9, Chicago).

The purpose of the Committee is to make recommendations on how to “safely” reduce the ever-increasing prison population in Illinois and thus reduce the extraordinary cost that accompanies it. Most of the questions asked were regarding the “numbers”, specifically with the number of prisoners presently incarcerated, most prevalent categories of offenses, their rate of recidivism and the unsustainable cost to continue this current pattern of incarceration. In addition to knowing the current numbers, the Committee is ultimately asking for possible solutions to interrupt the almost certain revolving door back into the prisons and instead find effective ways to facilitate permanent re-entry into society.

Those who spoke before the Committee and the overflow crowd included the Illinois Department of Correction’s (IDOC) Director Salvador Godinez, Kathy Saltmarsh, executive director of the Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council, Jon Maki, the executive director of the John Howard Association, Cara Smith, the executive director of the Cook County Jail and Raymond Rose, the undersheriff of Lake County.

Some of the statistics discussed by the speakers gave tremendous insight into the state of incarceration in Illinois. The number of prisoners in Illinois is currently at 48,851,



but according to the IDOC it is still under the capacity level of 50,307. Data also revealed that it cost approximately 60 million dollars each year to process inmates, often the very same lower level, non-violent class 3 and 4 felony inmates. They comprise almost 50% of those who do recidivate, thus, the system reprocesses many of the same people over and over again.

While there was no shortage of numbers being discussed, something perhaps more telling was beginning to emerge. Dunkin, rhetorically asked how many African Americans were incarcerated in the state (40% of prison population), while asking how much of the state’s population that they comprise (13%). There was no mistake in his intentions of wanting to go on record with these alarming rates of what appear to be a racial disparity in sentencing. Apparently, justice is also slow, as Smith testified that over 90% of those in Cook County Jail are still awaiting a trial.

Godinez fielded questions about the slow release of inmates under the current Supplemental Sentence Credits (SSC). He made it

clear though releases were slow, they were cautious, noting that nobody, especially elected officials, were tolerant of any release errors. Godinez also noted that one of the largest problems was the systemic lack of programs, stating they were categorically absent for both short-term and long-term prisoners.

We also heard more than once, the need for community based programs as an alternative to prison and the need for better re-entry programs for those getting out. As Raoul stated, “...release is only as good as the re-entry.” This will mean we will have to spend money to save money on programs for drug and alcohol rehabilitation, along with mental health and sex offender treatment. Investment will be needed for both youth programs and to create jobs in communities that have none.

Turner went on record to state his support of HB3668, noting the high cost of incarcerating elderly inmates, who while may have done a serious crime in the past, as a whole, have a very low rate of recidivism. However, Reboletti expressed a much different senti-

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Hope...Redemption...Change

FROM THE EDITOR

WELCOME AND THANK YOU for reading another edition of Northeastern Illinois University's Stateville Speaks. While reading this edition it may appear that Illinois prisons may really be on their way to reform. The first potentially exciting event was the introduction of the new elder bill, HB 3668, which passed out of the Restorative Justice Committee this spring. However, thus far it has not been called for a vote, as there are not enough votes to approve it, at this time. It appears that the non-supporting legislators do not trust the system that is currently in place. For proponents, HB 3668 is simply a way for those long-term/life-term prisoners to get a possible-potential, second look at release, by our current Prison Review Board (PRB), only if a rigorous criterion is met. Opponents see this as a get out of jail card, thus not trusting the system we have. I might also add that

it is glaringly apparent they have not been down to the PRB any time lately.

Though the Illinois Legislature has not quite embraced HB3668, it is still alive and has been actively discussed, among many other ideas, in the Joint Criminal Justice Reform Committee, a committee formed to address the growing concerns over our current ever-expanding, costly and non-complying (remember the little part of the Illinois Constitution about "restoring the offender to useful citizenship") justice system.

Since going to print, there have been two hearings thus far, in which many people, from all sides of the justice system have given statistical and personal/anecdotal testimony. While these hearings could not have come any sooner, it is still too early to know if this is about genuine change or about genuine rhetoric, the kind we are so used to, especially

in an election year. We hope they at least offer more transparency of the prison system so Illinois voters themselves may make informed decisions on the direction our state should be going. We will continue to follow these proceedings.

In the meantime, our mail from inside our 25 adult prisons, statewide, share many of the same themes - lack of programming, lack of medical and emotional/psychological help. Additionally, there is little, if any help preparing for re-entry whether it is a simply acquisition of a state I.D. or housing, especially for sex offenders, which is virtually non-existent.

Another persistent theme has been regarding the use of Administrative Detention (A.D.). What is it and what is its purpose? What are the rules governing its use? Who decides who gets it and who doesn't? Does

SEE EDITOR PAGE 13

BRAVO, JON BURGE, NICELY PLAYED

By Gayle D. Tulipano

In a decision handed down by the Illinois Supreme Court, former Chicago Police Commander and current Butner Federal C.C. inmate Jon Burge will be allowed to keep his police pension. In the ruling by Justice Anne Burke, the Cook County Court was incorrect in allowing Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan to intervene in the pension rulings of Burge. According to the ruling it does not diminish "the seriousness of the crime" but that the intent of the legislation clearly follows the decision handed down by the Board. It was in that 2011 4-4 pension tie vote that allowed the Burge to retain his money.



Former Police Commander John Burge

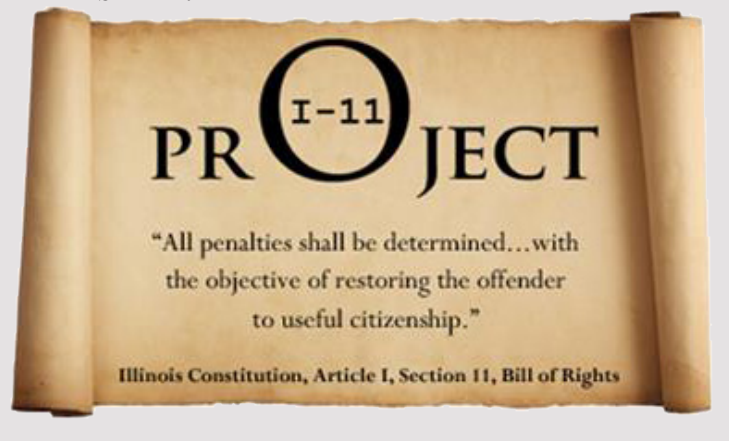
Apparently, according to the law, one may indeed benefit from their crimes, as long as they are backed by their very strong union. Thus, Burge will be living comfortably on his roughly \$4500 a month pension upon his release, while forgotten by many are the countless victims of Burge still languishing in prison. How many of our readers I wonder, will have a pension waiting upon their release? It also appears that the procedures or laws governing the pension board need to be changed to stop the next round of corrupt police from also grifting the system.

Finally, while the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that they were just following the law with their decision I can't help but notice the ruling was announced on the 3rd of July. That seems like the perfect day to announce the golden parachute awarded Jon Burge. ■

UP-TO-DATE REVIEW OF HB3668

As you may know, the House Restorative Justice Committee met in Springfield on March 25 and voted HB 3668 out of committee and recommended its passage by the full House. Testifying in support of HB 3668 were Bill Ryan, prison advocate and founder of Stateville Speak, Chuck Schiedel, a retired State Appellate Public Defender, and James Chapman, President of the Illinois Institute for Community Law & Affairs. In all, there were 44 proponents of the bill at the Committee hearing, and 4 opponents. The Committee vote was 4-3 in favor of sending the bill to the full House for debate and final vote.

As the legislative session moved to a close, it was clear that HB 3668 did not have the necessary votes (61) to pass the House. **Therefore, the bill's sponsors decided not to bring the bill up for a vote AT THIS TIME.** ■



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STATEMENT BY BILL RYAN, AUGUST 2014

Note from Bill Ryan: “I am not sure what will come out of this Committee, but as the saying goes, I am cautiously optimistic. The members are genuinely concerned about the current state of affairs in our prisons and jails. There are differences as to how to address them, but that is what democracy is about. I applaud the Committee for taking on the huge challenges facing our justice and prison systems.”

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,
I congratulate you and the committee members for accepting the challenge of reforming the state’s approach to crime and punishment.

My name is Bill Ryan, and I belong to several groups, including the Illinois Institute for Community Law, the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression-Chicago, and Project 1-11. I am a co-founder of Stateville Speaks, an Illinois prison newspaper now in its 10th year. I also served as Chair of the Illinois Death Penalty Moratorium Campaign.

We are reaping the harvest of tough on crime policies: overcrowded prisons, inadequate medical care, overwhelmed mental health services, strained budgets, and continued violence on the streets. In your discussions, I urge you to think big and consider large questions about the kind of society we want to live in. Mass incarceration is not a partisan matter. It is a human crisis.

This committee can be beginning of a historic effort to fashion a criminal justice system driven by fairness and democratic principles rather than fear and cynicism. Now is the time to bend the curve toward smart, effective, data-driven policies and laws.

In the movement to abolish the death penalty, Illinois became a national leader. The same concern for equal protection and social justice that made visible wrongful convictions and a host of procedural failures in the capital system now motivates us to reflect on what is happening to men, women, and teenagers in prison.

In Illinois, there are about 49,000 people in prison and another 25,000 on parole. About 60% of people released come back within three years. This is a failing system.

It costs approximately \$23,000/year to house a person in general population. (This figure does not include medical or physical plant maintenance.) The national average



for the cost of an elderly person in prison is \$75,000/year. In our state, taxpayers pay over 1 billion in annual operating costs for prisons, plus another billion for medical costs in a ten-year period.

In the past twenty-five years, the Illinois prison population doubled. Where will we be if it doubles again in twenty-five years?

Many states, including several red ones, are reducing prison populations. My home state of Kentucky had the highest incarceration rate of any state a few years ago. This is being reversed now. Other states are developing community-based alternatives, such as, Georgia, Kansas, Texas, and New York. The state of North Carolina has closed four prisons. In your packet, there is a summary of what conservatives are saying and what states are doing.

It is essential that we remember that most people in prison are not there for violent offenses. And while illegal drug usage is fairly consistent across racial groups, black Americans are far more likely to end up serving time for a drug offense.

Part of the charge of this committee is to develop solutions that address racially discriminatory outcomes in the criminal justice system. Such a change cannot come soon enough. About 49% of the people imprisoned in Illinois are African American and 13% are Latino. In other words, 62% of the people under correctional supervision are from communities of color.

It is also important to keep in mind that

10% of imprisoned people are women, and that women are being imprisoned at a higher rate than men—and going to prison for lesser offenses.

We need to have smart sentencing laws that provide security, create savings, reduce prison populations, and conform to democratic ideals. I recommend that we take the following actions:

1. Implement the Elderly Bill
2. Divert nonviolent offenders to alternative programs
3. Invest in re-entry
4. Create responsible early release options
5. Provide training in diversity and peaceful conflict resolution to DOC staff

1. I urge the committee to consider carefully the lives of elderly people in prison and support the provisions in HB 3668. During the past 20 years I have come to know many elderly men and women in prison. I consider many of them good friends. Many have reformed themselves and present no threat to anybody. There are others who should not be released. I am convinced that a human being is more than the worst thing he or she has done.

HB 3668 allows prisoners who are age 50 or more and who have served at least 25 years to apply for parole. Because of stress and bad medical care, both prior to and while in prison, a person’s medical age is generally cal-

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A NEW UNDERSTANDING

By Dawn Larsen, Assistant Editor

I recently completed an internship with *Stateville Speaks* and during this time I began to realize how much I did not know about the Illinois prison system. I learned that the public does not have access to the prisons, nor does the Illinois Department of Corrections provide any information to the public. Therefore the media is the main source of information about how the prison system in Illinois operates. I don't believe everything I hear from the media, as it's oftentimes difficult to figure out what is fact from what generates "good ratings" because the media is skillful in their portrayal of crime and those who commit crimes. While driving one day I heard a politician speaking on the radio and because of my new understanding of how the criminal justice system operates I was able to easily hear the discrepancies between fact and innuendo. This State Representative used what I believe was intended to incite voters and I had no choice but to write him (see letter below). Unfortunately, there has been no response from him as this issue of *Stateville Speaks* went to press.

April 6, 2014

Representative John M. Cabello
1941 Harlem Road
Loves Park, IL 61111

Dear Representative Cabello,

I am an Illinois resident who would like to raise a few questions about a commercial I heard this morning on WBBM radio concerning Illinois prisoners. Factually, the commercial was incorrect and I feel that it is important to bring this to your attention as thousands of people, maybe more, listen to WBBM and I do not think it is fair for them to be misled. The commercial stated that prisoners are coming up for "parole" in Illinois annually and it is creating undo misery and hardship for the families of the victims. I can not imagine how horrible it must be for these families and I sympathize wholeheartedly, however my concern is on a different topic completely. The concern that I have is the fact that "parole" was abolished in Illinois in 1978. Period. That is the law. The only Illinois prisoners who qualify to be considered by the Illinois Prison Review Board for



parole are those referred to as "C" prisoners, who were sentenced prior to the law change in 1978, therefore have currently been in prison for at least 36 years.

According to <https://www2.illinois.gov/idoc/aboutus/Pages/faq.aspx#03>: "C-Numbers" refers to those inmates who were convicted to indeterminate sentences prior to the implementation of determinate sentencing in 1978. C-numbered inmates periodically appear before members of the Illinois Prisoner Review Board to plead their case for parole. Other inmates serve a specific amount of time and are released after serving a percentage of their sentence." It's difficult for an outsider to know the exact number of "C" inmates left, though I have heard it ranges from 250 to 340, a small proportion which I don't think was pointed out in the commercial. The commercial sounds as though the parole board is being bombarded with large amounts of criminals looking to be released which factually is not the case. The only people with access to the Prison Review Board for "parole" are the set amount of prisoners sentenced prior to 1978.

I attended the Prison Review Board meeting on March 27, 2014 in Springfield and I would like to point out that not one of the 13

inmates was given a 1 year set or the opportunity to be considered "annually" as you stated in your commercial. Twelve of the thirteen received either a 3 or 5 year set, with one prisoner, receiving a 2 year set as the Board decided he should be psychologically evaluated for potential mental health issues. None was granted parole as is often the case. The prisoners ranged in age from 55 to 75, predominantly though, they were in their 60's which statistically has a very low perpetrator or recidivism rate.

My objective is not to minimize the pain of the victim's families. As I stated, I attended the most recent Prison Review Board meeting so I heard the grisly details and horrific stories of innocent people being victimized by these prisoners. However, it is important to me, as a resident of Illinois, that factual information be put forward to the public, especially by members of the Illinois Congress who I believe have a responsibility to make sure their statements are factual and not inflammatory as the commercial I heard this morning was. I appreciate your time and I look forward to your response.

Best regards,
Dawn Larsen

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT COMES TO LOGAN

By Janet Jackson & Paula Sims

“Wheelchairs, Walkers and Canes to the Front” yells the correctional officer. Sixteen women, some with attendants, move slowly to the front of the line. They are in various stages of infirmity, some young and some gray haired. This is the North wing of Unit 6, the ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act – Unit. The brainchild of former Women and Family Services Director Deb Denning, Unit 6 is the first of it’s kind in the State of Illinois to not only house those who need help on their own unit but to also house trained attendants to help them on the same unit. Attendants go through a 5 week program for training which includes training on how to push a wheelchair, assist those with walkers and canes, proper terminology and a sensitivity class.

The ADA program started at Logan CC in June of 2013. Currently it is under Patrick Keane, the ADA Advisor for the state with direct control under Acting Warden Locke and Counselor Jessica Sullivan. Unit 6 is not considered a program unit but rather a program on a unit. Acting Warden Locke and



former Warden Sheryl Thompson have allowed the women a few extra privileges such as a small library and a tutoring program. On the many icy, snowy days of this winter while it was hazardous for the disabled to leave the unit, meals and sometimes medications were delivered. The library proved its worth, allowing the women a means of entertainment from the bleak existence of confinement. The library is staffed by one of the unit’s women as a volunteer. Tutoring is done on a volunteer basis as a positive way of giving back. Attendants, patients, students and tutors all

participate along with inmates from the South wing. Everyone was thrilled to see students progress towards their G.E.D.

Many of these women would benefit from the passing of HB3668. Decades of incarceration have taken a toll. Medication lines run 5 times a day, 7 days a week with about 30 women from Unit 6 going each time, some 2 and 3 times a day. The cost to continue this is enormous. Blister packs of medication of all types, inhalers, wheelchairs, walkers and canes abound on the ADA unit. Despite their infirmities the women who need assistance are sweet and spicy. They show pictures of their children and grandchildren. They cook, paint, tutor, read and sing. They laugh, cry, tell jokes and demand respect. The ADA unit and the program has had its ups and downs, yet it still continues to bless the many who need it. ■

Editor’s Note: *Stateville Speaks* would like to know if Unit 6 at Logan includes inmates with mental disabilities or age-related dementia. Please write and let us know.

WRITER ON THE MOVE

Congratulations to Stefan Crisbasan on the publishing of still another book, *Freedom from Inside*. A talented and prolific writer, he has published many other works, including *Reverberatii Interioare*, *Jesus My Life* and *My Love for You*. We invite him to share his work with us, here at *Stateville Speaks* and again, applaud his talent and his efforts. ■

BLACK HISTORY OBSERVANCE AT PINCKNEYVILLE

Congratulations to Minister Donzell Digby and Anthony Jones on their efforts in organizing a celebration during this year’s “Black History Month” at Pinckneyville C.C. The program included a history of the observance, a biography of educator Carter G. Woodson, along with a selected reading of his work. Also included was a presentation of the winners of a poetry contest. The event was dedicated to the late Dr. Margaret T. Burroughs. The theme based on the African Proverb that “Without History we are without identity.” This is truly a good message for us all. ■

PRISON BY J.C. RODRIGUEZ



LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD

The Joint Criminal Justice Reform Committee will continue to hear testimonies, ideas and suggestions, on the “state of incarceration” through much of the remainder of this year. They are scheduled to make recommendations by mid-December 2014. We strongly encourage anyone with a vested interest, especially those currently in prison, or those with loved ones in prison, to be heard. Unfortunately, many people, even some legislators and senators are unaware of just how the criminal justice system works, especially with regards to our draconian prison system. Educate them, educate all of us. To help you do so, we have included contact information for members of this committee and again, we encourage you to do so. ■



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Cartoon by Anonymous

FROM OUR READERS

As predicted, the alternative to the personal typewriter confiscation to allow offender access to typewriters is failing! There are those of us trying to meet the October 25, 2013 deadline to file a clemency petition, attempting to be heard before the end of the Governor's term. Because such petitions must be typewritten we must utilize the law library typewriters. Problem is this is not easily accomplished!

First one must request to get to the law library and often the lists are full from those who requested long before. Second, because typewriter supplies (ribbons & correction tape) are no longer sold on the inmate commissary, if we do not still have our own supply there is a chance there will be none supplied in the law library.

It's been over a year since the confiscation of all personal typewriters and the administration has yet to allot proper management to keep up with the order of said supplies. So what we have at Stateville is the one who is in charge of the budget for school and library supplies passing the buck with respect to including typewriter supplies in her budget. Unless the operations warden (K3-3) directly tell her to order typewriter supplies they will not get ordered!

Additionally due to IDOC's administrative provocation excessive lockdowns has been the result. Though I've been given the opportunity to access the Law Library typewriters once a week for approximately 1 1/2 hours and able to borrow a typewriter ribbon, due to successive lockdowns for five straight weeks and counting none of us have been allowed access. Many of us have not been able to borrow a ribbon and have not been able to type since July. This problem is solved if IDOC would allow the more than willing Swintec Typewriter Corporation to modify the security concerns and give them back to us.

Until litigation on the illegal confiscation of the typewriters is decided upon, it is urged that we all continue to have paper trails on how we are suffering from it. That is to say, by grievance through the counselor, Grievance Officer and A.R.B. Sure we don't expect the department to justly police themselves. But by sending this paperwork to Uptown People Law Center, Brian Nelson we are supporting the litigating that is fighting to get our typewriters back. Peace!

Ricky Robinson



Envelope Art by Raymond Simer

Dear Justice Studies,

May this letter find you all in good health & spirits. The Stateville Speaks (Winter 2014) was very good and "From the Editor" and "Lesson Learned" by Sheila Martin showed us, the voices inside, that people are listening to our cries and will aid us in our struggle....

My hope is the young people in the inner city will see that prison is big business and they are the commodity needed to keep it going. I have been placed in what is called Administrative Detention (A.D.) which is a form of segregation. Once they closed Tamms Supermax they placed all the men in A.D. around Illinois and out of state. I am here because of my past, which can be the only reason. I haven't been doing anything but writing and trying to change what I can by speaking out.

The Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him) said when you see a wrong change it. If all you can do is speak on it do that. If I wasn't in prison I would be in the street speaking to young guys and girls about that street life. It ends in two places more often than not, prison or the graveyard. We need some programs for them and a way to get the word to them about prison. I am sending a poem for Stateville Speaks. I want to thank you all again and I look forward to hearing from you. I wrote Bill Ryan last week and told him how much I enjoyed the Stateville Speaks. Take care...

Peace!

Vincent Galloway

GREETINGS TO ALL ILLINOIS INMATES

Please consider me if you are seeking legal assistance. I am a criminal defense attorney with more than thirty years of experience, first with the Cook County Public Defender and then with the Illinois State Appellate Defender. Because I have retired from both of those agencies and am now in private practice, I am in a position to offer my services to anyone who has a meritorious case. My experience includes several years as a supervisor in the Cook County Public Defender's Homicide Task Force and more than eight years as a staff attorney with the State Appellate Defender's Death Penalty Trial Assistance Unit. I am particularly interested in and well versed in cases involving scientific evidence.

I am happy to review your case at no charge and, if it appears that I may be able to help you, for a reasonable fee, I will pursue whatever remedies may be available. Contact me at:

Allan R. Sincox Attorney at Law
820 West Jackson Suite 300
Chicago, IL 60305
(708) 953-2616

(Unfortunately, I cannot accept collect calls.)

ARE YOU DOING YOUR PART?

By Anonymous

Most of us were thrilled when HB3668 passed through committee. It was a giant step. But it remains a step in a long, long road. Are you walking the walk? Are you talking the talk? Or are you sitting on the sidelines expecting to be carried along by your brothers and sisters? Are you a burden or a blessing? It's going to take a lot of work to get this bill passed and if you expect progress, roll up your sleeves and get to work.

First – Talk up the bill to anyone you can. Show your support for your brothers and sisters. Pass the word.

Second – Ask your family, your people, friends, their friends, church groups and other organizations to call, write or e-mail the representative and senators in their area to

support HB3668. We need a majority of 61 votes in the House of Representatives to get this passed and currently there are 30. If you don't know who the legislators are in your area, go online to Illinoisissues.vis.edu for a listing or ask at the law library. A simple letter, phone call or e-mail from a voter can make a difference.

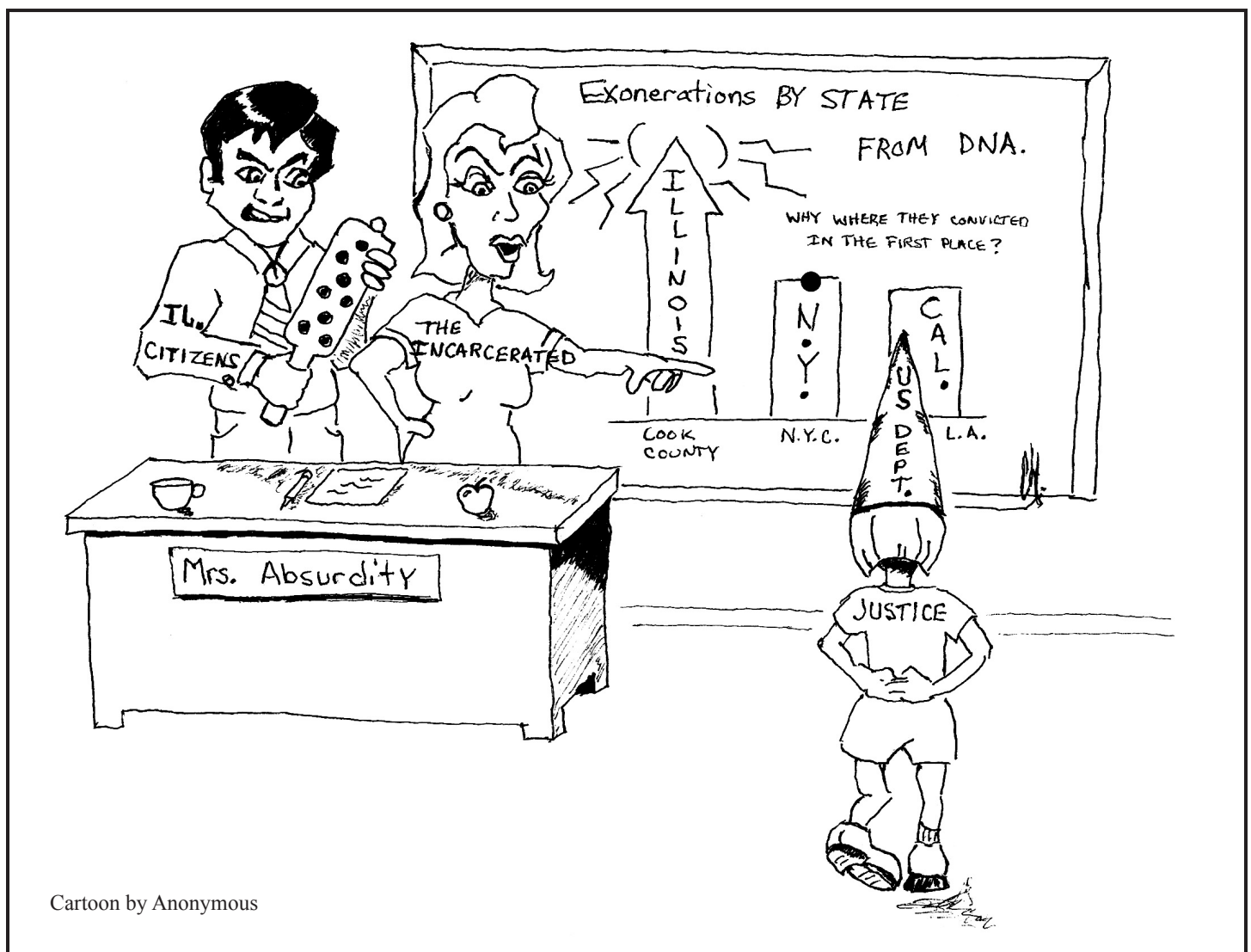
Third – Encourage people that have internet to go online to sign the petition at change.org. Once you enter the site go to petitions, then HB3668. This petition is sponsored by Freedom within Prison Ministries will be sent to legislatures once 3000 signatures are accumulated.

Do you want out? I know I do. So stand up! Speak up! Reach out and may you'll get out! ■

SINGLE BULLET THEORY

By Joseph P. Barr

There was only one bullet in the gun. Isn't it funny how fate tells us who's the one. We all have one person out there- the love of your life. And if you are lucky enough to meet that one person, you make her your wife. Once you meet her, you're shot through the heart, there's never another, no matter what happens, death, divorce, infidelity, no one will come close. You will always love her So you were shot, with the single bullet from the gun. No matter how you tried, you could never run. Fate brought you together she was the one. ■



Cartoon by Anonymous

ISOLATED THOUGHTS

By Vincent Galloway

Isolated thoughts
Separated from others
Kept by itself
Cuffs & chains
Around the brain
Isolated thoughts
Behind the glass watching you
family grow older & die
A hug would be worth more than gold,
behind iron doors everyone is bold

Isolated Thoughts

Hate books, won't think!
Insane to the enter brain.
A lot of pain, our thoughts
Travels 930,000 times faster
than the sound of our voice

Isolated thoughts

Voices all around, men in
Pain. The sound of rain
madness comes from all sides
Schizophrenia, post traumatic
stress disorder

Isolated Thoughts

See the sun shine in the top
of your yard cage.
Mad men on all sides
jumpsuit down turd in hand
duck a bomb in flight – madness!
Wrapped-up.

Isolated thoughts

wolfin to the beat, summertime
heat. No G.E.D, ADHD, S.T.G.
D.O.C. high off stress.
Books banned, 48 laws no
power. It's part of the art of
war; Isolate the thoughts ■

THE SYSTEM

By Andrew Matthews Jr.

The system seems to operate without a care in the world. It's quick to pull out a gun and shoot carelessly. Within a blink of an eye grievance forms seem to show this standard. Inmates write about problems that staff does on a daily basis. Taking inmates property! Institutions selling certain items on commissary and then when an inmate transfers to another institution he or she is not allowed to transfer with these items. When mail is going out a person has to buy high priced write-outs (pre-stamped envelopes) in order to write home. When you send out a blank envelope with a money voucher it is rejected. Staff members pass out the mail when they feel it is ok on certain days. There are always complaints about short staff but for some reason there are staff members somewhere relaxing and chattering, doing nothing. All you need are a few young people who can get this job done, and then there would not be any problems. I know everything is not perfect, but come on, if it was me or other inmates breaking rules what end of the law would the weight be on. Grievances are for the staff purposes. Cover up the silent gun. ■

DREAM

By Manuel Malave

I was just thinking last night at Pontiac SEG and it made me reflect back to when I was in Stateville C.C. Prison is what they call it, but I call it the "Cousin of Death". You begin to die mentally. Your existence becomes irrelevant to family and so called friends. Therefore, your emotions begin to deteriorate because your mental state of mind is unstable. This in turn leads to a lack of physical fitness.

The judicial system is a double edged sword which is designed to destroy a person in every possibly way. First, we are sentenced to prison, and then we are released. We can't find employment because of our background; this why so many people end up going back to jail, which leads our kids going to prison because they have a lack of proper guidance.

THE NEW KKK

(KIDS KILLIN' KIDS)

By Erwin Daniel

I hate you, I hate all day, I hate the way you dress, pants off your ass that's just a mess, good for me bad for you, now you can't run when I put this lead into you.

I don't sneak no more I stand out front don't have to blend...the hood run amuck.

Ya' I hate you why not you our kind don't like each other, don't need no truck not even a rope, trees out dated the block is my pot luck. No cops in sight here I go again I see you sucker used to be my friend.

KKK seemed to be on strike they don't have to worry I'll take the little one's life. Shoot and shoot my eyes will be closed whoever I hit God only knows. I can get up to 3, 4 even 10 at a time hangin' in front of the liquor store selling drugs for a dime.

Kill and kill that's what I'll do until us black men start being true.

(Stop the killing of our own kind) ■

Send us your letters and essays for publication.
See page 15 for address.

LEGITIMATE TACTICAL SHAKEDOWN OR PROVOCATION AT THE STATEVILLE CORRECTIONAL CENTER

By Rickey Robinson-El

It costs the state taxpayers money to conduct a statewide tactical shakedown on a maximum security institution. No doubt shakedowns will be necessary in a prison. But are they necessary when the correctional officers' union, (ACFSME) use it to excite a reaction from the prison population? Their union would have to believe that the spike in violence is directly contributed to the closing of the Supermax Tamms Correctional Facility. But that's just it, there is no spike in violence, at least not at the Stateville Correctional Center. In fact, the number of staff assaults this year (2013) are no higher than the past few years.

Here you have it, August 17, 2013, a Stateville Correctional officer, one who is both a tact team member and a Int. Officer with a sketchy provocative history was assaulted. Stateville and IDOC's answer according to ABC channel 7 new is a two week lockdown to conduct a costly statewide tactical shakedown. A statewide tactical presence consists of tact team members which are correctional officers that dress up in tactical clothing, including an orange jumpsuit, commonly nick-

named "orange crush" or "The Power Rangers" that are from several institutions. These officers from other central and downstate institutions are bused in each day to raid different Stateville cell houses on the 7 am to 3 pm shift. With officers belonging to all these shifts all get paid for overtime, i.e. time and a half and double time, especially if some of these officers are called to tact team duty on their days off.

Officer assaulted sounds a lot worse than it usually is. Being spit upon, bumped into or having water or any substance thrown upon, all classified as an assault. The point is this officer was not seriously injured his attack was not systematically orchestrated and nor was there a weapon involved. There have been officers who have endured attacks much worse and though lockdown was deemed warranted for investigation a tactical not to mention a statewide tactical shakedown was not warranted then. But because of this officers I.A. and tact team status a costly statewide tactical shakedown on Stateville was conducted disguised as a security concern.

Additionally what is not know is that these

tactical teams from other facilities who don't want to be there often damage or throw away offenders property and refuse to write shakedown slips (that must be done according to policy), to which many take to the court of claims to be financially reimbursed. Which costs the state even more money!

It is my sincere hope that the Stateville offender population see IDOC's actions for what it is and do not play into it giving their union more reason to say "see how dangerous it is since the closing of Tamms!" It's a whole other story how Tamms was financially bleeding the state dry with countless constitutional violations but we won't get into that here.

The question is to the taxpayers of the State of Illinois do you really believe that the allocation of you dollars by IDOC as state here is justified? Or should some noise be made to the general assembly to put pressure on the Governor to shake up his IDOC Administration because the current administration doesn't seem to care much about cutting cost. Legitimate tactical shakedown or provocation? Investigate to find out! Also see the costs! ■

GRIEF

By Jason Adkins

On the day I was sentenced to forty years in prison I made a promise. I promised, to the people that I love, I would not let the hardships of prison cause me to grow angry, bitter, or hate the world. A decade later and through agony greater than I thought I could bear, I find myself in a constant battle to keep my word.

No explanation is needed for the obvious pains of prison (being separated from all of your loved ones, losing your job, dangerous environment and even confinement). Being able to participate in simple activities is no longer taken for granted. Sometimes it's the small things that cause the greatest pain. For example, few things are as reassuring as a loving touch or as therapeutic as a hug, or as passionate as a kiss. Human touch - it's significant in nurturing a child and it remains a necessary all throughout our lives therefore the loss of this is equally weighted.

SEE GRIEF PAGE 12

A LIFE SENTENCE

By David N. Bailey

The possibility and reality of dying in prison never really occurred to me. I actually gave the subject very little thought until several years ago, when a very close friend of mine was killed

I had already spent approximately eight years at this particular facility, and had heard all the tales concerning individuals being killed and the old who helplessly faded away with time. Nothing could have prepared me for the death of one who I had grown to know so well. The reality of seeing him just lying there draining away touched the innermost depth of my soul.

I never thought that serving a life sentence really meant just that - doing a sentence until death came your way. I had always imagined that you would either be released or perhaps at the most would die of old age, as I had known to have happen. Not to die in your early thirties, with so much of life still wait-

SEE LIFE PAGE 12

IN MY OWN WORDS

By Antonio Jackson

We all have a voice that needs to be heard. And right now I'm asking for your help in making sure the right ears hear mine. At this current time I'm incarcerated. In fact I've been here in jail since the age of sixteen. I'm now thirty five and soon to be released.

In May 2015 I will be placed back into the "free world" with a round trip ticket to come back to jail. I wouldn't go as far as saying that the system is designed for that but the odds that we must defeat in order to maintain a humane state of mind is very close to be unavailable.

Two out of twenty may overcome those odds, but the other eighteen are either killed or placed back in jail for what we call "trying to eat".

Please don't hear me wrong! There are a lot of things that we can change about ourselves, but the one thing that we can't change is our description. And for the opportunities that

SEE WORDS PAGE 12

THE CORNER

By D. Brown

This corner tells stories of many lives.
Where damaged egos & casualties abide.
The inhabitants of this corner are lost.
And must find their way home.
Foreign to mother's love & accustomed to things that are wrong.
Late nights & early mornings bounded by cold steel & idle promises.
Every other day to be escorted off the premises.
As rainfall assaults the asphalt; another man has encountered his downfall.
Only to be blown effortlessly with the wind.
This man has been apprehended, at the hand of a deadly sin never to be seen again.
Now the corner lives still, even in the heat of the night.
The streetlight burns, as a mother mourns her begotten son.
And a child's mother is abandoned with life's hardships.
She has lied to her lover; another man has met her lips.
This corner has seen it all; but tells no secrets.
This corner holds many riches but intends to keep it.
Some move on never to return, as others stay put never to ever learn.
It was hard growing up in Henry Horner.
And one never learned to steer clear from the corner. ■

A TEAR AND A SMILE

By E. Snead

I've been away from the scene for awhile
I am back with "A Tear and A Smile"!!
Obama's hair has more shades of grey
Republicans wouldn't have it another way
Chicago has closed many public schools
Students ask why abide by the rules?
If many are called yet so few chosen
For help I yell yet your feet frozen!!
"A Tear and A Smile" in my eye on my face
This marathon, this sprint, this rat race!!
Why do we show little to no gratitude?
We demand money order with attitude!!
"A Tear and A Smile" we keep intact
Is this fiction or matter of fact?!!
Don't know where I'm going or where I've been
I agree to let the games begin!!
Through muddy water I spot dry land
A cold shoulder I get minus helping hand!
Escape from this reality, try as we might
After the high, there is no relief in sight!
To the higher power we must be devoted
Have my concerns been duly noted?
In my eye is "A Tear and A Smile" on my face
Tattoo says love Mom all over the place!!
In the street we run where the night falls
Stateville Speaks from behind prison walls!
Continue to carry yourself with grace and style
Always room for "A Tear and A Smile" ■

GRIEF, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Coping with the death of loved ones has been my ultimate challenge. My daughter was the hardest one to deal with. She passed away shortly after my arrest. A year later my grandfather died. Then my father passed away. My mother felt terrible delivering the news to me. She died a year later.

I am just one of many convicts to lose one, some or all of the people they love. For us there is no funeral to attend, no family to mourn with, not even a comforting hug. Forging forward while hiding our pain and controlling our emotions, is our closure. No grief, for grief is an emotion and emotions show weakness. Predators pray on the weak.

The wretchedness of prison desensitizes to the core. We endure an incredible amount of pain in our lives. The experiences harden us to a degree rarely seen, even in the most battle-tested warriors. Yet, my promise remains. ■

LIFE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

ing to be lived.

He was to serve a life sentence also. To see a human life being terminated and the fulfillment of his sentence which had been imposed by the powers to be. This not only affected me to the core of my every existence, but most importantly, this brought the realistic truth finally home. That reality is that a life sentence could easily be paid in full at any given time.

What this does for me as an individual serving a life sentence is put reality in its proper place, and life in prison or elsewhere could end at any given moment; just as the sentence which has been imposed shall be served accordingly. I now realize that and make every effort to do every good deed humanly possible. As we should already know, it is only the Creator who actually knows when and how my sentence or for that matter anybody's sentence may end. ■

WORDS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

they say are available, we just don't fit the description. And no, I'm not talking race. I'm talking simply a distinctive look that one can't change without plastic surgery. And I know no one other than the rich and confused that's willing to take that step in order to feel as if they belong. Although we are qualified, if not over qualified for the jobs that are being permitted, they're still not for us x-cons.

We x-cons are being put in prison for just about anything other than breaking the law.

And the parole system is not helping us at all. In fact it is so paralyzing that guys would rather spend over half of their parole in jail instead of a full parole sentence on the streets (home)!

When you have guys that would rather be in jail, instead of being on parole living at home with family, SOMETHING'S WRONG. We need to be healed, helped, heard, and I'm reaching out. ■

Send us your letters and essays
for publication.
See Page 15 for address.

RELIEF, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ment over the potential release of elderly, considering it being another blow to a tough stand against crime, starting with the abolition of the death penalty and continuing with the closure of Tamms Supermax.

One of the most convincing testimonials came from Saltmarsh, after fielding many questions regarding the many years of IDOC statistics that she compiled, over the course of years. Simply stated, "...the current system is not working..." and as Saltmarsh said regarding our policies, they are "... based on extremes, not on averages".

However, it must also be noted that this current system is indeed working for some. For a second year in a row IDOC paid over 60 million dollars in overtime to its prison guards. According to the IDOC the overtime pay is an anomaly brought on by unexpected retirements and ever-expanding prison populations. It seems almost incredulous that IDOC themselves would be caught off guard with the increased prison population considering it has been steadily rising since the mid-1970's. It is also well known that under the current American Federation State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) contract that overtime pay is always paid to staff when they are covering co-workers who have called in sick, or are out on a leave of absence.

EDITOR, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

it really serve a useful purpose or simply an unregulated practice of control? We hope to discuss A.D. in more detail in future editions.

Two other cases that we will be following are the arrest of Illinois Representative Keith Farnham (D-43) and (former) Police Cmdr. Glenn Evans. Farnham, representing the Elgin area resigned shortly after his computers (both state and personal) containing child pornography were seized. Farnham, as you may recall co-sponsored legislation to toughen penalties against those that commit sexually based crimes against children. He officially resigned his position due to health reasons shortly before his indictment. He is currently on electronic home monitoring.

In another case, Police Commander Glenn Evans, of the Harrison Police District was relieved of his duties due to allegations of abuse and misconduct. Evans was accused of putting the barrel of his police revolver down the throat of Rickey J. Williams, who police were

In a statement released to the Illinois News Network on the day of the hearing, Governor Quinn expressed his appreciation to the Committee saying, "As I've made clear, it is necessary to take a comprehensive approach to public safety that includes stronger gun laws such as those included in the Public Safety Act, smarter sentencing reforms and greater investments in proven re-entry and diversion programs as I proposed in this year's budget".

While the Governor may "...salute Zalewski and the rest of the Committee", others fear that real reform is not what is on the horizon, but just another trade off. Keeping in mind that Zalewski attempted but failed to legislate longer mandatory sentences for gun crimes many prison reform advocates believe that the proposed gun sentencing legislation is still unofficially alive. The tradeoff might still be for a decrease of sentences for the non-violent, low level drug offense in exchange for longer, perhaps mandatory sentences for those involved in gun crimes.

The next hearing, on August 19 will allow for activist, advocates and concerned family, friends and vested citizens to express both their concerns and ideas. The timetable for recommendations by this Committee is expected to be released by mid-December of this year. ■

pursuing for allegedly possessing a handgun. While no gun was found, Williams' DNA was recovered from the barrel of Evans' revolver. We will all wait to see the outcomes of these cases and to see if justice becomes blind or just remains dumb.

Legal cases that we get a lot of mail regarding are about the fans, typewriters and soy. They, like many other cases are slowly moving through the court system. We will let you know as soon as something notable happens,

In the meantime, please keep your essays, letters, poetry and artwork coming. Let us know how we are doing, the good, the bad and yes, the ugly. Remember, while we welcome outside subscriptions and donations from all, subscriptions are FREE to inmates. We thank you for your honesty, and thank you for letting us be your voice. ■

IN MEMORIAM

Belinda Belcher of Uptown's Peoples Law Center passed away on July 1, 2014

I write this with a sad and heavy heart. We lost a great friend and an unwavering ally. Belinda had two speeds: go and go faster. She was a force to be reckoned with, a hundred pounds of TNT. Through her work at Uptown and in her personal life, she has touched more lives than any of us will ever know. I was fortunate to meet Belinda in 1998 after I was transferred to Tamms Supermax Prison. Many of us reached out to the larger and known law firms seeking representation for retaliatory transfers. Most did not respond. Those that did simply wished us "good luck" in taking on the 'giant', aka the Illinois Department of Corrections. In the end, this small underfunded law center in Uptown, with Belinda's insistence, took our case. She fought for us at every turn and on every level. With the help of this dynamo and a handful of others, many of us were released from Tamms. Now today, the place that irrevocably changed so many lives, in including Belinda's sits shuttered and decaying. She never sought or received the accolades she so deserved. She was content with being in the background. She was a soft and caring woman, yet an Irish warrior that would take on anyone and never backed down.

You will be tremendously missed Belinda. There will never be another like you. It was an honor to have known you. Until we meet again my friend, I love you.

In the struggle, Joe Sorrentino.

• • •

The entire staff at *Stateville Speaks* would like to offer their condolences to Pierre Jordan and his family on the passing of his brother **Namon Omar Jordan**, also known as BayBay. We also offer sympathy for the difficulty to properly heal and grieve while incarcerated.

• • •

We at *Stateville Speaks* would like to extend our sympathies to **Jason Adkins** for the passing of his daughter, grandfather, father and mother. Our sympathy is also for the struggle and inability to be unable to grieve through these painful losses. ■



RYAN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

culated to be about 10 years older than their actual age. Think 60.

Currently there are about 800 men and women that meet these criteria. (Twenty years ago there were 32.) If 100 of the 800 eligible people were to earn parole, the state would reduce expenditures by 7.5 million dollars.

After an initial screening by the DOC, petitions would be forwarded to the Prison Review Board (PRB) for a thorough review and decision. Families of victims should be included in any parole process and would be notified within 30 days of a petition being forwarded to PRB. The family would be permitted to submit an impact statement, attend hearings and, if desired, obtain an order of protection.

If release were granted, restorative justice could be presented as an option. All parties would have to agree to the process.

Some victims' families, supported by prosecutors, are opposed to any kind of sentence review. There are other victims' families who support the Elderly Bill. Please remember in your deliberations that there is no one voice for crime victims' family members.

Family members of victims suffer horrendous loss, and I can easily understand wanting a person who has done you terrible harm to never be released. This seems to me entirely human. But the purpose of a justice system is to provide some measure of objectivity and to weigh competing interests. The Greek figure of Justice is always represented with a scale.

We must ask ourselves if it is just to refuse to allow even the chance of release to people who have been in prison at least a quarter of a century and who, by all accounts, are no longer any kind of threat.

I will try to tell you a little about the people I know, but it would be far better if you heard from them directly. I am here because they cannot be here.

- When he was 19, RH committed a murder during a botched robbery while high on drugs. He had been left years earlier by his mother and father, could not read or write, and was gang-involved. After almost 30 years in prison, he is an ordained minister with a college degree. If released, he could go to a halfway house or if none were available he could live with me.

- DM wrote, "My husband was sexually abusing my daughter. I arranged for a contract killing. I am sorry and remorseful that I took the law in my own hands. I am a first

time offender. I have options with family to support me."

- PT explained, "I am a 67 year old female who has been in prison since 1979. I killed a person during a robbery. I am a first time offender. Not a day goes by that I don't think about and am sorry for the victim's family. I have numerous medical issues."

- JB wrote, "I am a 52 years old with 29 years in prison. I am first time offender. I was high on drugs, robbed a house and killed a woman. The police had not a clue who did this. I felt guilty and confessed. I am serving life. I am remorseful and do not feel sorry for myself. I have taken advantage of every program I can."

In the news, these people are made into monsters. I can assure you that they are not monsters. We must not respond to cruel acts with more cruelty. An eye for an eye, as Martin Luther King understood, makes the whole world blind.

2. A prison sentence should be used sparingly as part of a comprehensive effort to prevent crime and redress harm. Too often, rather than serving to protect the public, prison serves only to warehouse people struggling with addiction, mental disabilities, homelessness, histories of abuse and trauma, or unemployment.

A little bit of prison time tends to be a springboard for many more years inside. I honestly believe that prisons right now are doing more harm than good.

In our state, two common scenarios result in nonviolent offenders going to prison. The first occurs when the state "bundles" misdemeanors. In a recent article on WBEZ, Kathy Saltmarsh explained that the state can't imprison a person for a misdemeanor, but the state can and does bundle misdemeanors, which can lead to a person, with no violent record, going to prison.

The same article described a case in which Illinois spent \$50,000 to imprison a man who had stolen \$111. Surely, we can do better.

Secondly, people can go to prison for technical violations. Those on mandatory supervised release (MSR) – this is often called parole but parole was eliminated in Illinois in 1978—can be returned to prison for violating the terms of their release (such as, not showing up for an appointment).

In these situations, alternative sentencing can be far more effective and less costly than prison. Programs that provide quality guidance do a better job of moving people into

education and jobs than a prison sentence. The state should invest in programs that reliably measure outcomes and can be held accountable.

With savings from a reduced prison population, money could be directed toward crime victims' needs—toward helping to restore broken families and communities, toward good rather than harm.

Martin Luther King was right that "budgets are moral documents." And while he was confined in Birmingham Jail, King reminded us, "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

3. We need to invest in re-entry programs. An investment now will yield enormous savings down the road. Some people argue that we can't afford to change. Hogwash. We can't afford to continue what we are doing. We must invest in the practices that reduce recidivism. If we don't change, some federal judge is going to make us change.

There are plenty of successful re-entry programs, including religious ones, but all of them struggle with limited funding and overwhelming demand. They deserve more state support.

It is impossible to discuss prisons without discussing people with mental health problems. We need to provide more and better mental health services both inside and outside prisons. (Dwight had excellent mental health services. And Dixon has good services, but can only reach a fraction of the people in need.) Right now, the three largest providers of mental health care in the US are LA County Jail, Rikers Jail, and the Cook County Jail. Prison is not a suitable environment for someone who is mentally unwell. This kind of care must be available before someone breaks a law.

4. Criminal sentencing is complicated. I will not pretend to have all the answers, but I do know that too many people are serving too many years. We must create ways to make the sentencing process free from racial bias and proportionate to the offense. This will involve repealing or revising truth in sentencing statutes.

We have lost touch with what time means. There is a human element to all the numbers. I have witnessed plea bargaining when twenty, thirty, forty years of a person's life – and the lives of all the people who care about that person – are bandied about in bizarre and ar-

bitrary calculations.

We can shrug the problem off by thinking; don't do the crime if you can't do the time. The phrase is as catchy as it is misleading. It absolves us from asking key questions: Does the punishment fit the crime? Is every person treated the same during this process? What happens when a person "does time"? Are prison conditions in our state just and humane? Who is responsible for overcrowding, poor health, conditions that exacerbate or create mental health problems, and the possibility of wrongful death? There are several pending federal lawsuits regarding medical malfeasance in our state.

There are additional unintended consequences to excessive sentencing. When we send a parent to prison, we increase the likelihood that his or her child will go to prison. We also lower the life expectancy of every individual who spends more than a few years inside. A recent study by a sociologist at Vanderbilt determined that every year in prison reduces life expectancy by approximately two years. Prison takes time in more than one way.

In addition to reducing the numbers of people who go to prison in the first place, I recommend that good time be available to people convicted of violent and nonviolent

offenses. As part of this incentive program, the state can take better advantage of newly available risk assessment tools.

5. Lastly, we need to ask a simple question: Do we want people to get out of prison better or worse off?

DOC staff has a difficult and demanding job. Many people in prison present major challenges. However, prison culture fuels racial insensitivity and despair. We need to provide positive programs to those imprisoned and additional staff training on racial sensitivity and conflict resolution.

An excellent example of DOC programming is a unit dedicated to people with disabilities in the Logan Correctional Center. Other positive programs include fatherhood programs, peer counseling, Kairos, 4 R's, book programs, the Prison and Neighborhood Art Project. But these programs need far more support, and we need more programs, especially in education. By investing in people now, we create a safer environment for all of us tomorrow.

Again, I thank you for taking on this challenge. I have included in your packet letters from men and women in prison, most of whom I know. Please read these, and I urge you to visit prisons and talk with the people there. Thanks so much. ■

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BY ARKEE & SHAKUR



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