

STATEVILLE SPEAKS

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE • 2015 SPECIAL HOLIDAY EDITION

STOP WASTING, TEACH AND PROSPER

By Madeleine Ward

According to the Negro College Fund, “A mind is a terrible thing to waste.” According to the research by ProLiteracy low literacy rates cost the U.S. \$225 billion or more each year in non-productivity in the workforce, crime, and loss of tax revenue due to unemployment.

A conservative national cost of incarceration is \$76 billion dollars. Combined, the criminal justice system and illiteracy represent two of the largest drains of taxpayers’ dollars. The lack of basic literacy skills keeps feeding the cycle of both our welfare and criminal justice systems. The combined cost of illiteracy and incarceration in the U.S. is greater than the gross national product (GNP) of 200 other nations.

More than 60 percent of all prison inmates are functionally illiterate and according to Reboot Illinois, while Illinois’ population grew only 2.5 percent, the prison population grew 75 percent, keeping more people in a state of illiteracy. This is a burden that society and its taxpayers can no longer afford.

Penal institution records show that inmates have a 16% chance of returning to prison if they receive literacy help, as opposed to 70% for those who receive no help. However, an often-cited reason for not providing this education is due to lack of funding.

In April, 2015 HB 3884 was passed. It reads, “90 days of sentence credit shall be awarded to any prisoner who passes high school equivalency testing while the prisoner is committed to the Department of Corrections.” In



other words, inmates will have 90 days deducted from their sentences. The credit can be tacked on to any credit that was previously earned by someone under IDOC supervision.

Illinois cannot afford to pay for every prisoner in need of GED education, especially since the majority start from below the 4th grade, not at the 8th grade level. It takes longer to teach the GED,

“But what if Illinois could save taxpayers money without significantly affecting the current I.D.O.C budget? The answer is peer to peer education.”

Under §405.20. Adult and Juvenile Educational Programs (Last Updated: July 9, 2014): “... we shall educate those who need itNothing in this Part shall be construed to require educational opportunities for all committed persons...” However, Illinois is not required to provide GED education.

therefore the results are fewer graduates. Illinois Department of Corrections 2015 budget is \$1,310,498.5 billion dollars, but only \$16,545.7 million is allocated to education. (Management, 2015). The budget restraints are necessary because of the disastrous state of Illinois’ economic condition. Hence

the system continues to grow both in population and costs.

But what if Illinois could save taxpayers money without significantly affecting the current Illinois Department of Corrections’ budget? The answer is peer to peer education, inmates helping other inmates. This would increase the number of GED graduates, improve their chances of not recidivating, and reduce the population because of Good Time Credit. Peer to Peer volunteer tutoring could solve this problem by providing the necessary tutoring for those whose tests are below an acceptable level, while perhaps also allowing the tutor programs credits for their efforts.

The Federal Prison System and other states have had peer to peer education for over 10 years; per the Bureau of Justice, it has been very cost effective. Indiana’s program was voted best practices by Corrections.com, and won numerous awards.

According to Lois M. Davis, of the RAND research organization, “To address the diverse needs of non-readers and low-level readers, the literacy program uses one-on-one inmate tutoring a very important aspect of the program and perhaps its driving force is the dedication of its participants.”

“One of the bigger factors of the program is the one-on-one inmate interaction,” said Charles Jones, Supervisor of Education at Correctional Industrial Facility (CIF) in Pendleton, Indiana He continues that “It would be too costly to do this with staff, there are 12, 15 or 20 individuals tutoring on a regular basis. They get to see the inmates’ growth as they im-

SEE PROSPER PAGE 3

Hope...Redemption...Change

RELIGION DENIED



By Marvin Alexis

There has been a well-known issue throughout IDOC that has continued for decades and has not been addressed completely. The best way I can explain it is candidly: The right for a religious group to assemble for worship is law, even for those incarcerated. There are provisions for us to preserve and protect the safety of staff, security and inmates. It is detailed in length in the 20 Illinois Administrative Code (Section 425.60 – “Religious Activities”)

However, this directive has been manipulated and enforced biasly by a lot of correction facilities toward religious groups ideology. You will find Christianity and Orthodox Islam religious services in every facility throughout IDOC, but religious groups such as African Hebrew Israelites, Moorish Science Temple of America, Rastafarian, Nation of Islam and Nation of Gods and Earths for example will not be found in but a handful of facilities, even though the federal courts and government has recognized and acknowledged said groups as religious organizations. Where a facility such as Hill Correctional (a Level 2 Medium-Max facility) promotes the congregation of these services with no incident whatsoever, a lower level facility such as Dixon Correctional refuses to allow regularly scheduled services for these groups.

Their excuse is “You must have an outside volunteer to come in and conduct your services, there can be no inmate conducted service, base on (unexplained) security reasons. They try to shield themselves behind subsection (e) of the 20 I.A.C. Section 425.60, which states “commit-

ted persons shall be prohibited from assuming a position of authority or leadership over other committed persons. This does not preclude committed persons from actively participating in religious activities.” But they exclude and ignore the following subsection (f) which gives an

“The right for a religious group to assemble for worship is law, even for those incarcerated.”

exception for said groups: “Religious activities for which religious program volunteers or chaplains of that particular faith are unavailable on a permanent or protracted basis may be permitted (committed persons can conduct services) if the following conditions are satisfied:

1) The committed persons submit written verification to the facility chaplain that they attempted to locate and secure the services of religious leaders or faith representatives from the community and that such persons refused or were not approved to conduct religious activities;

2) Security, program or chaplaincy staffs are available to attend and supervise the religious activity.

3) Written verification that attendance at existing religious activities does not satisfy the recognized tenets of their faith is received;

4) Written agreement by a chaplain, faith representative or recognized religious leader of that faith group to provide general oversight and guidance of the religious activity is received;

5) The religious practice advisory board (which we’re told no longer exists) recommends approval; and

6) The committed person submits a copy of any proposed sermon or doctrinal interpretation to the Chief Administrative Officer or staff designated to supervise the religious activity for review and approval prior to delivery, based on safety and security concerns.

Even when followed to the letter, said groups were still denied supported by the grievance officer and administrative review board in Springfield. What I was told, when I filed to be allowed a Nation of Islam service to be regularly scheduled was that I was always permitted to go to AI-Islam service. For anyone in the know, it is well documented those AI-Islamic communities, especially in prison, rejects outright the tenets of Islamic groups as the Nation of Islam, Nation of Gods and Earths and Moorish Science Temple of America. They are not bashful about expressing their disdain openly and often. So we are being forced to either subject ourselves to continuous verbal disrespect and abuse, or just don’t go to service. All because of the facility’s rejection of “black militant” religious groups, as we are called. But the IDOC records cannot show violence at the hands of any of these groups as a whole throughout the Department of Corrections in the country. We have a right to assemble and congregate to worship according to our tenets and beliefs. Hill C.C. should be an example and model of how it benefits the facility to allow such groups to have peaceful assemblies; growth, productivity, positivity and peace. How can we get to a post-racist era if it can’t be demonstrated through action? Thank you and God Bless. ■

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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to a special holiday edition of Stateville Speaks. Our goal was to try and reflect on what is important. It may be a little kindness, perhaps patience or sharing, especially of one's time or knowledge. To some, it is devotion to a higher power, though sadly sometimes the ability to practice that commitment is denied.

Again, we take this time to enjoy your awesome writing and equally talented artwork. And we wonder where and how you sharpened your skills? Did you do it alone? Did you have help? Who inspired you? Or did you inspire yourself? If given the chance, would you participate in a

peer-to-peer program? What would you like to learn? What could or would you be willing to teach? Are some of you already in a program? Please let us know. As we look at other correctional facilities, the potential seems almost limitless, but only if you, the prospective student, finds merit in it.

Please, drop us a line and let us know what you are thinking. Remember, let us know if we can publish and sign your name. And most of all we wish you all a healthy and a hopeful new year. ■

THE EMCC HILLTOP TOASTMASTERS

Something very positive is happening at East Moline Correctional Center and we thank our subscriber, Robert Sims for sending it our way. Last year, the East Moline Correctional Hilltop Toastmasters, whose success has been growing over the last four years, won the honors of being the number 2 ranked club in the world, for earning the number of academic awards, 42 individual and seven Triple Crown Awards. It was also named as a member of the Toastmasters International's Presidents Club.

Mr. Sims, the Vice President of Membership of the Club, the Warden, Director of Programs and all the other members of this club

should be extremely proud of these accomplishments. The Toastmasters is an international club with over 292,000 members, participating in over 14,350 clubs in 122 countries. The club at EMCC has 20 full-time members and between about 10-15 casual members.

Toastmasters help their participants develop their communications skills, especially public speaking, and boost self-confidence. These are all invaluable as well as marketable skills particularly at employment interviews and for those re-entering the work force.

Again, congratulations to all involved in this very successful club. ■

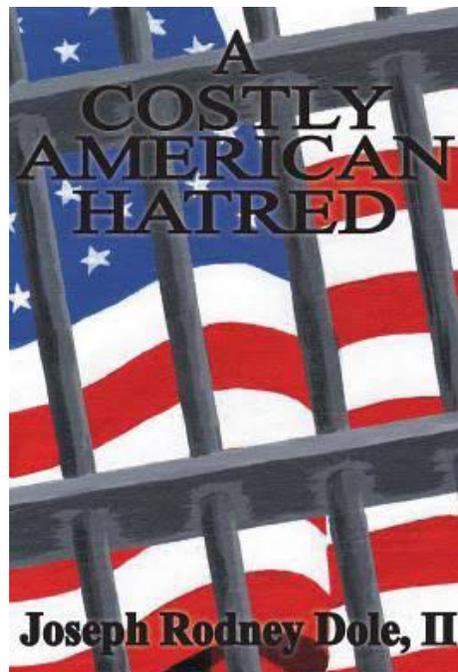
NEW BOOK ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Stateville Speaks would like to give a shout out to Joe Dole on the publishing of his book, *A Costly American Hatred*. This book scrutinizes how "counter-productive" our criminal justice system has become, beyond punishment and instead into the realm of "ostracized, abused, commoditized and disenfranchised". This 346 page book can be ordered from:

Midnight Express Books
P.O. Box 69
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PROSPER, FROM PAGE 1

prove gradually, but slowly." Indiana estimates they save \$50,000 or more on each prisoner that successfully completes the program.

Another problem facing Illinois is the need for more tax dollars to balance Illinois' budget and avert an even larger crisis. The budget can be attacked by significant growth in the tax base. One way to increase the tax base, without raising taxes, is through job growth. We cannot afford to overlook those involved in the criminal justice system as future educated workers. Ninety-six percent of the people in our state's jails and prisons will serve their time and be released—a projected 50,000 in the next two years alone.

According to RAND, prisoners who receive education while serving time are 13 percent more likely to find employment. Correctional education also leads to a 43 percent lower chance of recidivating. These findings, from the largest-ever meta-analysis of correctional educational studies, suggest that prison education programs are cost effective, with a \$1 investment in prison education reducing incarceration costs by \$4 to \$5 during the first three years post-release.

But beyond just the financial rewards is a parent being able to read and understand their child's school work or understanding a prescription label. There is an unmeasurable reward in taking driver's exam and passing, balancing a checkbook, filling out an employment application, checking a schedule, reading a food label and countless other activities most take for granted.

It is time to stop wasting even one more mind. ■

Madeleine Ward is the founder and executive Director of CURE Illinois, an organization that strives for the betterment of those incarcerated. She was a former resident of Dwight Correctional Center. Though she was fully exonerated of all charges that brought her into the custody of the Illinois Department of Corrections, since her release, she continues to work for critically needed changes in our state prison system. For further information contact:

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A LETTER TO YOU FROM SATAN

By Jesse A. Taylor

I saw you yesterday as you began your daily chores. You awoke without kneeling to pray. As a matter of fact, you didn't even bless your meals, or pray before going to bed last night. You are so unthankful, I like that about you. I cannot tell you how glad I am that you have not changed your way of living fool! You are mine. Remember you and I have been going steady for years and I still don't love you yet. As a matter of fact I hate you because I hate God. I am only using you to get even with God. He kicked me out of heaven and I'm going to use you as long as possible to pay him back.

You see fool, God loves you and he has great plans in store for you. But you have yielded your life to me and I'm going to make your life a living hell. That way we'll be together twice. This will really hurt God. Thanks to you I'm really showing him whose boss in your life. With all of the good times we've had... We have been watching dirty movies, cursing people out, partying, stealing, lying, hypocrite, fornicating, overeating, telling dirty jokes, gossiping, backstabbing people, disrespecting adults and those in leadership positions. You have no respect for the church, bad attitudes: surely you don't want to give all this up.

Come on fool, let's burn together forever, I've got some hot plans for us. This is just a letter of appreciation from me to you. I'd like to say "thanks" for letting me use you for most of your foolish life. You are so gullible, I laugh at you when you are tempted to sin - you give in ha, ha, ha you make me sick. Sin is beginning to take its toll on your life. You look 20 years older. I need new blood. So go ahead and teach some children how to sin. All you have to do is smoke weed, drink alcoholic beverages, cheat, gamble, gossip, fornicate, and listen to and dance to the top 10 jams. Do all of this in the presence of children and they will do it too. Kids are like that.

Well fool, I have to let you go for now. I'll be back in a couple of seconds to tempt you again. If you were smart you would run somewhere, confess your sins, live for God with what little life you have left. It's not my nature to warn anyone, but to be your age and still sinning, it's becoming a bit ridiculous. Don't get me wrong, I still hate you.... It's just that you'd make a better fool for Christ.

P.S. If you really love me you won't share this letter with anyone. ■

EVERYONE IS BEAUTIFUL

By Robert West

The greatest resource in the world is a human being, and because a person's life consists of a balance, not one of us is perfect. There within each person is some ugly and also beauty. Regardless of someone's age, an introspection of our self may reveal a "grown kid" who's emotionally-encapsulated in back and force self-hindrance and the fleeting of time.

Upon observations of the journey of a caterpillar's evolution, one may recognize a similar measurement, which reflects upon their own life's path.

A caterpillar is the larva of a butterfly. The larva is the "immature" stage of a butterfly that undergoes complete metamorphosis. A caterpillar contains the embryo of the adult insect, "enclosed" within a muscular envelope, in which it remains for some time. It then throws off its envelope and emerges as an "adult."

The butterfly doesn't let the lowlife era of the caterpillar's lowness define it, nor does a butterfly excessively preoccupy itself in the ugliest memory retrospective to days of crawling. As the caterpillar had to metamorph by shedding its "past" enclosure of "immaturity" to reach the future beauty of the butterfly's heights,

so also must an emotionally damaged individual completely change by separating oneself from an entrenchment of profound sensitive issues, to attain the core beauty of adulthood.

Everyone is beautiful. And for any one of us to move beyond a crawl to flight in the highest degree of self-transformations, none of us then can remain in self-preserved ugly shells. Let's allow for the beautiful peacock butterflies we've suppressed within us, to emerge pass immaturity and soar to reach personal responsibility -because every human being is beautiful.

Nothing, not a thing happens in The Maker's world by mistake. Everything we've experienced and felt was exactly the way our lives were supposed to have happened to unveil our Maker's beauty.

Butterflies aren't an insect. A human being isn't a bug. Everything and everyone is a beautiful creature of our Maker's creations. Never again be anything less than what The Maker created for you to be - i.e. beautiful! ■

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Artwork by John Steinbeck

I HAVE CHANGED (THE WORLD)

By Robert West

I have changed the world. I did some things to make the world a little better. The moment I had done introspection, controlled myself and changed my behavior from negative conduct to positive, from my awakening and at that very moment, I then instantly made the world a little better. I contributed a modicum of good into the world. I am no longer being a liability to civilization; I've become an asset to it.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "Be the change you want to see in the world." No pressures can make me stop being an asset to the earth. No one can compel me to lie. Nobody can force me to use profanity, or be disrespectful, rude, lash out, or to be disingenuous, or a lawbreaker or out of self-control. No human being can stop me from being a decent person.

Mahatma Gandhi also said "If you were in control of yourself, no one else could control you. To change the world you do only what you can do and I will only do what I can do and neither you or I concern ourselves about what the other person is doing, because whenever we are waiting on someone else to be the one first to do something, then nothing ever gets done." As Ann Frank came to see – "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single minute before starting to improve the world." ■



Artwork by James Degorski

ENDLESS LOVE

By LaShawn Wilson

No one understands me,
I'm the source from which life is formed.
I can be on opposite sides of anything,
And still make the two conjoin.
Some say that I'm blind,
And some say that I'm strong.
I've even been called weak at times,
Above all, I keep them holding on.

I reside all over the world.
I can't and won't be denied.
You can feel me in your hearts & souls,
Yet see me in everyone's eyes.
I am love... true love,
Without fault, doubt, or contradiction.
I'm the remedy to all broken hearts,
And contrary, I am the addiction.

Yes! I am powerful,
And against me you have no will.
I am the love you wish to be without,
And without me, you just can't live.
No one understands me,
I'm sent from the heavens above.
When life treats you mean
It too will pass... fore I am
~Endless Love~ ■

WE THE PEOPLE: THROUGH THE EYES OF THE OPTIMIST

By Corky Terry

"Character" is the primary fruit from which negative energy is bred. Unlike violence, character and materiality does not attack the body or the conscious functioning of the mind; it assails the willpower and destroys the morale. But when the desire to do right for the sake of right is smothered by matter, the knowledge you desire and wish you had to overcome it is achievable. You're divided from it only by your method of approach. You cannot rise to the true heights seen through the lens of the optimistic while in servitude to the inferior part of self. As a personality amongst a prominent circle in which all enjoy the fruits of life, your character and personality must forever remain transparent.

In order to help oneself overcome the wounds and conflicts taking place, and the hurts which crippled ones development and progress as a personality – resulting in physical pains and/or symptoms of the most varied character –

one must employ a method to become the voice of the voiceless. Patience is not a skill. It's an attitude instilled in all, to which need's discovering. This attitude requires no special knowledge.

"...no real result can be attained if one has not already developed a certain quality of character and intelligence..."

Just as surgery has given to the physical body for the purpose of correction, psychoanalysis attempts to give to the personality and character in a conservative effort to prevent the need to become resurrected. Once the living has buried what has been widely perceived as the dead, that soul is forever lost.

However, under no certain rationale can

the dead bury the dead! Through the eyes of the optimist, no real result can be attained if one has not already developed a certain quality of character and intelligence, which makes it possible for one to submit to a facing of his naked soul, and to the pain and suffering which this often entails. Here as in no other relation in life, an absolute truth and an absolute honesty are the only basis of action, since deception of any kind deceives no one but the individual himself and acts as a boomerang, defeating his own aims.

The notion of ones who remain steadfast and secure when boldly implying their grounds be heard when faced with immeasurable odds, are often misunderstood and disturbingly viewed as a cancer in a bad light. But I echo the same sentiments, in comparison, of the statement made by the late Martin Luther King, Jr. "Riots are the language of the people who are unheard."

Eat, my brother...let it stick to your ribs. ■

THE ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF FAITH: (IMAN)

By Irving Madden

Some people may think that man becomes a Muslim when he confesses belief in the oneness of the true God and in Muhammed as his last messenger. This is far from the full meaning of faith. In Islam faith is a state of happiness acquired by virtue of positive action and constructive conceptions as well as dynamic and effective measures.

The Arabic word (Iman) which we have rendered in English as faith, literally means, "to know", "to believe", and "to be convinced beyond the least shadow of doubt". Faith thus

is firm belief arising out of knowledge and conviction. The man who "knows" and reposes unshakeable belief in the unity of God, in his attributes, in his law and the revealed guidance (Holy Quran) and in the divine code of reward and punishment is called "Mu'min" (Faithful). This faith invariably leads man to a life of obedience and submission to the will of God. One who lives this life of submission is known as "Muslim". The relation of Islam to Iman is the same as of a tree to its seed. ■

TRANSCENDENCE

By Roberto Sauseda, Jr.

For in the cave
have we been chained,
sequestrate in
the voice of naught.
We beg to fly,
yet wings stay strained
with lack of light
that we have sought.
So follow my
transcending wings.
We'll ride the wave
the sun provides.
With third eye grace
our souls will sing,
destroying caves
we once reside. ■

MISGUIDED

By Roberto Sausedo, Jr.

Reckless Thoughts:
I can't live as such
Distant Hopes:
Being lost to touch
Bleary Eyes:
How do the blind see
Weary bones:
From fighting on knees
Prisoned Minds:
Like roaches in dark
Shattered Souls:
Who have lost their spark
Leaving Worth:
We are bound to fall
Damaged Goods:
Will consume us all. ■

WHAT WILL MY LEGACY BE?

By Arkee Chaney

Some years ago a good friend and teacher of mine, Dr. Margaret T. Burroughs) asked me, "What will my legacy be?" I found this to be a profound question. Profound because when we analyze, or speak about ourselves we tend to highlight the positive and down play the negative, in which case leaves a somewhat distorted picture. I will try not to do that. Most of my life I've been known as a crook. Even as a young kid, like so many other youngsters, I found a lot of way to get in trouble; in and out of juvenile facilities. It appears that serving a natural life sentence in prison was my unavoidable destiny.

It was while in prison that I fell head over heels in love with the arts: painting, ceramics, cartoons and poetry. I'm reminded of Malcolm X, who found his calling in prison when he found Allah (God). It was due to his unshakeable belief in the one God that turned his life around. Well...I too believe in Allah. And I believe that nothing happens without his permission. Allah knows best.

At the rate that I was going on the street, I would have murdered someone or someone would have killed me. So, what does all of this have to do with my legacy? Plenty! I now realize that, no matter how dark the path is that we start down, there's always room for redemption. Thanks to Dr. Burroughs (who's no longer with us) I have artwork scattered throughout Chicago, Cuba and parts of Africa. Creating art has given me a tremendous amount of joy. The path that I now travel is no longer that of a crook, but that of an artist.

IF WE CHANGE OUR THOUGHTS, WE CHANGE OUR ACTIONS. ■



Artwork by James Degorski

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EVERY LIFE MATTERS

By Michael Wyatt

Growing up in a poor and negative environment has a detrimental impact on a person's identity and development. Our neighborhoods are infested with violence, drugs, gangs and prostitution. This epidemic has been going on in our communities for far too long. We don't have to look far to realize how many lives are being dilapidated by neglect. Our world is filled with people who show great academic promise, but without guidance and protection their hopes of ever accomplishing anything in life will be a thought of the past.

It is so imperative that we learn how to build one another up in the things that bring rewards. We cannot be a people of apathy. God holds us responsible for the way we live and the way we treat other people.

Many people in our world are sardonic, they develop the "me, myself and I" attitude. But if we are ever going to be a people of worth and purpose, we have to repudiate and circumvent that kind of thinking.

Every now and then we do well to take stock of our situations, so I'd like to ask you to look around. What's happening in your life, your family, and your community? I'm sure that once you have done an honest examination you'll find that your service of commitment to making your neighborhood a safer place to live will be much needed.

In concluding, after further analysis of the tragedies that take place in our "surrounding region" which one way or another affects all of us – we should then come to a realization that not just some but "Every Life Matters". ■

LAMENTATION TIME

By Roosevelt Wilder

Shalom (Peace).

I'm deeply touched by the recurring image of blameless youngsters (all around the world) suffering in ways that most people can't even imagine. Parents...gone, siblings...gone, home...gone, food...gone, clothes...gone, the sense of being loved and feeling safe...gone – in an instant. The sad sight of tragedy-stricken children just standing around, clueless and hopeless is heart wrenching.

So many women are literally weeping and wailing (all around the world). Their husbands and children are being massacred daily. If not by war or what they call terrorism, then by disease, tsunamis, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, mudslides, drought, wildfires, etc.

The stench of death is everywhere. It's so strong that I can smell it through my tv. The entire planet has been defiled by the constant application of ideas that champion death.

The prophetic state of affairs is more than painful to behold. I find myself tearing up all the time. I can't help it. The news I hear, the images I see, and what they cause me to feel in my heart is often disturbing, unsettling and unpleasant. The gradual development of hearing ears, seeing eyes and a feeling heart doesn't come free of charge. A serious price has to be paid. I'm starting to understand why they called Prophet Jeremiah "The Weeping Prophet".

Shalom ■

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