

STATEVILLE SPEAKS

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE • SUMMER 2015

NEW ADVOCATE FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM



By Jobi Cates

With some good friends, I started [Restore Justice Illinois](#) (RJI) late last year after leaving my position at Human Rights Watch. As a member of the Illinois Coalition

for the Fair Sentencing of Youth Steering Committee, I heard again and again that our movement does not have enough political power to make real, sustainable progress on criminal justice reform in Springfield. So I pulled together a board of directors that now includes a wide range of individuals, including the mother of a young man incarcerated for a crime committed as a juvenile, the sister of a murder victim at the hands of a teenager, and a number of other citizens from a variety of occupations who have seen the failures of Illinois' criminal justice system and cannot turn away.

We will support (and in several crucial ways supplement) the excellent work being done by other non-profit organizations in the area of criminal justice reform, in particular as it applies to juvenile offenders. Unlike most traditional non-profits organizations, however, we are incorporating as a 501 [c] 4 civic organization and will invest the lion's share of our resources in legislative advocacy. We also plan to found a Political Action Committee to support candidates and elected officials who are reform minded, and share the organization's belief in the importance of redemption, release, and ultimately reunification of rehabilitated inmates with their communities.

We believe that this is a critical time—perhaps the most promising in many years—to advance a reform agenda in Illinois. There is a widespread recognition across the political spectrum that change is needed. Although motivations may differ based on political positions, the opportunity to bring about meaningful change is strong. For that reason our efforts will continue to focus on addressing the most chal-



lenging issues in the criminal justice system, such as the negative consequences of extreme mandatory sentencing, determinate sentencing, and truth in sentencing.

RJI has no paid staff. At this point, all donations have been poured into lobbying efforts.

HOUSE BILL 2471 SIGNED INTO LAW

Evidence of early impact came just this week, as Governor Rauner signed the bi-partisan HB 2471, which was a groundbreaking law designed to give judges sentencing children in adult court freedom from some mandatory enhancements (including gun enhancements) and from mandatory life without parole. Its sponsors included Representative Barbara Flynn Currie, Representative Scott Drury, and Representative Ron Sandack, alongside Senator Don Harmon.

HB 2471 was an important first step toward ending juvenile life-without-parole (JLWOP) sentencing in Illinois, but more work needs to be done to truly end JLWOP.

Now that HB 2471 has been signed into law and will be enacted on January 1, 2016, RJI has focused efforts on post-sentencing reform through its new "[Bring Back Second Chances](#)" campaign. We believe this campaign is neces-

sary to break down some of the barriers to truly ending extreme sentencing and mass incarceration in Illinois, in addition to ending JLWOP.

BRING BACK SECOND CHANCES

Between laws passed in the late-1970s and the mid-1990s, Illinois effectively eliminated the possibility of parole for many people receiving long-term sentences.

We are considered a "determinate sentencing" state, which means for a significant classes of

crime, Illinois does not offer "time off for good behavior." No second chances. Not even for children sentenced in adult court.

That is why RJI has launched the Campaign to Bring Back Second Chances. RJI hopes to get a critical mass of Illinois legislators to sign-on to [House Resolution 509](#), a bi-partisan effort to lay the groundwork for future legislative reform, and to encourage the Governor's Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform to include post-sentencing reform in their recommendations.

People who care about bringing back a rational solution to extreme sentencing with no parole can participate today by going to this web link below or to send a letter to their State Senator and State Representative through our online advocacy system: <http://bit.ly/1KKiNsk>

Or, connect with us here:

Web Site: RestoreJusticeIllinois.org

Facebook: [Facebook.com/RestoreJusticeIllinois](https://www.facebook.com/RestoreJusticeIllinois)

Twitter: [@RJ_Illinois](https://twitter.com/RJ_Illinois)

Mail: Restore Justice Illinois

PO Box 6160

Evanston, IL 60204 ■

Hope...Redemption...Change

ARE TIMES CHANGING?

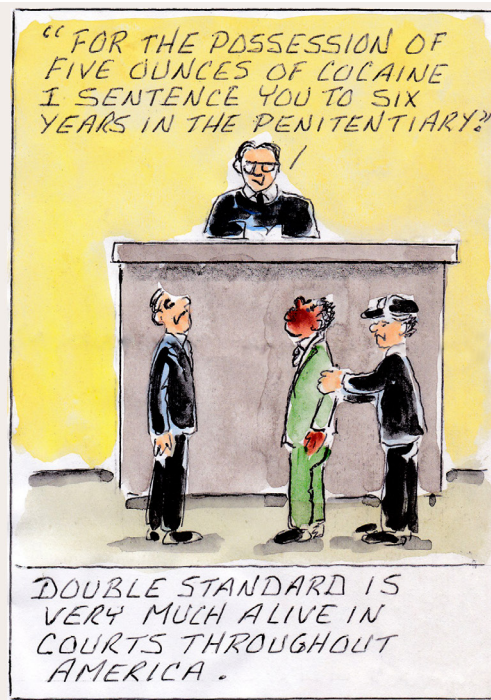
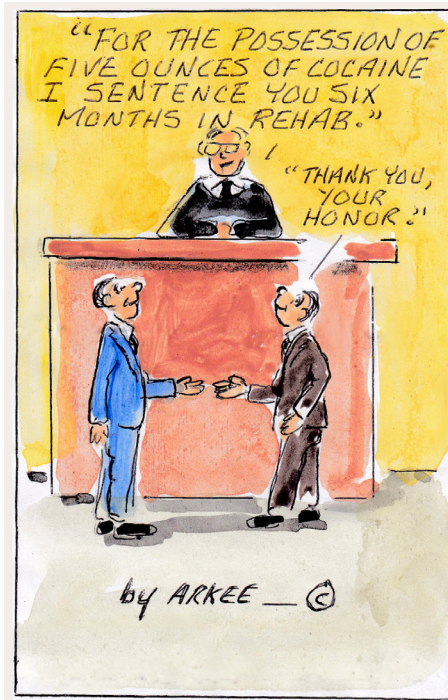
By Dawn Larsen

Changes are being proposed that would decriminalize small amounts of marijuana and other controlled substances in the State of Illinois, Cook County and the City of Chicago. The ultimate goal is to lower the number of people circulating in and out of the criminal justice system; the courts, jails and prisons.

On April 20, 2015 Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez announced a new drug policy aimed at keeping low-level drug offenders out of the

criminal justice system and steering them into treatment. Effective immediately, those found in possession of under 30 grams of marijuana (a misdemeanor), who have been arrested or issued a municipal violation less than three times will not be prosecuted by the State's Attorney's Office. According to Alvarez's office "Individuals with three or more arrests or citations for these charges will be referred to the State's Attorney's existing Drug School Program and will have their case dismissed once the requirements of that program are met."

"Additionally those charged with a Class 4 felony charge of Possession of a Controlled Substance or Possession of Cannabis, except for those with significant violence in their criminal backgrounds, will be routed to an alternative prosecution program including the newly created Drug Deferred Prosecution Program



(DDPP)". Other recreational drugs such as heroin and cocaine will fall under this umbrella as well, according to http://www.statesattorney.org/press_SweepingDrugPolicyReform.html.

One of the goals cited is to begin treating drug use and addiction as a public health issue rather than a criminal one. Those who are arrested for possession of small amounts of drugs may have a better chance of keeping their jobs, homes and families intact under this new program. The savings, in a cash strapped state, are also a consideration. Alvarez states that "In 2014, Class 4 felony drug possession cases accounted for close to 25 percent or 10,000 of the nearly 40,000 felony cases that were handled by the State's Attorney's Office".

There has been legislation in the Illinois Congress as well, specifically HB0218, that has passed both the House and Senate and is

on Governor Bruce Rauner's desk awaiting approval. This legislation is intended to create a uniform statewide law, explicitly for marijuana possession. It would make the possession of 15 grams or less a civil law violation instead of criminal one, punishable by a fine.

Similarly, in 2012 the Chicago City Council passed an ordinance giving the police the authority to issue a ticket for the possession of a small amount of marijuana instead

of making a formal arrest. Many consider this a good first step in decriminalizing minor drug use, while others addressed concern that this ordinance is highly subjective by leaving it to the discretion of the police officers on whether to issue a ticket or make an arrest.

According to Dr. David E. Olson, Professor of Criminology at Loyola University and member of the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing (formed under Governor Rauner), the 55% increase in prison admittance during the last 15 years can be attributed to the increase in admittance of Class 4 felonies, many due to drug charges. Without continuity among the different agencies or strong state legislation, it remains to be seen how much of an impact these reforms will have on reducing the prison population in Illinois, which currently totals 47,952. ■

STAND FOR SOMETHING AND STOP GETTING SHOT DOWN FOR NOTHING

By Antonio Jackson

Protest without progress is void! Protest without progress is only noise! Protest to impress only depresses the depth of what the communities are actually protesting for! The situations that are taking place throughout the United States of America have become oppression! In a sense of speaking (we) all need to become progressive in giving a mental action toward a social and culture improvement. Or even toward a moderate political change. Because without it we will never understand the excellence of humility! We can't continue to be shot down for nothing. Then to stand for something! We can't continue to live in existence and still be irrelevant to the pressure of dedication! We must bring our attri-

butes to character and place them in the alignment of substance.

As we proceed to protest to keep the historical havoc in history! You cannot know the color of shade to over shadow four unique abilities as being a man or woman! With the proper preparation to present any poor performance you can recalculate your steps and find what it is that is absent within the unbound publication of a pamphlet! To my people of all color: Life is a fight full of endless rounds. And in this situation you've been given wind to prevail and not exhale! It's not time to give up. Fight until you're mentally exhausted. And after that, continue to fight. Spread your word as if it were your ash from that burned desire! Stand for something. And stop getting shot down for nothing! ■

A SECOND LOOK AT JLWOP

By Dawn Larsen

There has been some progress made in the sentencing of juveniles in the criminal justice system at both the federal and state levels. In *Roper v. Simmons* (2005) the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that “executing minors is cruel and unusual punishment, prohibited by the 8th Amendment”. In 2010 the court ruled in *Graham v. Florida* that under the 8th Amendment “a juvenile offender cannot be sentenced to life in prison without parole for a non-homicidal crime”.

Then in 2012, *Miller v. Alabama*, the Supreme Court determined that a mandatory sentence of life without parole for children convicted of murder violated the 8th Amendment’s prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment. But the high court has not decided definitively whether to apply *Miller* retroactively, and lower federal courts and state courts have been divided on whether *Miller* applies retroac-

tively”. Last year (2014) the Illinois Supreme Court decided in *People v. Adolfo Davis* that *Miller* does apply retroactively.

Thus, on May 4, 2015, Davis was given the opportunity for re-sentencing at a hearing presided over by Judge Angela Petrone. Davis’ was the first of about 80 hearings that will be held for prisoners in Illinois who were sentenced as juveniles to mandatory life without parole. But, instead of a possible second chance, Judge Angela Petrone delivered the most severe sentence possible, life in prison without the possibility of parole. According to court records, she did so because “This sentence is necessary to deter others. It is necessary to protect the public from harm. The defendant’s acts showed an aggression and callous disregard for human life far beyond his tender age of 14.” Though she did say that he did show “...commendable acts towards self-improvement during the 24 years he has been incarcerated,” it apparently was not

enough.

This decision came after testimony from several family members, as well as former Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Abner Mikva (Former Illinois and U.S. Representative, White House Council, Law Professor and 2014 Presidential Medal of Freedom), who also testified on behalf of Davis. After the verdict was announced, Mikva said “This was a mockery of a hearing”. He also went on to say, “This was not what the *Miller* case (Supreme Court case *Miller v. Alabama*) was supposed to do, and she embarrasses my profession.” Davis’ lawyers have 30 days to file a notice of appeal.

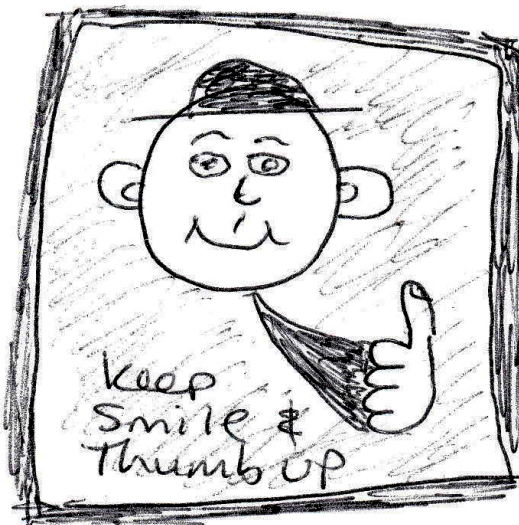
Juvenile life without parole is banned in all countries except for Somalia and the United States. However, at this time there are no juveniles in Somalia that are currently serving life without parole. The total number of juveniles serving life without parole in the U.S. is 2,570. ■

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to this edition of [Northeastern Illinois University](#)’s Stateville Speaks. We are delighted that after several years of transitioning to the University that we appear to finally be on schedule and sticking to our deadlines. We have our sights set on six newsletters a year and we still hope to be able to reach our goal.

Although there is never a shortage of news within or about the Department of Corrections it is really about having additional opportunities to publish more of the extraordinary submissions that many of you are sending in. Some are sad, some are funny, many are often ironic, but it is the sheer honesty that we most admire.

After working on the last two editions about the tragic, yet typically dismal conditions of the prisons (Fall/Winter, 2014) and the SORT lawsuit (Spring, 2015) we are really pleased to bring to you the powerful and positive work being done by the organization [Restore Justice Illinois](#) (RJI). Quite simply, they are taking on the task of submitting proposals for consideration to replace the complicated, fragmented and ineffective layers of sentencing legislation that have we have today. While it is indeed a daunting task RJI was also perceptive in their inclusion of many dedicated and knowledgeable reformers to work on this campaign. We hope this is just the beginning and will keep you informed of any new developments.



Artwork by Curtis Foster.

It also appears they may really have the Governor’s ear. In a July 2015 Initial Report of the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing, simply stated, the goals are to reduce the prison population by 25%. The hard part, of course, is determining the best ways to achieve this. Also, as we went to print, the Governor named a new Director of Corrections, John R. Baldwin. We will take a closer look at these in the next edition.

Equally important for the upcoming edition is an update on the newly appointed Prison Review Board (PRB) and if it appears any re-

lief is on the way. We will also bring you another lawsuit filed by attorneys at the [Uptown People’s Law Center](#) (UPLC) and [Winston & Strawn LLP](#) on the “excessive and inappropriate” use of solitary confinement. This is a huge concern among our readers and should be for everyone else. Kudo’s to these two firms for taking on still another egregious, clandestine tactic used on our citizens.

In the meantime, keep it coming...the good the bad, the ugly, but as I drone on, keep it as brief as possible. Remember, that while we never turn money away, we will also never turn away a prisoner requesting a subscription. We know how predatory every service and product is in the IDOC, and we will never ask you to choose between the Twinkie (or toothpaste) and the newsletter.

Finally, let us know you are receiving them. We worry when we do not get feedback, especially from a whole prison. Were the newsletters just lack-luster or dumpster-bound? Either way, let us know and again, thank you for letting us be your voice. ■

SPONSORS NEEDED

To make a donation to, or to sponsor an issue of, Stateville Speaks, please contact Dr. Cris Toffolo, NEIU Justice Studies Chair, at 773-442-4761.

THE BLESSING

By LaShawn Wilson

Only if my words could express,
how much you mean to me.
Picture me singing an inspirational song,
with Angels humming symphony.

I'll never take you for granted,
and appreciate you with all my love.
For rarely do we comprehend,
the gifts we get from above.

You do so much, for so many,
and in you, I can see the lesson.
God touches us all in special ways
and through you, I can feel....
~~The Blessing~~ ■

SERVANTS WANTED

By John Steinbach

We have unlimited openings for motivated servants to meet the needs of God's people. Start immediately. Responsibilities include performing random acts of kindness, serving and pleasing God and doing what he calls you to do. No skills needed. God will equip you with on the job training. Benefits include growth opportunities leading to one incredible raise at the end of your service. To apply, contact God. ■

To subscribe to Stateville Speaks,
or to submit an essay, see page 7.

THIS SOME BULLS**T!

By Roosevelt Wilder

They call me Lil' Man 'cause I'm only 13,
but I feel like the head of the house.
I got two little sisters, so I'm always
hustling to put food in their mouths.
My friend's getting shot.
My brother's selling drugs and getting caught.
He tried to turn our house into a dope spot.
But them heavy-hitters flashed "them" glocks
and said "naw, homey – not on this block".
Dad is dead; Moms ain't right in the head,
and my oldest brother is in jail.
We got four locks on the front door
and bars on every window,
so I always feel like I'm in hell.
This Some Bulls**t!
I get good grades 'cause I'm smart.
Intelligence is a blessing

THE HARDEST PART ABOUT DOING TIME

By Eddie Williams,

The hardest part about doing time is being woken from another un-fitful rest. Dreams won't come easy, if you try an' go to sleep while doing too much thinking. And if you've been here too long, almost all your dreams begin or end with you in the can. But on this occasion, it's the restlessness an' frustration that prevents any decent amount of sleep. So I rise – in order to look out my heavily fortified window. Seein' it's still dark – I fall back with head heavily laid upon pillow. Lyin' here stressin' and ' guessin' as to why I haven't heard from my people. No mail. No visit. No money order, or pictures. They haven't even put money on my card, so I can call an' see what's happenin'. What? They don't think I'd be worried.

The hardest part about doing time is feelin' like my people don' left me for dead. Walkin' around feelin' dazed an' confused until I become bitter, because I'm afraid an' unsure about what to do. Movin' about in slow motion, with hurt in my eyes while talking in a harsh tone yet with a whisperin' voice. Can't you hear my pain whenever I force a laugh? The hardest part about doin' time is feelin' like the weight of the world is upon my shoulder. Dealin' with hardship sho' is burdensome.

Learning the unfamiliarity of loneliness, or is it the hopelessness of knowing you're helpless. Trying to keep it together, but I'm so damn depressed. It's eating away at me until nothing really matters. I can't even think straight. Trapped like a fool up in a cage. I

can't get out an' I don't know what to do. It makes me want to throw up both my hands an' holler, "I can't take it anymore, I just want to end it." I probably would have, but somethin' inside me won't let me. I hope I can bounce back an' come from under this. But, in order to do that, I must first get my life back in order. I must become mentally strong an' prepare to execute the moment opportunity reveals itself. It can happen. All I gotta' do is stay focused and hopefully find a friend in here to lean on.

The hardest part about doing time, every man must face, and this is his darkest fear- "Doing time on my own." For no man is a rock, or island. He cannot stand alone. He needs that friend along with family support. How else can he carry on? But alas, that may not always be the case. A good friend is priceless an' hard to come by. As for family, some grow old; some get sick an even pass on. Now I know no man wants to think about this. But that's the reality and the reason why they're no longer visible – financially and with visitation. Then you have the mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers, the spouse who has found comfort with another. Even your kids simply just fade away, distantin' themselves, even further in an already strained relationship. We all must face the undefeated – no mercy, the very fabric that corrodes loving memory an' breaks up commitment. All these obstacles one must go through while incarcerated. If you really think about it, no house can ever be built without first laying down a strong foundation. ■

so I stick with my lessons.
But what good is being smart
when each new day just might be the day
I stop a bullet with my heart?
I'm not safe and I know it.
I'm scared, scared, scared and I show it.
Can't you hear me crying?
Gang wars igniting, people shooting and fighting,
I'm always dreaming of dying....
This Some Bulls**t!
everybody is taking advantage of me.
Those who are supposed to protect me
Be trying to sex me...
My teacher, my preacher,
Even my creepy ass uncle be texting me
talkin' 'bout sexing me.
This Some Bulls**t!
You know it ain't supposed to be like this.
Childhood riddled with neglect, abuse,

perversion, and all this other bulls**t.
I can't be a child 'cause you grown-ups won't let me.
I can't be a grown-up 'cause I haven't grown up yet, see?
What am I supposed to do?
You can't protect me and I can't protect myself.
You got Ceasefire, Neighborhood Watch,
Safe Passage programs and everything else,
and none of that stuff helps!
This Some Bulls**t!
Shame on you!
Shame on you parents, shame on you teachers,
And shame on you preachers too.
Shame on you policemen, shame on you Democrats,
Shame on you Republicans, shame on all of you!
This Some Bulls**t! ■

THE SQUARE ROOT OF PRISON

By John Steinbach

Living in a 6' x 8' cell, a box,
it's a living hell, complete with locks.
A sensory deprivation chamber, feeling suppressed,
except for misery, pain and anger from years of stress.

How much the mind can take is amazing.
Before I'm lost in translation, check the equation.
The cage plus hate, multiplied by rage, plus oppression,
divided by hope to the 10th power,
minus psychotropic dope, suicide checks every half hour.

It may seem hard to comprehend,
but what you have in the end,
as the ink flows from my pen is a Rorschach test.
Painting pictures with words; nouns, adjectives and verbs,
conceptual realization is in the eye of the beholder,
depending on the brain, but the facts remain the same.

Continual incarceration creates a shell-shocked soldier,
post-traumatic stress disorder and a heart that's colder
than most and bitter to the core,
with a twisted viewpoint, a casualty of war.
Upon release, what's your reward?
Return to the streets worse than before. ■

THE FULL SYMPHONY

By Robert (Bobby) Sauseda, Jr.

Thoughts press the chords of my mind,
creating harmonic melodies of what's perceived.
When you feel the rhythm in life,
is it not much easier to comprehend its music?

To know that each moment is a note set upon the scale of existence,
immortalized only by the tethered verse.
How lows, as well as highs carry the heart to the spectrum of beauty.
Where deaf ears ease open, blooming to the ambient, sound song.

For without the humbling bass of broken souls,
evades the versed value of the soprano's spirit.
And dare I say, how the crudest of notes be played with beauty,
whereas the sweetest of sets ring void of sustenance.

Attend to your masterpiece, which has uniqueness defined unto you alone.
Tis only when its last note is written, that its' symphony speaks. ■

NO SKY THIS FAR

By Alan Wyman

We can die as a legion,
and by decree, one day might.
But so far, it's one at a time,
far from the world's sight.

Death comes from unclassified
illnesses and from unhealed sores.
Treated with bureaucratic evasions
as the vapor of life
floats from our pores.

There are good reasons for
prisons, but not how they're run.
Where the bad are made worse,
the game, zero-sum.

On the road to this landscape,
like the road to hell,
the pavement of intentions
serves many a one, well.

The prosecutors play quarterback
and treat the accused as just points.
And it's always the quarterback
the judge's decision anoints.

In this Neo-American scheme
the Constitution's a joke.
Just the corpse of an idea
at which the laws poke.

There are many bad
people afoot in the land
Running big corporations
or on benches, gavel in hand.

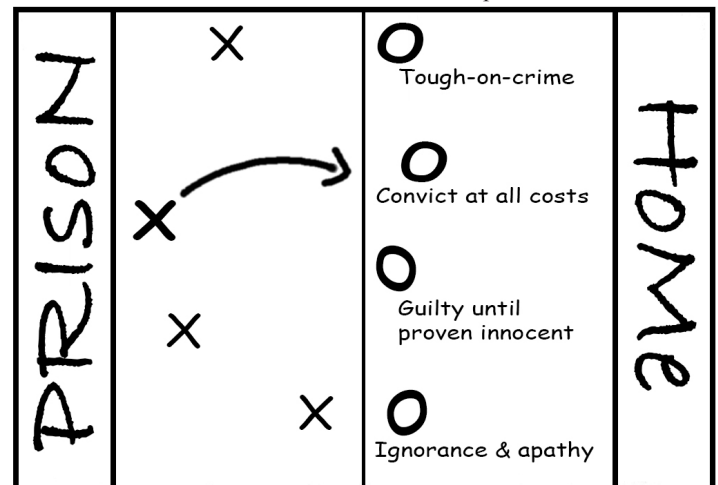
They are in state houses
and Congress
and drive in squad cars.
But are the lesser of two evils,
the worse being ours.

Or, so you would think,
since the truth is not known,
that much of the evidence
by their own hands is sown.

Since most judges hearts
are as black as their robes,
they ride hard over jurors
who convict all before them,
in droves.

Twining the innocent with the guilty
we have no control of our lives.
The good rot with the evil
like spoons mixed with knives.

Justice is a lottery
of the most American form,
turned inside out,
so hell keeps it warm. ■



Cartoon by Sal Barry

TIME TEACHES YOU TO EXPLORE A RELATIONSHIP WITHIN YOUR OWN HEART

By J.E.T.

How life teaches you to go deep inside of your own soul, when
all you have is your own heart to explore your emotions, while you are
missing a companion to share your feelings. Spending time with your-
self, when surrounded by people you keep at a distance. It's an experi-

ence to live in this world and get to know yourself on an intimate basis;
building a long lasting relationship within your own heart and mind,
after years of becoming familiar with your own character. Preparing you
for someone the day that opportunity knocks on your door. ■

WHEN YOUR COUNSEL IS INEFFECTIVE, WHO CAN WE TURN TO?

By Phillip LaPointe

Most Illinois prisoners can testify to the simple fact, “My lawyer didn’t do everything he could of or was supposed to do while representing me”. But once a person is convicted, who can we turn to for help? Most ordinary citizens have no clue how to preserve and post-trial motion their issues for an appeal, or how to prepare a post-conviction petition on matters that are de hors the record.

The Northern Receiving Center (NRC) at Stateville is not equipped to handle the massive amount of new inmates it receives each week, having prisoner’s sleeping on the floors in the garage area at night is proof enough. But a new prisoner coming in from whatever county only has 30 days to prepare and file either his post-trial motion to reconsider sentence or withdraw guilty plea, or file a notice of appeal. As a law clerk here at Dixon C.C. I’ve started to see more of an influx of new arrivals coming from the NRC who weren’t given the proper advice or any state forms to fill out to send to the court. The new arrival then has to hope that law clerks

at the assigned prison are experienced enough to help him preserve his issues in a timely manner.

There’s a problem with this though, the IDOC has stopped giving paralegal and law clerk training programs. There are very few knowledgeable and trained law clerks in the system that can assist other inmates within the time frames in which they have to preserve or challenge their convictions. Most guys try to rely on ‘jailhouse lawyers’ or guys who don’t have formal training. For example, stop me if you’ve heard this, “sure I’ll be glad to file your post-conviction for you, for some commissary”.

Before you know it your post-conviction is poorly put together and the court dismisses it as “frivolous and without merit”. Your one opportunity to get relief, due to your counsel being ineffective, just went out the window. So what options do we have? If you have enough money or your family is willing to help, you can hire an attorney. But most prisoners, or their families, don’t have a couple thousand lying around. The solution rests with our legislature to provide

more funding for programs in the prison system so that the law clerk/paralegal training programs can be reinstated. Why do I write this article hoping that someone will listen? This happened to me when I first got locked up. There was nobody to help me timely file my post-trial motion in 1978. I have been fighting for 37 years to get a fair hearing on the issues that should have been raised by my ineffective lawyer. Recently the Appellate Court agreed that my attorney was ineffective for failing to follow my request to file a post-trial motion, but, held his deficiency was not prejudicial. Yet I sit here with a life sentence as opposed to a 40 year sentence if counsel had timely filed or if someone had been there to help me file pro-se, prejudice is manifest.

If you’re trained in the law and sitting in Stateville, Menard or wherever, pick someone to train. We can’t wait on IDOC to reinstate the law clerk training. It has to be up to us to train someone for the next generation, when we’re gone and the guys coming in 2025 or 2030 come into the system. Stay strong. ■

IN MEMORIAM

In Memory of James Sueffer

Everyone called him “Chopper”. At 5’5” and 140 lbs. he was a tough little dude – full of fire! Quick wit and sarcasm – that was his humor and usually his response to anything you might say. And you didn’t dare say a bad word around him about the White Sox. That was his favorite professional sports team and he’d be quick to spin on his heels and shoot two jabs into your shoulder to stick up for “his” team. All in fun of course, but that’s who Chopper was – high energy, fun and full of wit.

Thirty years spent behind these bars and he didn’t complain. Even towards the end, when we all knew he was consumed by pain – he didn’t complain. Again, he was a tough little dude! To see cancer extinguish one’s flame so fast is disturbing. However, I know he’d want those of us who knew him to believe that he’s no longer in pain and in a better place – Finally Free. Rest in peace old buddy.

Your pal,
Jason Adkins

Stateville Speaks would like to send our condolences to **Paula Sims** on the sudden, tragic loss of her son. Please accept our heartfelt sympathy.

WHY?

By Roosevelt Wilder

Shalom (Peace).

Who can effectively protect the children? A better question may be: Why are the children in such dire need of protection? At the beginning of every school year there is a lot of hoopla and excitement about the back to school “Safe Passage” program. Everyone fiercely focuses on the effect: Children have become perpetual targets for perversion, abuse, and untimely death. But who is investigating (and doing something about) the cause?

Why is it necessary to build up a phalanx of bodyguards to escort our children to and from school – in our own neighborhoods? Who (what kind of mindset) has created an environment wherein the children aren’t safe anywhere in the community?

The smiling, brightly uniformed bodyguards manning every corner in the neighborhood are not indicative of an admirable achieve-

ment. Instead they highlight the fact that our minds, our households, and our communities have been deeply immersed in the “gross darkness” (deception, ignorance, confusion, perversion, etc.) spoken of by Prophet Isaiah.

Who is harming the children? The danger and the harm comes from discombobulated parents, twisted teachers, perverted preachers, sadistic police, the young fool next door, etc... The deceived, destructive, anti-life mindset is wildly pervasive and has caused the neighborhood to devour itself.

The bottom line is there can be no peace (or safety) without righteousness. Until our minds are rewired in righteousness we will never be able to protect the children, because the most dangerous and destructive enemy is within the confines of our own minds.

Shalom.
Roosevelt Wilder ■

**Stateville Speaks is generously supported
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Artwork by Wade Wiseman

MY FRIEND

By Wade Wiseman

I've got this friend
I can't touch nor see,
but I know he cares
because he died for me.

They hung him on a cross
with a sentence of death.
He said, "I die for you",
as he took his last breath.

He spoke of two places
called heaven and hell,
For the holy word
Was all he would tell.

Heaven is peaceful
and as nice as can be,
Hell is pure fire
and eternal misery.

To believe in him
is all we must do,
It's a simple choice
he left to me and you.

Jesus Christ is his
Name I'm glad to say,
And I hope you find him
sometime today. ■

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