

STATEVILLE SPEAKS

Voices from the inside • Fall 2024

Our Future Generations Deserve Abundance, Not “State of the Art” Prisons

BY I.B. PEACEFUL

This essay is a winner of Truthout’s 2024 Keeley Schenwar Memorial Essay Prize.

I felt it birth in my core and sneak its way up my windpipe. It slithered over my vocal cords and caught in my throat just for a second. Its rancid flavor morphed into an unfamiliar word and settled on my tongue, disgusting my taste buds. It escaped my clenched teeth and forced its way through my tightly pursed lips before finding its place in my unwelcoming ears – “numb.”

This was my body’s reaction to Acting Illinois Department of Corrections Director Latoya Hughes’s March 15, 2024 memo to all individuals in custody in Illinois. During the past 33 years of my incarceration, I have received hundreds of Department memos. I ignore or throw out most of them, but this one was different.

Earlier in the day, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker had made an announcement that the state would be closing two of its aging and deteriorating correctional facilities. The first would be Logan, the facility that housed women, and then Stateville, the men’s facility in Crest Hill, Illinois.



Prelude to the 13th Amendment — Enslavement by Kenneth Key

For those of us who have spent any amount of time in these facilities, the words “aging” and “deteriorating” are gross understatements.

Pritzker later stated, “Unfortunately over many years, the state has neglected to do anything about the conditions in these prisons... We’re stepping up and actually making a proposal and putting money forward to do the right thing.”

My initial reaction was: thank you. I’ll finally be able to have my incessant cough properly diagnosed. We’ll all be able to have our blood tested for lead levels. The vermin, roaches and birds that infest the kitchen, dining

halls and living units will be exterminated.

Then the other shoe dropped. The governor shared his plan to not only demolish these facilities, but to then spend close to \$1 billion dollars in taxpayer money to rebuild both facilities.

My body and brain reacted. They were rejecting this news on a visceral level and I couldn’t intelligently or verbally articulate my feelings. Numb.

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STATEVILLE SPEAKS

Fall 2024

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS:

Given the recent news about the impending closures of— and plans to rebuild— Stateville Correctional Center and Logan Correctional Center, we have devoted this edition to covering the closure issue, highlighting the responses of people who are incarcerated in these prisons.

Taken together, these pieces reveal the violent systems that have made possible both the horrific conditions at Stateville and Logan, and the unjust proposals for what comes next. We hope these articles offer analysis and insight into what change might be possible, as the future is not yet fully determined. ●

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The art featured in this issue comes from the upcoming exhibition **Undoing the Carceral State: A Visual Protest Against Injustice**, organized by Joseph Dole and featuring work by Dole alongside artists Luis Naya, Aryules Bivens, Robert Curry, Benny Rios DonJuan, Chris Everett, Darrell Wayne Fair, Juan Luna, I. B. Peaceful, William Jones, Christian Dior Noel, Ernesto Valle, Kenneth Key, and Luis Trevino. Thank you to the artists and Prison + Neighborhood Arts /Education Project (PNAP) for sharing!

Undoing the Carceral State opened on October 11th at PNAP's community art space Walls Turned Sideways in Chicago. Learn more at p-nap.org.

Stateville Speaks is a newsletter written by and for individuals incarcerated in Illinois, their families, those working in the correctional system, activists, advocates and everyone affected by prison conditions. It is available to any incarcerated individual who requests it regardless of their ability to pay, as well as any interested reader. Additionally, it is provided to every Illinois state senator, state representative, and Illinois Department of Corrections warden.

Stateville Speaks Fall 2024

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Stateville Speaks was founded in 2004 by Renaldo Hudson and Bill Ryan at Stateville Prison

Northeastern Illinois University Justice Studies has been home to Stateville Speaks since 2009

You can learn more, donate and read digital issues at statevillespeaks.org

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Continued from the cover

I must've repeated that word – numb, numb, numb – or some variation of it a hundred times over the past seven days, absorbing it deep in my viscera.

Numb, numbing, numbness. These words had a hold on my being and refused to release me. They were demanding to be wielded at this particular moment in time. After years of neglect and dismissal, the state was paying attention to the conditions of our prisons, and this was the result.

The state memo notes that the rebuilding plans resulted from the Department of Corrections contracting with an “outside firm” to “assess and report on the physical condition of each facility to identify our needs.” But the assessment of “needs” wasn't focused on the actual human beings incarcerated behind these prisons' walls and razor wire-topped fences. It was focused on the physical steel, brick and mortar structures. What about our needs? The state isn't prioritizing the physical, mental or psychological conditions and/or needs of the humans being held.

The state's words and actions are less about the demolition of an inhumane, dilapidated, 102-year-old prison plantation than they are about forecasting the “criminal” futures of a whole generation of people who are now too young to have even committed even a single criminal act.

The memo notes that its proposals for building prisons take into consideration “population projections, staffing levels and the infrastructure of the facilities.” I read this to mean: In the future, the state will need space to cage today's Black, brown and poor pre-teens. We will need jobs for our small towns and illogical building projects to generate kickbacks.

This point was reinforced during an April town hall meeting here at Stateville Correctional Center, attended by the Director and other officials. A high-ranking official told us that they would be building this next facility for “future generations that will be coming to prison.”

My fellow incarcerated brothers, sisters and siblings understand clearly this isn't about us. This is about the children who are left behind and the ones who are not. This is about the future housing of one group and the employment of another.

My numbness comes from the realization that my two pre-teen nephews will be targeted for capture and deliverance into state slavery – just as their father and uncle were. It comes from the dread of one day meeting them for the first time – here. It comes from not knowing how to help them to walk the system's tightrope – backward, hands tied, with no safety net.

It comes from having turned 20 years old in prison, and then turning 52 in the same housing unit, 32 years later. It comes from missing 32 Thanksgivings, 33 Christmases and almost 13,000 days of freedom for crimes committed as a child.

It comes from asking re-entry organizations how they plan to activate around the prison-rebuilding issue, and receiving no substantive response.

It comes from some members of my own incarcerated community believing it's preferable to be in a “better cage,” rather than none at all.

It comes from our state government planning to spend close to \$1 billion on two “state of the art” prison facilities, when the communities we come from have never seen a single \$100 million high school or community space.

It comes from the sad fact that the only time some young folks will ever see a “state of the art” anything built specifically for them, it will be a prison.

I have more years behind me than I have ahead of me. I may be lost to the historical genocide that is mass incarceration. I do not plead for myself. I plead for the next generation who will witness more money and resources invested in two prisons than will ever be invested in their survival. I plead for the mothers who fear their sons and daughters will be lost to prisons as their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and husbands were.

I plead for the lives and futures of my two nephews. I wish I could offer what's left of mine in their place. I pray they are not forced to grow up in a world where they'll see more places being built to enslave them than to educate them.

I have never met or touched my nephews because their parents don't ever want them to step foot inside of a prison – free or otherwise. I respect their decision. I long to meet my nephews, but if the state plans for our first meeting to be as they are spending their first days of incarceration inside a shiny, brand-new Stateville Correctional Center, then I pray I never do.

I may feel numb, but nevertheless, I am pleading: Invest in our young people now, so this place isn't the state's destination for them later. Our future generations deserve abundant lives, not “better” cages. ●

I.B. Peaceful is the pseudonym of a writer incarcerated in Stateville Prison. He chose to use a pen name due to concerns about retaliation.

We Asked Women Incarcerated at Logan How They Got News About Closure. Here’s What They Said.

BY STATEVILLE SPEAKS

The announcement of the impending closure of Logan prison took many people by surprise. Three women shared their reactions to the news with us.

Diandra Samuels: “I got news about the closure through word of mouth, the news, and the various nervous and angry staff members who were complaining. It came in all different directions, with all different responses. I am already a transferred individual in custody (hostage) from Virginia. **A prison is a prison is a prison.** I hope they can change laws which will allow the beautiful men and women of Logan and Stateville to just go home, preferably the individuals with heavy time who have already carried out an equivalent amount of time. Eventually, I hope they let everybody go. I don’t disagree that Logan needs to get closed, but no, we don’t need more prisons. We need trauma centers, more educational programs, more funds allocated to the community. We need not to oppress individuals, but to help them.”

Erika Ray: “I learned about the closure of Logan through staff members expressing anger about the closure. Many of them requested that we advocate for the prison to remain open. I do not believe that Illinois should use taxpayer dollars to build another prison. **This money could be used to create more resources, programs, and assistance for communities that are harmed by the carceral system.**”

Anonymous: “I heard it through the grapevine. That grapevine is a few ladies here that are in contact with some lawyers. Needless to say, I was thrilled about it. The staff is livid, and a few of the ‘privileged’ inmates want to stay here in Logan; their privilege probably won’t follow them. I don’t care where they put me, anything is better than this. We have sewage under the houses. The maintenance men refuse to drink the water. The officers are increasingly more violent. Our grievances are being thrown away. I could go on, but you get the gist. The tablets have an ‘update’ about the closure section from Latoya Hughes, which always states that there is no update. From what I’ve gathered from local news stations, we are going to move in five years. But the maintenance men believe we will be moving by the end of the winter, because they have no faith in the ancient coal-run boilers. The boilers have been on the fritz for years, and last year a whole house was moved because there was no heat. This year will probably be more of the same. We already have cold water because the boilers can’t heat enough water for all the grounds. **We live in a dump. I want to move, or better yet, I want to go home.**” ●

Lack of Notice About Stateville Transfers Harms Individuals in Custody

BY ROBERT CURRY

Stateville Correctional Facility is scheduled to close due to hundreds of millions of dollars in deferred maintenance and incompetence of correctional administration. As a result of these issues, the institution became a dangerous environment for the men who were housed there. Due to a preliminary injunction granted by the court on August 8, 2024, Stateville was ordered to transfer all individuals in custody from the facility by September 30, 2024. Since this ruling was sanctioned, the closure of the facility has been expedited, and mass transfers have been the result.

In the first two weeks of transfers, about 85 men were transferred per week, 40 or 45 men each Tuesday and Thursday to other correctional facilities throughout the state, totaling approximately 170 men being moved. These transfers have triggered anxiety on both sides of the bars. Individuals in custody are put in positions of further loss by prison officials’ unwillingness to give advance notice that they are on the transfer list. Without advance notice, individuals in custody are subjected to loss of personal property, the ability to schedule final visits with loved ones, and the ability to contact loved ones to inform them of transfers. Individuals in custody also aren’t given adequate time to prepare to be moved.

The reason such preparation is necessary is because individuals in custody are human beings first, and deserve the dignity to decide which of their personal belongings are valuable, and to make arrangements to send them home or pack them in their property, rather than being hurried, then forced to discard things due to being informed a day or two before being put on a bus to who-knows-where. Correctional facilities range in proximity to Stateville, from as close as two hours to as far as six hours away.

In many respects, the lack of notice is extremely malicious. The anxiety inflamed in correctional staff from the closure and their own displacement has caused them to consciously choose to make us, individuals in custody, suffer further by intentionally causing us to lose more during this process. There’s no empathy or understanding of how this institution has become a detriment to our lives and health. Instead, they seem to be withholding transfer notification as an act of retaliation in response to individuals in custody having the audacity to need to live in good health and free from hazardous conditions. Though they say withholding notification is a security measure, it’s actually an act of punishment. ●

Robert Curry was born on the low end, south side of Chicago. Robert is currently serving a de facto life sentence at Stateville Prison for a crime he did not commit.

How Bad Do Conditions Have to Get for a Women’s Prison to Be Condemned?

BY KAREN MCCARRON

The conditions at both Illinois’s Stateville Correctional Center (a men’s prison) and Logan Correctional Center (a women’s prison) were officially condemned at about the same time. Yet, the state of Logan Correctional Center, where I am incarcerated, remains in limbo. Incarcerated women listen as officers play armchair quarterback, talking about what should happen in order to either keep the prison in Logan County or move us to another facility during a rebuild or new build. All the while, these same women feel ignored and unheard.

How many times do women, in their carceral experience, hear that they are not mentally ill enough, not abused enough, not fearful enough for their own safety to get their needs met? Once again, we are seemingly thrown into a measuring-stick game where authorities will compare the conditions of a women’s facility and a men’s facility, and make arbitrary determinations.

Here is what we are facing: The gym/auditorium has been closed at Logan for four years because of black mold. Logan currently provides a small, condemned living unit for its gym and church services, which is hardly adequate. The vocational school building has been closed because of repairs. The black mold that exists at Logan is not isolated to two buildings; it exists in every living unit. Women have come back from medical appointments with positive lung biopsies for black mold. This then begs the question: How much black mold in a woman’s facility is “enough” or too much? Does the black mold have to be equal or greater than the black mold issues at men’s facilities?

The structural maintenance problems at Logan and Stateville did not happen overnight, but show a pattern of deliberate indifference. If new prison facilities are built, will they be maintained properly? Or will these new facilities, because of staff neglect, corruption, budget cuts, and administrative inaction, fall prey to similar problems? These questions need to be addressed. Otherwise, new facilities will merely become another local jobs program. These prisons, as they exist, do not truly help people reenter society.

Correctional staff trips to Norway—to “learn” from its prison system—are useless if the administration is not willing to put into practice restorative and professional practices that attempt to reduce the deliberate indifference at all levels within Illinois Department of Corrections.

The plan to shut down and rebuild Logan resembles telling a woman to move into a new home with an abusive husband. The new home does the woman little good because she is still faced with needs that a different physical space cannot truly help with.

The Illinois prison system has an atrocious recidivism rate. If facilities “need” to be built, it would make far more sense to put monies toward building smaller reentry centers focused on improving housing and job placement, rather than more prisons. If people have housing and jobs, they are less likely to recidivate.

We also need more releases. Pathways for long-timers to earn release need to be constructed through legislation, through bringing back parole for determinate sentences, and through greater clemency actions. There is a need for general reeducation of the public about those who have committed violent crimes. Those who have spent more than 20 years in prison have a recidivism rate of less than 2 percent. People age out of crime. Money needs to be spent reeducating the public to accept former long-timers into their communities and give them jobs. Spending money wisely in this manner will lessen the “need” for prison bed space in the first place.

I believe the path forward is clear. However, all of my common sense and lived experience may not matter, because those maintaining the current culture have deemed me “not enough.” ●

Karen McCarron is a North Park Seminary Masters in Restorative Justice candidate and a Parole Illinois inside board member.

Prisoners’ Justice Day at Walls Turned Sideways

BY STATEVILLE SPEAKS

An event for Prisoners’ Justice Day was held on August 10, 2024. It was sponsored by the Justice for Restricted Citizens Foundation (J4RC) and organized by founder Robert Curry and his partner Barbara Curry. It took place at Walls Turned Sideways, PNAP’s new art gallery on the west side of Chicago. One hundred people came to bring awareness to the injustices that burden our loved ones in prison. There was music, food, testimony and fellowship. We heard formerly incarcerated individuals tell their stories of survival and of keeping their promise to help bring more people home. They also rallied behind the Parole Illinois Earned Reentry and Good-Time bills (HB3373/SB2129 and HB5219) and sent letters to legislators in support of these bills. ●



Michael Broadway’s Death Shows That Stateville’s “Inhumane” Status Goes Beyond Decrepit Buildings

BY DECEDRICK WALKER

Stateville Correctional Center has been condemned as “decrepit, unsafe, and inhumane,” as reported by the John Howard Association and acknowledged by Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker in his March 15 plan to rebuild both Stateville and Logan prisons. But what aspects of this structure are inhumane and unsafe? Is it the outdated physical structure only? Or, is it the pervasive culture of dehumanizing prison operations and policies that have contributed over the years to the now-dilapidated physical structures of each prison, not to mention the harm that has been done to the human beings inside?

Citing the need to modernize, the Illinois Department of Corrections’s Acting Director Latoya Hughes conveyed in a memo to staff at both locations that “a reconstruction of both facilities will best meet the department’s operational mission and requirements.” Introducing a plan to modernize these facilities with current technologies is one example of this administration’s commitment to change.

For me, as a theological scholar who obtained my Master’s degree in Restorative Justice Ministry in May 2023, this biblical passage comes to mind: “No one puts new wine into old wine skins, or else the wine skins burst, the wine is spilled, and the wine skins are ruined” (Mark 2:22). In other words, putting modernized \$900 million correctional facilities into the hands of a dehumanizing culture in the manner outlined by Governor Pritzker will end in ruins for incarcerated people.

From a prisoner’s perspective, a safer work environment for staff does not necessarily translate into safer living conditions, if a decrepit building is replaced with a modernized one. A new building may prevent the ceiling from falling in on us. However, it will not deter prison staff from treating us inhumanely.

Here’s an example.

On June 19, 2024, at approximately 4pm, Michael Broadway, an individual in custody at Stateville, a graduate of Northwestern University’s Prison Education Program, a cancer survivor, and author of the recently published book *One Foot In*, began to experience shortness of breath. Michael complained to another incarcerated person assigned to the cell next to his on 9 Gallery, the top tier of the living unit, prompting IDOC staff to call a Code 3 emergency. Upon hearing the Code 3, prison staff were supposed to secure immediate medical attention for Michael. A correctional officer (CO) who verified Michael’s complaint of shortness of breath walked down from 9 Gallery to the 5th tier fire escape, looked over the rails, and was visibly incredulous when he saw the nurse standing inside the cellhouse on 1 Gallery with no sense of urgency.

Multiple witnesses heard the nurse tell the CO, “Bring him [Michael] downstairs,” as the nurse explained she did not want to walk all the way up to the top tier in the heat. The cellhouse

lieutenant finally convinced her to take the flight of stairs up to attend to Michael’s needs. After hitting Michael’s breathless body with a dose of Narcan, the nurse watched him remain unresponsive. Two additional nurses arrived later with an oxygen tank and stretcher.

Due to what witnesses described as “general incompetencies” of most personnel involved, Michael’s breathless body was carried from 9 Gallery to 1 Gallery in a state-issued white bedsheet offered by an individual in custody because the stretcher that had arrived close to 30 minutes after the original Code 3 was inoperative, and the COs were physically unable to carry Michael down the stairs. Michael’s body left the cellhouse before 5pm. By 7pm that evening, we learned that Michael had died.

There are a plethora of other Michaels here at Stateville prison whose medical needs are being neglected. There are men here who learned of late-stage cancer diagnoses because medical personnel failed to inform them of their condition when it was treatable. It isn’t just that these “facilities possess critical infrastructure needs beyond maintenance and repair,” as Acting Director Latoya Hughes said. The way prison personnel operate within the prisons — the way they dehumanize people incarcerated — makes clear that our needs go well beyond maintenance and repair.

Perhaps Governor Pritzker could devote a portion of that \$900 million to transforming a dehumanizing culture. ●



My Water Is Toxic by Ernesto Valle

DeCedrick Walker, MA, is a published author, hip-hop artist, poet, and trauma-informed street analyst trained and experienced in de-escalating conflict and brokering peace. He is no longer his past, he is his present, and he is redefining his future.



Follow the Money by Darrell Wayne Fair

We Need to Build More Prison Study Groups

BY JEREL MATTHEWS

Prison study groups have always been necessary pathways for prisoners to educate ourselves. Liberatory thinkers and agents like El Hajj Malik Shabazz, George Jackson, and Martin Sostre (the O.G. of prison litigation), received their theo-political and legal education via their involvement in study groups, not in formal prison education programs.

With the evolution and expansion of the carceral state, we need study groups now more than ever.

For too many, the prison industrial complex remains a hidden site of domestic war waged against Muslims, BIPOC people, members of the LGBTQ community, and others. Innocence and guilt continue to be fictions of the state which shield its culpability for the environmental and psychological casualties that result from their carceral tactics. While the Illinois prison system offers some very limited educational opportunities, the curriculum is often heavily controlled, geared towards maintaining the status quo of peace without justice. These programs are also often unavailable to those serving life or de facto life sentences and offered only to individuals with shorter sentences.

We need to build study groups — reading, writing, studying, and debating questions of race, gender, family, history — to allow some of the world’s most dynamic people to cross-breed diverse ideologies and experiences. A group of this nature gives its participants the opportunity to collectively and individually theorize, and also to dissent and resist oppression.

We need to learn, together, how state violence persists through what is called and practiced as justice. A vibrant intellectual life can also facilitate unity and support people to decarcerate mentally through learning philosophies and ideologies of freedom along with psychologies of liberation. Individual

transformation does not happen in a vacuum. We are always influenced by others, even if they are different.

We need collective study to build collective and individual struggle. ●

Jerel Matthews is a father, son, brother and an abolitionist from the southside of Chicago. He is committed to abolishing mass incarceration and state violence against marginalized people on this planet. Jerel is currently incarcerated at Shawnee Prison.

Family Fun Day at Logan

BY WOMEN’S JUSTICE INSTITUTE

“I am so happy! I don’t want this day to ever end!”
– 8-year-old boy to his mother

The Women’s Justice Institute (WJI) was overjoyed to organize and host the first-ever Family Fun Day on August 17, 2024 at Logan Correctional Center. Over 150 people from 42 families came together from around the state of Illinois to celebrate being together in an outdoor field.

The day included ice cream sundaes, a piñata handmade by women who work in Leisure Time Services, bubble blowing, chalk drawing, and board games. Many children made friends with each other, happy to be with other children who understand what it is like to be separated from their moms. Many moms cuddled their babies and children, some of whom they hadn’t seen in years. One mom was able to feed her baby the milk she had laboriously pumped. In Illinois’ prisons, moms who are not in the specialized Moms and Babies program are only allowed to remain with their babies for 72 hours, making these mother-baby reunions all the more essential.

As rewarding as Family Fun Day was, the reality is that parents and children should not be separated. Prison punishes the whole family, from the grandmothers to the youngest babies, and everyone in between. It is vital that laws and policies leading to the damaging of family bonds be changed and implemented. ●



IN MEMORIAM

Long Live Anthony Gay!
Justice for Anthony Gay!



The National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression dips our banners in honor of freedom fighter **Anthony Gay**, who recently passed away. We send our condolences to his family and broad community of supporters who are feeling the weight of this enormous loss. Anthony made history by connecting his personal fight to a broader struggle against the system of racist tyranny that keeps so many oppressed people controlled and confined. He survived 22 years in solitary confinement, under the iron heel of police repression and mass incarceration. While enduring that torture, Anthony transformed himself into a freedom fighter. And when he got out, he broadened his fight to change not only his own personal conditions, but to change the way this system is allowed to operate. That fight continues.

It is because of the advocacy he engaged in, fighting to pass the Isolated Confinement Restriction Act, that he was then targeted by the Rock Island Police, pinned with a false gun charge, and sent to federal

prison for 7 years. It is because of this wrongful incarceration in retaliation for his organizing that he did not receive the medical treatment he needed when he was diagnosed with cancer. While his family and the movement continued to press for the federal Bureau of Prisons to provide information and provide him adequate treatment, the Bureau hid information and demonstrated neglect of his medical needs. Anthony's death lies squarely at the feet of the Bureau of Prisons and of this racist system that has been trying to silence and control him since he was a teenager.

Beyond his tireless activism, Anthony was a one-of-a-kind person, who cared for everyone he came across, looked out for the most vulnerable, spread light to others, and would drop everything for those who needed a hand. His story reached from news channels to children's classrooms, from Rock Island, Illinois to California, Iowa, Florida, and even countries around the world. He brought out the skills in anyone and showed them how to use them to serve the people, and managed to continue cultivating his relationships even while he was locked up. The movement in Chicago and all of Illinois will never be the same without him, and he should be here with us today.

We must and we will carry on the struggle to end the use of solitary confinement in his memory and carry on the fight against the system that enabled his death. We must do this with the love for the people and each other that Anthony showed us in our hearts, and with the understanding of the brutality of this racist system that he shared in our minds.

Long Live Anthony Gay! Justice for Anthony Gay!

—Statement from Frank Chapman, Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression

Stateville Speaks wants to honor those we have lost.

Send eulogies to:

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

POETRY & ART

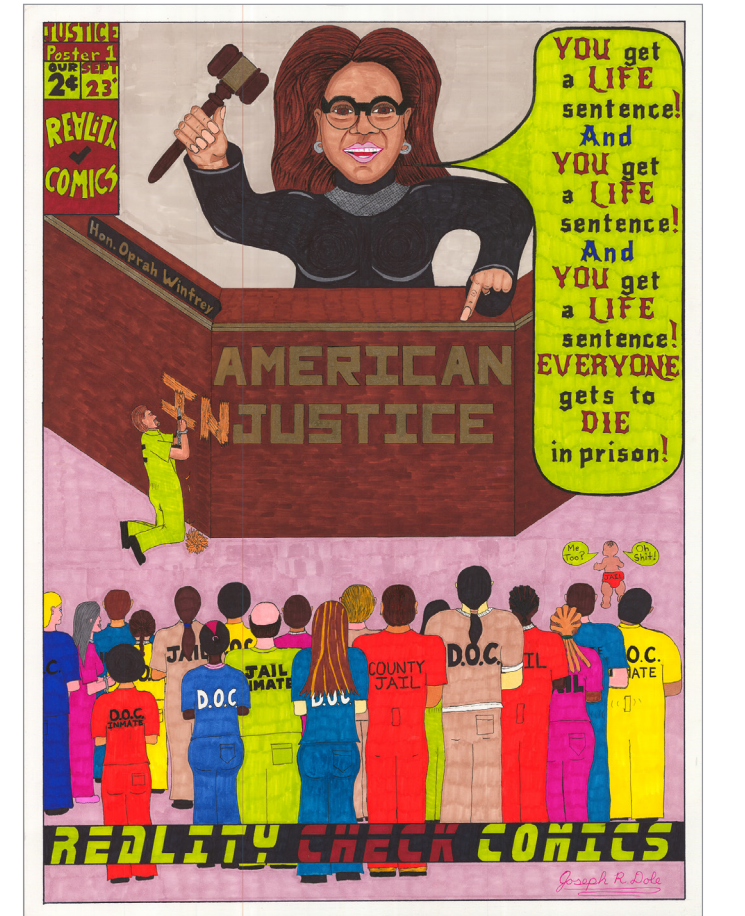
CORRECTION BY CHAKA RICHBLOOD

Correction, you ain't been living right
Even though you was raised wrong
Not that it was your parents' fault

It was by design
Through the annals of time
Dehumanized and Deprived

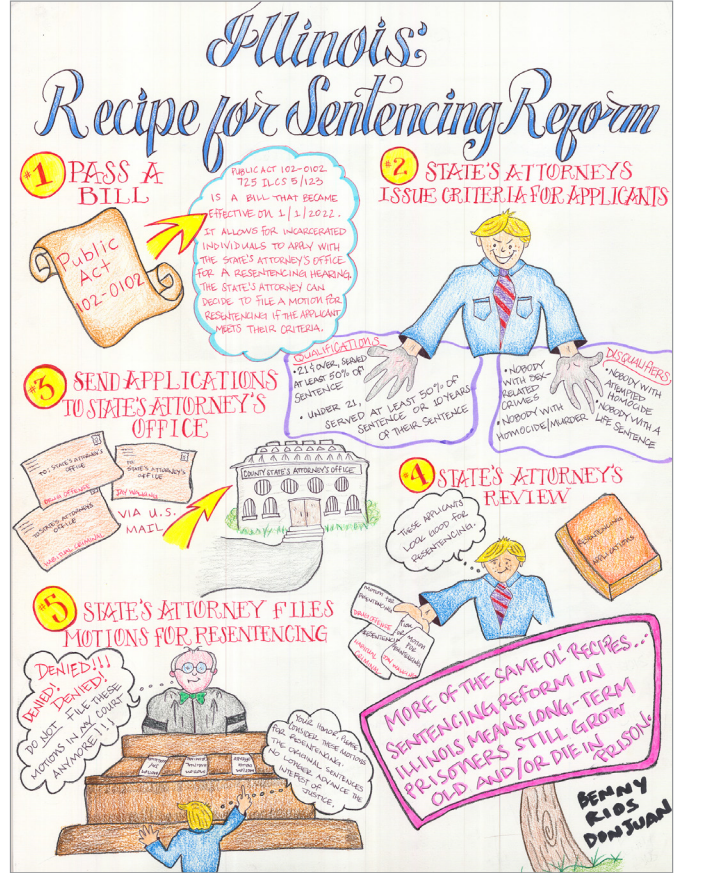
Said a colonizer,
"I don't understand why."
"Why are you depressed?"
"Why are you angry?"
"Why are you in such a state?"

Once dark, now enlightened oppression
Vague expressions, and gentle touch
to this insidious machination



The Media and Mass Incarceration by Joseph Dole

Recipe for Sentencing Reform by Benny Rios DonJuan



In this place of Correction
Masked, cruel, and unusual
Officer Right
Trained in the Third Reich
Is Responsible for your safety

He is learned in the way of correcting your life
After everything went wrong
And this process goes on...
correctly, incorrecting

This is dedicated to all my little brothers who cannot articulate the reality of the carceral experience. Remember, a great struggle requires great strength. ●

Chaka Richblood was raised in the Chicagoland area, and has been incarcerated for over half his life—automatically adjudicated as an adult for the terrible choices he made as an adolescent. Since his incarceration, he has achieved many feats including a high school equivalency degree, associates degree in general studies, and he is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree with EIU and the U of I. His writing has been published various literary journals such as *The Ninth Letter*, *Making Choices*, and *Blessed and Broken*.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE 2024 STATEVILLE SPEAKS AWARDS!

Do you know someone who is incarcerated who continues to be a force of power and generative change? A person whose art — poetry/spoken word, drawing, music — is transformative and mesmerizing? Nominate that person for a small monetary prize and recognition in an upcoming edition of *Stateville Speaks!* The award review committee is convened by Renaldo Hudson.

Nominate your inside **Advocate of the Year** and/or **Artist of the Year**. In your own words, tell us who they are, and why they need to be recognized. What are they doing, and why do they inspire you? In a one-to-two page letter, describe why they deserve this award. Your nomination can address:

1. How has this person made a positive impact on the lives of incarcerated individuals or a positive change within the prison system? Offer examples.
2. How has the Inside Advocate/Artist demonstrated leadership and/or creative ingenuity within the prison community?
3. Have you personally benefited from the advocacy or the creative energies of the Inside Advocate/Artist? If so, how?
4. How has the Inside Advocate/Artist inspired or motivated you?
5. What initiatives or projects do you think this Inside Advocate/Artist should focus on in the future?
6. Would you like to be more involved in supporting the Inside Advocate/Artist? If so, how?

In your nomination, please also include the following information: Your Name, Name of Nominee, Your Relationship to the Nominee, and (Optional) Supporting Documents (You may attach letters of recommendation, photos, or any other materials that further illustrate why the nominee should receive this award.)

NEW DEADLINE for Nominations: December 1, 2024

Mail your nominations to: ***Stateville Speaks 2024 Awards, c/o Justice Studies Department, LWH 4062 Northeastern Illinois University, 5500 N. St. Louis Ave, Chicago IL 60625.***

Reproductive Justice Bill Signed Into Law

The Women’s Justice Institute is ecstatic to share that HB5431 has been signed into law by Governor J.B. Pritzker. This new law is a huge step forward in reproductive justice for those who are pregnant or postpartum and under correctional control. Leaders at the WJI, together with our WJI Reclamation Policy & Advocacy Fellows, spent many days in Springfield, fighting alongside the bill’s sponsors, State Senator Mary Edly-Allen and State Representative Kelly Cassidy. Here are a few of the changes that will begin on January 1, 2025:

People who are pregnant or postpartum in jails or prisons cannot be restrained, with extremely limited exceptions.

Anyone pregnant or lactating in jail or prison must receive at least 300 supplemental calories each day, and that such nutrition be accessible outside of mealtimes.

For anyone delivering a baby while on an electronic monitor, their ankle monitor shall be removed while in the hospital, or earlier if deemed medically advisable by a medical professional.

Reproductive rights must be posted wherever people who are pregnant may be housed, including the laws concerning people who are pregnant, the procedure to obtain an abortion, and how to receive information about guardianship or adoption upon request.

Jails and prisons will be required to keep records of how many pregnant people they house each year, as well as the number of miscarriages and deliveries that occur in custody.

None of this would have been possible without the advocacy of WJI Fellows all year, courageously sharing their own stories of being pregnant, parenting, or going through delivery while in jail or prison. In addition, the WJI and ACLU of Illinois report, “Expecting Justice,” was critical in the formation of the bill. The WJI would like to thank the Ms. Foundation for Women for funding our advocacy in this space. Thank you to everyone who fought for reproductive justice and dignity for all!

“Restoring Hope”: Working to Expand Prison Education

Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prisons (IL-CHEP) held an event on August 14, 2024 at Adler University entitled, “Restoring Hope: Expanding Higher Education in Illinois Prisons—Challenges and Opportunities.” The coalition is currently working on policy recommendations to expand educational access and opportunities for incarcerated individuals. This meeting was attended by educators, advocates, media outlets, and Illinois Department of Corrections representatives. IL-CHEP’s current program coordinator and media manager are both formerly incarcerated. They spoke about their firsthand experiences of the obstacles to accessing higher education programs, especially among those with lengthy sentences. This was one of the main focuses of the meeting, since many people incarcerated in Illinois with lengthy sentences are languishing without access to constructive programming. In its recommendations, the coalition stressed the need to amend the eligibility process and criteria for higher education programming in Illinois prisons.

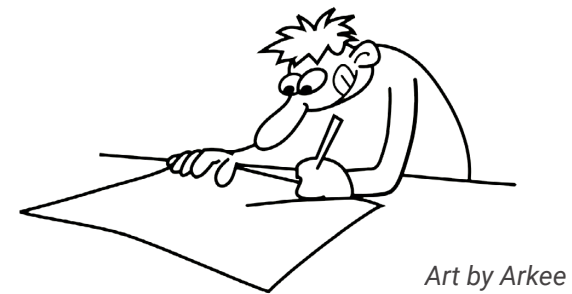
“To Cut a Barber’s Hands” Premieres at Second City

In July, Anthony Spaulding’s one-man play, “To Cut a Barber’s Hands” was featured at the famous venue Second City. This debut, which was featured for three consecutive weeks, was a remarkable feat considering that Second City primarily features comedic acts. Anthony spent 27 years incarcerated in Illinois and was released from prison approximately two years ago. **Congrats to Anthony!**

We want to publish your essay, letter, eulogy, announcement, poem or artwork in an upcoming issue! Please try to limit articles to around 500 words and include a short bio. Articles may be edited for length. Due to the volume of submissions we receive, work may not be returned.

If you have a topic or question you would like us to address in an upcoming issue, drop us a line and let us know!

Send submissions to:
***Stateville Speaks c/o Justice Studies
LWH 4062 Northeastern IL University
5500 N. St. Louis Ave.
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RE-ENTRY RESOURCES

National Alliance for the Empowerment of the Formerly Incarcerated (NAEFI)
Sankofa Cultural Arts & Business Center, 5820 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago, IL 60651 (773) 593-2540 naefimentor.wixsite.com/naefi

Institute for Nonviolence Chicago
Austin (Main Office), 819 N. Leamington St., Chicago, IL 60651 (773) 417-7421 nonviolencechicago.org

Pushing Envelopes Chicago (formerly Black and Pink Chicago) is grounded in prison abolition and builds LGBTQ+ community across bars through penpals, legal aid and re-entry support. We recognize that surviving incarceration is a radical and transcendent risk, and every day is an incredible act of resilience, particularly for LGBTQ+ people.

We are accessible to people incarcerated in Illinois who identify as LGBTQ+ and/or are living with HIV. We believe that no one is disposable, that abolition is inextricably linked to LGBTQ+ liberation, and that our work is not finished until everyone is free from all forms of imprisonment, surveillance, and punishment.

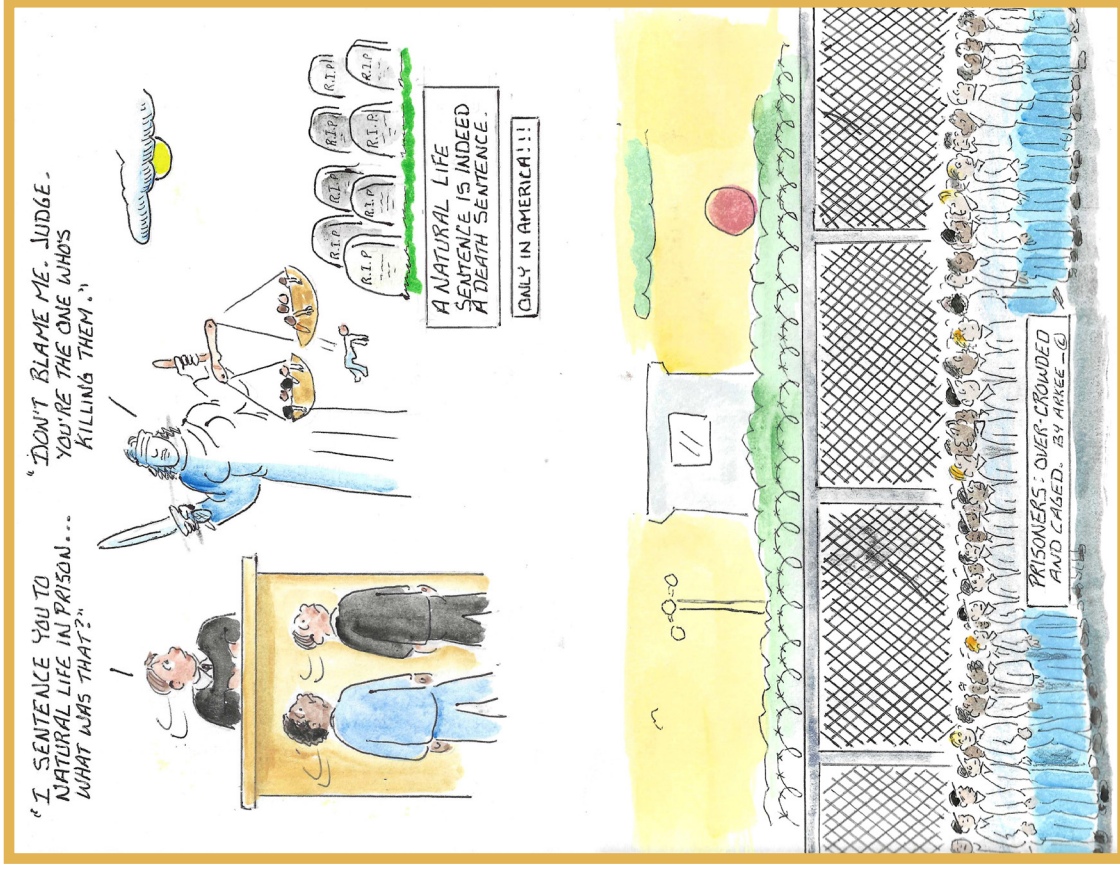
We work with other organizations in Chicago to fight against criminal registries and housing banishment laws that perpetuate homelessness and reincarceration, to support clemency campaigns and lawsuits against IDOC, and to ensure that our folks have the tools they need to survive, both while locked up and for those who are released.

If you identify as being a part of this community, would like a pen pal or are getting released soon, don’t hesitate to write to us. We will try our best to support. Reach us at **Pushing Envelopes Chicago, P.O. Box 577942 Chicago, IL, 60657** or **pushingenvelopeschicago.org**. Sending lots of love to you all!



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