

STATEVILLE SPEAKS

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE • WINTER-HOLIDAY 2020

BILL RYAN: STATEVILLE SPEAKS AND BEYOND

By Gail Biro, Katy Ryan
& Gayle Tulipano

Over the past half a dozen years or so, we have fielded so many letters inquiring on what Bill Ryan, “outside” creator of Stateville Speaks is doing now, most assuming he is enjoying those coveted golden years of retirement. Although he has taken a noticeable step back from the newsletter, he has been far from idle. In my efforts to answer these letters I wanted to find out what he was up to now and what he had in sight for his future. In that quest for this information, I was stunned at what I never knew and only recently found out about my friend and mentor. So, with enormous input from previous co-worker and friend Gail Biro and daughter Katy Ryan, another driving force behind Stateville Speaks, I just needed to share.

Bill Ryan, aka Toad, grew up in Maysville, Kentucky, one of six children on a small farm. As a boy he was confused as to why the black kids he shared a basketball court with were not allowed to share the same soda fountain. This confusion developed into a lifelong commitment to racial and social justice. He attended a Catholic high school with a graduating class of 12 and earned his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science at Notre Dame in 1956. He joined the Army in 1959 and became a Special Agent-Counter Intelligence; he served in Korea and Japan.

After discharge he worked in his hometown as a reporter, Deputy Tax Commissioner, and high school teacher. One of his students Peggy Taylor said she



Bill Ryan testifies at an IDOC hearing in 2017.

attended her first demonstration with Bill after the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church. He encouraged her to write an editorial for the school paper. “It was Toad who made so many of us aware and awakened in us a sense of responsibility,” Peggy recalled. “He was the teacher who had the most profound influence on my life. I adopted his passion for social justice and have been an activist of one kind or another all my adult life.”

In 1961, Bill married Mary Julia O’Hearn, also from Maysville. In six years, they had four children. Bill worked as a Juvenile Counselor with the Covington Child Welfare office before becoming Supervisor of the Juvenile Counselor Unit of Child Welfare in Lexington.

During this time, Bill was active in the movement to desegre-

gate local businesses. In 1964, he organized a trip to a civil rights march in Frankfurt led by Dr. King. In a local paper Bill was quoted, “We didn’t see any legislators whom we recognized.” He became known for encouraging people to push, pull, or get out of the way.

He graduated from University of Louisville School of Social Work with his Master’s in Social Work in 1967. Social services fueled his drive to assist the oppressed and vulnerable. By 1970 he was appointed Assistant Director of the Department of Child Welfare, Division of Community Services where he managed child welfare services for half of the state. It was there he began to make his mark creating programs for young people who were the most complex and challenging to place. He also became an instruc-

tor at University of Kentucky in the College of Social Professions.

In four short years he was recruited to fill the Deputy Commissioner position for the State of Kentucky Department of Child Welfare. As his influence increased so did his efforts in reform. He worked with Kentucky legislators to revamp statutes and develop community-based alternatives, which allowed the state to close mismanaged youth schools.

In 1974 he was recruited to manage child welfare services in the state of Illinois with an annual budget of over \$200 million dollars. He developed and pioneered the Child Abuse Hotline now used across the country. He was responsible for institutions charged with the care and well-being of children with disabilities and hospitals for veterans.

See BILL RYAN, page 4

Hope...Redemption...Change

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

SB2929 (END PRISON SLAVE LABOR ACT)

Amends the Unified Code of Corrections. Provides that the wages paid to a person for work as a person committed to the Department of Corrections or the Department of Juvenile Justice, either in the correctional industries program, on work release, or in a work training program, shall not be less than the State minimum wage. Provides that the respective Department shall charge businesses reasonable hourly rates for meals and the housing of committed persons on work release, if applicable. Effective January 1, 2021*.



Amends the Unified Code of Corrections. Provides that the wages paid to a person for work as a person committed to the Department of Corrections or the Department of Juvenile Justice, either in the correctional industries program, on work release, or in a work training program, shall not be less than the State minimum wage. Provides that the respective Department shall charge businesses reasonable hourly rates for meals and the housing of committed persons on work release, if applicable. Effective January 1, 2021*.

CHICAGO WORKS SB2929 FACT SHEET

The bill's purpose is to end the last vestiges of slavery and embrace the spirit and the promise of the Thirteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, by having the General Assembly extend the Illinois State minimum wage to persons incarcerated in the Department of Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

- Over 30,000 people re-enter into society every year in Illinois. By providing people an opportunity to work at the state level minimum wage, it will afford them the opportunity to have earnings when they are released. This increases the ability to re-integrate into society smoother; therefore, reducing recidivism and human suffering, making our state safer.
- Increasing the economy on the "inside" will help family members on the "outside." In Illinois, 186,00 children have an incarcerated parent. A recent report from Youth.Gov concludes "family incomes drop 22% when fathers are incarcerated, about 65% of families with a member in prison cannot meet basic needs, and one-third land in debt. The remaining parent or family members must care for the child and often face child-care and work conflicts." This bill reduces the socioeconomic trauma on children who have a parent in custody.
- The average pay for a person detained and working in an IL Prison is \$0.09 to \$2.12 per day! It takes almost two weeks of work to afford one box of tampons or \$10 calling card.
- Monthly, people in custody are still required to pay for their own: Soap = \$5, Deodorant = \$8, Shampoo = \$8, Toothpaste = \$10, Toothbrush = \$4, Stamped Envelope = \$.70, Paper = \$4, Pen = \$2, Food = \$220

SB2929 was sponsored by Senator Robert Peters (13th D). It was introduced, had a first reading, and was referred to Assignment, on February 4th, 2020, where it has remained. Several sources close to Stateville Speaks believe SB2929 has merit, interest, and support, but will face resistance due to the unforeseen budget shortfalls caused by the pandemic. They also believe, if needed, it will be re-introduced.

*Proposed date of compliance, only if bill passes. ■



Illustration by John Rossi

Stateville Speaks wants to publish your article, poem, essay or artwork. Try to limit articles to around 500 words. Articles may be edited for length. Please let us know if you do not want your name printed. Due to the volume of submissions we receive, work will not be returned. **Please do not send us any legal documents.** See page 11 for address.

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to another edition of Northeastern Illinois University's Stateville Speaks. Additionally, we would like to welcome in a new year in which we hope you may find some promise and calm.

Without a doubt, a vast majority of the letters we are beginning to receive are concerning Covid-19. Some are asking why the state is still struggling with providing adequate testing? You are asking why simple, affordable, and easily doable tasks, that mitigate and often stop the spread of Covid-19 are not being done? Why is there still a soap (and hot water) shortage? Why is there still a mask shortage, and even more

Why is there a mask shortage? And why is the staff not wearing them?

questionable why are many of the staff often not wearing them? Why are many staff members not social distancing? Many of you wrote in expressing fear over

using the phone system, paying close attention, yet nobody noticing, not once, any cleaning of equipment between callers. Even Walmart sanitizes their shopping carts between use.

Many of you writing understand the loss of visitations and rigorous restrictions on recreation time. What you do wonder though, is while you are asked and are making these great sacrifices for the common good, why much of the staff are not doing their part? Especially, as many of you have pointed out, they are the source of entry into the prisons, have the autonomy to move about the prisons and have access to protective equipment, yet some still choose not to use them properly.

So yes, we heartfully are hearing you when you ask "please, no more poems, lets talk about what is happening with the pandemic..." Know that when you are reading this, we will be trying to gather as much information as we can on what is happening, for the next edition.

In the meantime, please indulge us first with one more edition about some of the amazing people working so hard to bring about much needed changes, such as Chicago Votes, who is reaching beyond the polls to challenge unfair labor practices and wages of prisoners.

Note the legacy of three amazing trailblazers, Clarice Durham, Sylvia Woods, and Josephine Wyatt. For those of you watching a little politics, know that the fight (for voting rights) of Stacy Abrams in Georgia, that helped shaped the outcome of this election and VP choice of Kamala Harris are possible because of the fight of these brave and spirited women.

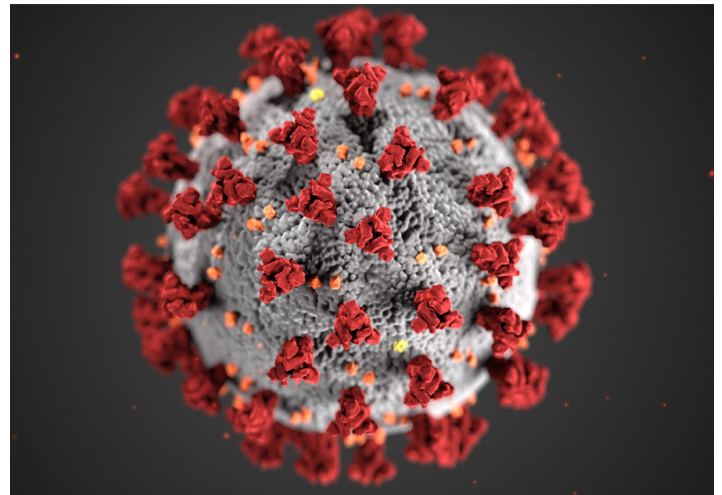
And we are in awe of the work of Alan Mills and Uptown People's Law Center. What an ambitious endeavor, with the help of Northwestern students to get the stimulus applications out as well as keeping IDOC medically compliant and sharing with us their plan to conduct Covid-19 testing within the prisons.

And in answering the simple question of "What's Bill Ryan up to these days?", I opened a whole separate story-his story, that just needed to be shared. Please take a moment in these awful times to know many people continue to work on your and all of our behalf, to make the world a little more just.

Finally, much can be learned from the actions of Preston Gresham (See "Out of Time," page 10). It is a lesson in tolerance, kindness, acceptance, compassion, and love. While we often have little control in circumstances or the people that surround us, we do have control in how we interact. Know that your kindness can have an impact far beyond what you may ever know. We truly believe life was a little bit better for Ron because of this.

So until next time, please, be kind and safe, both to yourself and others, and never, ever give up the hope. ■

COVID-19 TESTING IN IDOC



On December 6, 2020, in an effort to stop the spread of the deadly COVID-19 virus, IDOC began the rollout of testing within its facilities of both inmates and staff. Alan Mills, Executive Director of Uptown People's Law Center, shared the following information outlining the new protocol, providing us with further details that are shared below.

According to Mills, "Testing will be done of all staff, whether or not they show symptoms. This is a key breakthrough (which we and the federal court monitor have been asking for since August). As everyone now knows, people are able to spread the virus for several days before they have any symptoms. Since staff are the only ones coming in and out of the prisons, it is almost certain that they are the ones introducing COVID into the prisons--as they feel fine but are inadvertently coming to work contagious. Therefore, testing of everyone is the key to slowing the spread in prisons. As a result of the failure that spread is now horrific. On August 1st, there were only 368 prisoners who had tested positive in the entire system. Today, there are 5,458--well over a ten-fold increase*."

Below are some of the of the protocols that Mills shared with us regarding the IDOC implementation that began the first week of December 2020:

- The testing protocol is being applied prison by prison. IDOC plans to have this fully implemented in all of the prisons by mid-January, and in all of the ATC's by the end of that same month.
- The following are the parameters for testing IDOC staff:
 - 1.) Positivity greater than 10% within the county-- 2 times a week
 - 2.) Positivity between 5-10% within the county- 1 time per week
 - 3.) Positivity less than 5% - 1 time per month
- "In any prison where there is an outbreak, all staff AND prisoners will be tested twice a week, until there are 14 consecutive days without ANY new positive tests. After that, they will revert to the staff only testing protocol applicable to all prisons (Mills)."

This action was taken in compliance with Lippert v. Jeffreys, Case Number: 10 C 4603, filed by attorneys Alan Mills, Nicole Schult (Uptown People's Law Center), Ben Wolf, Camille Bennett, Lindsay Miller (ACLU of Illinois), Harold Hirshman (Dentons). This lawsuit cited lack of medical and dental care provided in IDOC, and the subsequent agreement outlines a number of guidelines, such as quantity and quality of medical and dental professionals, health care spaces, and medical equipment, to name a few.

*This number is as of December 14th 2020. ■



BILL RYAN, from page 1

In the early 1990s, Bill and Mary Julia moved to Florida where Bill became District Administrator of the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Resources. Before his first day, he went to the Food Stamp Office, stood in line, and applied for food stamps. He was ignored, mistreated, and humiliated. The first day on the job, he called the staff of that program together and introduced himself. He made clear that they would need to figure out how to treat people with dignity and respect.

Within a few years, Bill and Mary Julia returned to Chicago to be closer to their grandchildren. Bill began work at Jane Addams' Hull House and opened a branch of the now nationally known Youth Advocate Program. His effort was on the line between two warring gangs. Bill went directly to the gang leaders, set up lines of communication, and negotiated a safe place for young people to

meet.

Around this time, his daughter Katy Ryan gave him the book *Dead Man Walking*, an anti-death penalty memoir by Sister Helen Prejean. This book alerted Bill to the injustices in the legal system. Outraged by what he learned, he picked up the phone and called the author. They became fast friends and upon her recommendation he attended the meeting of a local group opposed to the death penalty. He learned that two men were scheduled to be executed, and one man's parents did not have the means to attend the final clemency hearing. In true form, Bill got in his car and picked the family up and accompanied them to the hearing. The next week he took the parents to visit their son. After this act of kindness, he received a call from William Peoples, also on death row, who thanked him and invited him back. That visit led to many more.

His friendships with the men

he met on death row compelled him to spearhead the death penalty moratorium campaign in Illinois. In his early sixties, he retired from his position at Hull House in order to volunteer full-time to eliminate executions in his state. He served as President of the Illinois Death Penalty Moratorium Campaign and was instrumental in the state suspending executions in 2000. Chicago Tribune journalist Eric Zorn said at the time that no one has visited more people in prison in the state than Bill Ryan.

"My dad's advocacy," Katy said, "comes from who he is. He

didn't just visit people on death row. He brought death row to the Chicago suburbs. He made calls, wrote letters, spoke to reporters, came to know legislators, and learned his way around the Governor's office. He spoke to everyone about his friends on death row and those serving long sentences. In nearly 30 years, he hasn't stopped."

As part of Bill's advocacy, he arranged for nine men who had been exonerated and released from death row to appear at a congressional hearing. This first-hand testimony helped to galvanize the movement that eventually led to the abolition of executions. After the Governor commuted all death sentences to life without parole in 2003, the Coalition against the Death Penalty awarded Bill the Unsung Hero Award. In 2011, the death penalty was abolished in Illinois.

Bill became especially close with Renaldo Hudson whose death sentence was among those converted to life. In the early 2000s, Renaldo had an idea to invite people incarcerated in Illinois

"I met Bill Ryan a week after one of my dear friends was murdered by our State. Bill attended Hernando Williams' funeral and heard of me from my Godmother Rev. Elena Calloway. From that day to this, Bill has been my friend and biggest advocate; ironically, I initially did not even want to meet him! You see, my soul shattering encounters with white racism had convinced me that all whites were my natural enemies. Bill was ALLAH's way of opening up my mind and heart to the reality of Universal Brother & Sisterhood. Mr. Ryan is not just my friend, he has been my father figure, my wisest counsel and the only consistent and unconditional love I've ever experienced. I am incredibly blessed to know him, but in his typical humble way, Bill would insist that he is the one who is blessed to know me!"

- William Peoples



Opposite page (left): Bill meets with Illinois Governor Jim Thompson; (right) Bill with ex-inmate Patrick Pursley; This page (left): Bill with ex-inmate William Peeples; (above) Bill with Illinois Representative Art Turner.

to submit essays for a writing contest. Bill and Katy collected submissions and arranged for a panel to select essays for recognition. Inspired by the level of participation, they published all the essays in a book titled *Lockdown Prison Heart*. To keep the creativity going, Renaldo suggested that the team start a prison newspaper. Thus, *Stateville Speaks* was born.

The first issue of *Stateville Speaks* was 8 mimeographed pages and had a circulation of 200. That was in 2004. Now the newspaper reaches over 3,000 readers. For years, Bill published issues out of his home. His kitchen table was regularly covered with essays and artwork, and Mary Julia helped to address outgoing newspapers. Twice Bill sued the Illinois Department of Corrections for refusing to deliver the publication to people in prison. He won both times.

The newspaper required a great deal of time, and Bill knew he would need to find it a permanent home. The January 2009 edition of *Stateville Speaks* was produced at Loyola Univer-

sity, with Professor Laurie Jo Reynolds. Activist and Professor Emeritus Renny Golden contacted Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) Justice Chair Dr. Cris Toffolo and Professor Kingsley Clarke in hopes of finding *Stateville Speaks* a home at NEIU.

Stateville Speaks did indeed find its permanent home at NEIU. Although Bill is no longer involved with day-to-day operations, he remains an integral part of the process as a consulting editor. Satisfied that the newspaper would continue, Bill was able to

“I want to thank you for letting me be part of your family. Bill, I have been knowing you for at least 30 years, and you always did good by me. You always wanted the best for me and always gave me sound advice. I thank you for standing by me even as I was not making the choices you wished I would make. I know I have told you these things before, but I believe I can’t thank you enough! My wish is that I could get out to help you now. Bill, I want you to know from the bottom of my heart, I love you. Thank you for being a father and a friend to me.”

- Lloyd Saterfield

concentrate on important legislative issues.

When his wife of over fifty years developed Alzheimer’s, Bill devoted himself to her care. In 2016, Mary Julia died at home surrounded by her family. She was eighty-three years old.

Bill now advocates for people serving long sentences and works closely with Illinois legislators. He helped to pass the country’s first law that allows postpartum depression to be considered as a mitigating factor in criminal sentencing or sentencing review. He continues to work on legislation that would allow elderly prisoners serving long sentences to also be eligible for review. Bill has been vocal in his support for Black Lives Matter

and in calling attention to the catastrophic impact of Covid inside prisons and jails.

In summer 2020, Bill learned that Arkee Chaney, an artist and regular contributor to *Stateville Speaks*, had been approved to be released after serving 33 years – but he had no place to go. Bill offered his home. Arkee moved in and converted Bill’s basement into an art studio where he paints and sculpts. Bill takes every opportunity to showcase Arkee’s artwork and let people how they can support Arkee and his vision (www.arkeestudios.com/).

“I don’t know anyone more transformed by friendships than my dad,” Katy said. “It makes perfect sense that Arkee is living in my dad’s house. My dad didn’t start a reentry program. He just opened his front door.”

In early September, Bill witnessed the release of his long-time friend and *Stateville Speaks* “inside” creator Renaldo Hudson. There are no words for the joy when Renaldo walked through Bill’s front door. Renaldo said he sat on the couch and put his head on Bill’s chest.

Bill has had and continues to have an amazing journey. He dedicates his life to humanity, to his family, and to justice. ■

STIMULUS EQUITY AND JUSTICE



Uptown People's Law Center mailed stimulus information to approximately 35,000 prisoners in Illinois. Photo by Terah Toner.

The CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) Act was passed to help Americans suffering economically, due to the swift moving, devastating COVID-19 pandemic. Its passage this March (2020) included many provisions such as a robust unemployment package, which included contract workers, housing payment relief and a direct \$1200 stimulus payments to most Americans and \$500 for each child, to highlight a few. The qualification for the full amount was for a single person to earn under \$75,000, with diminishing amounts for those earning up to \$99,000.

Prisoners and/or their spouses/families began receiving their stimulus checks, along with every other entitled American. Soon after, however, spouses who filed jointly were notified by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to return the portion of the relief money that was allocated to their incarcerated spouses. The IRS also ordered correctional facilities to seize stimulus checks that were already issued, even though there was nothing in the law that prevented prisoners from qualifying for the money.

To argue the unlawful actions of the IRS, a class action lawsuit was filed on behalf of incarcerated persons in local, state, and federal facilities. The suit, Scholl, et al. v. Mnuchin, Case No. 20-cv-05309-PJH, was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California and heard by Judge Phyllis Hamilton. (Mnuchin, the Treasury Secretary was named on behalf of the U.S. Government.)

While Judge Hamilton cited the withholding of the stimulus payment "arbitrary and capricious" and for payments to resume, the Trump administration appealed to stop the payments, again. The appeal was denied, and a final summary judgement was entered, allowing those incarcerated, who otherwise were qualified, to receive the payment.

While this was an economic win for prisoners and many of their families, it also created many logistical problems, such as application deadlines, lack of computer/internet access for filing (for those that did not have a recent tax return) or even a paper application. This also assumes that everyone could file their own tax return in a timely and cohesive manner.

Watching as the lawsuit ruled in the favor of prisoners and waiting on additional guidance from the IRS, Uptown People's Law Center (UPLC) worked expeditiously to assure those that qualified would have the tools they would need to apply for their money.

See STIMULUS, page 10



Illustration by John Rossi

To subscribe to Stateville Speaks, or to make a donation or sponsor an issue, see page 11 for details.

THE SPIRIT OF THE REVOLUTION LIVES ON

THE WOODS, WYATT & DURHAM FOUNDATION

Our Vision

We support organizations that do work to dismantle the white supremacy, classism, the cis-heteropatriarchy, ableism, and any and all other oppressive structures. Organizations can do this work in the form of education, advocacy, legislation, or any other avenues through which liberation can be achieved.

We unwaveringly support freedom for all oppressed people -- Black and brown people, women, LGBTQ-identified people, the disabled, and all the ways in which these identities intersect.

We support the incarcerated. Those who are in prison must be treated with dignity and respect, rehabilitated, and returned to their community as soon as possible. Our goal is the abolition of prisons and we aim to replace the Prison Industrial Complex and corrupt justice system with a system of Restorative Justice.

About Us

Sylvia Woods (left) was a union organizer, protester against the murder of Emmett Till, and the head of the Chicago Committee to Free Angela Davis. She organized a rally of 5,000 people at McCormick Place to greet Davis two days after her acquittal.



Josephine Wyatt (center) helped organize her Lawndale community against racist practices, picketed against apartheid in South Africa, and fought on behalf of (and became lifelong friends with) Angela Davis. She founded and led the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (CAARPR) for many years.

Clarice Durham (right) formed the foundation of the Progressive Party, worked in multiple education-focused organizations, and was an avid supporter of the arts. She worked tirelessly to get both Harold Washington and Barack Obama elected. She was co-chair of CAARPR for almost 25 years.

Contact Us

Pass the torch from their generation to the next. For more info or to make a donation that will go towards movements working for systemic change, the kind that would make these women proud.

Mailing Address:

Woods, Wyatt & Durham Foundation
1953 N. Clybourn Ave.
Suite R No. 358
Chicago IL 60614

Phone: 312-927-2689

Email: WWDMFund@gmail.com

Website www.wwdmf.org

Black women are the overlooked powerhouses behind every great movement.

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

By Robert Williams

How much time does it take to make the pain go away?

Does one mistake justify my lifelong stay?

Or is a life for life the only way I can pay to make you feel okay?

21 years of agony & tears praying to be redeemed.

Justice may not be blind within these confines, but it is rarely seen.

Truth in Sentencing is a travesty of the IDOC to keep the forgotten from going free.

85 to 100% plagues IDOC citizens struggling to cope with little or no hope of release or recidivism.

How can I atone if I never go home?

How is this justice when Truth in Sentencing is wrong!!

85 to 100% haven't been a deterrent to misjustice or crimes.

It's just a mischaracterization of justice to be sentenced to this much time!

The length of a sentence does not guarantee that justice is served to those who will never go free!

I've transformed myself & have helped others too.

Isn't that what true justice is supposed to do?

Only those without compassion think Truth in Sentencing is just.

7,176 days inside this cage....

How is that not enough! ■

2020

By Willie D. Scales

Dear Street Gang Leaders and Street Gang Members!

“Stop Killing Each Other Today”!

My obstacles is your obstacles

My struggles is your struggles

We need “BROTHERHOOD AND SISTERHOOD IN OUR COMMUNITIES TODAY”!

Street gangs, you need to provide your children with a safe environment to grown and learn

Street gangs, you need to provide your children with opportunities for education and future employment today

You must stop killing each other today

You do not want to come to prison with a gang related drug murder with a natural life sentence without parole, or a 20 to 60 year sentence.

You will die in prison and your children will become gang members and gang leaders and street whores

Your family needs you to stay out of prison and out of the graveyard today...

I have been in prison 40 years

You got a lot of gang leaders and gang members came to these Illinois prisons, when they was 17 to 21 years old

Now at the ages 60 to 85 years old. Old prisoners is dying everyday

DO YOU WANT THAT TO BE YOU OR YOUR CHILDREN? ■

AN OPEN LETTER ON HB3214

I'm writing this open letter in response to the filing of Illinois House Bill 3214 (a bill to grant parole eligibility to the majority of prisoners). First, I want to say thank you Rep. Mayfield for filing a bill to give people like me a second chance to be with my family, a chance to be in my kids life, and a chance to save my son from going down the wrong path in life. So, thank you Rep. Mayfield, the Stateville Debate Team and everybody who helped with this Parole Illinois movement.

But in my opinion, the point was lost, because it's not just people like me that need a chance at parole, but also the innocent.

We all know that not all Chicago police are bad apples, but we must admit that there are a lot of bad actors in the CPD and they are the reason that Chicago is the epicenter of wrongful convictions. For the past decade, we have seen dozens of people exonerated per year, many spending several decades in prison before having their names cleared and allowed to go home. Experts believe we have only seen the tip of the iceberg. There are many more people in prison who are innocent but simply lack the astronomical resources to prove it. For that reason alone, HB3214 should include everyone.

But it doesn't. It excluded anyone convicted to multiple murders or sex crimes. Two categories that we know include many innocent people. Multiple murder cases are often known as "heater" cases, meaning that police are under immense pressure to "solve" the cases. This has often been done by concealing exonerating evidence, fabricating evidence,

coercing confessions or false testimony, or otherwise framing innocent people in order to "close" the case.

In addition to police and prosecutorial misconduct, erroneous identification by victims and/or eyewitnesses is one of the leading causes of wrongful convictions – including sexual assault cases.

We shouldn't want a single person to remain in prison a single day more if that person is innocent. While parole alone won't fix the problem completely it can be a smart and safe safety valve to help minimize the amount of time innocent people spend in prison. The courts have proven ineffective in ensuring that wrongful convictions don't take place, let alone quickly rectifying the situation when they do.

Can we live with ourselves knowing that innocent people are not only being incarcerated, but also denied even the chance to prove they pose no threat to society and deserve parole? Are we comfortable paying out additional millions for additional years they spend in prison, just because we refused to do the right thing and give everyone a chance to parole? We aren't saying everyone will get out, just that they get the opportunity to try and prove they don't pose a threat to society and can be safely released from prison.

HB3214 should therefore be amended to remove the carve-outs in section (b) and should be passed as amended with all due haste.

Dwayne McCoy ■

TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS GREAT STATE WE CALL ILLINOIS AND ITS LAWMAKERS,

I want to bring to light the downfall of this state. People are wondering why our state is losing so much money? Here is your direct answer. The State of Illinois is spending three times the amount of money on jails and prisons than anything else in this state. Thirty-three to fifty percent of the jail population is made up of non-violent offenders which is costing the counties, as well as the state, millions of taxpayers' dollars, if not billions. Rather than spend this money on the prison system, why not create specialized programs that would increase the productiveness of these non-violent offenders, instead of helping them to learn how to commit better crimes.

When you subject an individual to jail or prison, you are now creating a two-headed monster, or even greater. He or she may think they are going to be rehabilitated but in actuality, one out of every fifteen or so will be. The jails and prisons do not have rehabilitation programs anymore, so therefore, these individuals are learning from lifers and other long-time prisoners how to commit their crimes better, causing now the "Domino Effect" of men and women going in and out of jail. I am sure that every family in the United States has what we call a "Black Sheep" in their family. Why? It's not because we as a family failed them, it's because we as a nation failed them. We've turned our backs on them and they have nowhere to turn to.

Our court systems have become a sham because they don't want to offer help. Our court system is a true farce of what our Constitution completely forbids. We have overzealous state's attorneys who only want to send people, as well as our children, to jail and prison. Our public defenders otherwise known as penitentiary deliverers or undercover state attorneys are helping them to achieve this goal.

When are we as a nation, going to stand up and fight for the rights of our state, country, and our nation? True, there are some who deserve to be incarcerated and there are those who if given the chance will change their lives around from where they've been. Our Constitution is built on help and forgiveness and not condemnation. The Laws of the Constitution are written on the principles of the bible.

Our money says, "In God We Trust." If we can't trust our police de-

partments across the world, what makes you think we can count on our criminal justice system unconditionally unless there is someone overseeing them. Our so-called public defender's office needs a complete overhaul with people who will do their job effectively and represent people to the best of their ability. We need lawyers and attorneys who want to win and not working just to get a paycheck. It's wrong and it's not fair.

Let's take a look at Will County Illinois Justice System. They do things as they want and please and not according to the law. There are no preliminary hearings at the courthouse. Every case they have is by indictment only. This is their way of punishing the innocent and making them guilty even before a trial, which in turn causes every man, woman, and child, to lose their jobs, family reputations, and cause pain and suffering. When will the Department of Justice intervene and see that Will County is completely violating the laws of this state? I am sure this is happening all across the United States and it is up to us "The People" to take action and correct the system that has gone utterly wrong.

In addition, there needs to be a law reform concerning non-violent crimes that would not only keep people out of prisons designed for pedophiles & violent offenders but also to help them understand how to live as a productive citizen. Cases such as deceptive practice, forgery under \$5,000, driving without a license, driving on a suspended license, retail theft, simple possession of illegal drugs, and those that fall within this category should be sent through some type of training or program that will help them to rehabilitate even if they have had prior trouble within the criminal system. Making this change would save millions of dollars within the state and with the proper classes and training, these same people who would have been in and out of jail will now be transformed into productive citizens in society, helping to make Illinois a better place to live. This will also cause Illinois to be the front runner in making a change that this country so desperately needs.

I am asking you to please, take a look at our state laws and make a change that will turn our state into a state of greatness and a front runner in criminal justice reform.

Trennis D. Jones ■

WHY ILLINOIS NEEDS TO BRING BACK PAROLE FOR DETERMINATE SENTENCES

By Karen McCarron

The U.S. is the nation that incarcerates more of its population than any other nation, not because we have more criminals or higher morals, but because incarcerating people is a business. Americans are becoming more aware of this fact, but most don't know what to do about it.

America is ranked with third world communist countries in incarcerating its citizens, and some say Illinois is one of the worst states to be incarcerated, ranking just above Alabama, not something Illinois should be proud of. One of the reasons that Illinois ranks so poorly is that it lacks a parole system.

Illinois is in the minority of states that lack a parole system for those with determinate sentences, causes inmates to serve their entire sentence prior to being seen by the Prisoner Review Board, which then only determines their conditions of Mandatory Supervised Release (MSR). Illinois has thoroughly confused its citizens about MSR, mistakenly calling it parole. MSR, an esoteric term, is not the same as parole. Parole is defined in Webster's as "the release of a prisoner whose sentence has not expired on condition of future good behavior." MSR is an additional supervisory punishment set by the judge tacked on to a full prison term and has nothing to do with good behavior.

There is no incentive for positive change within the prisoner or IDOC, currently. Rehabilitated inmates become hopeless, serving long sentences with no recognition of their accomplishments. Aggressive and



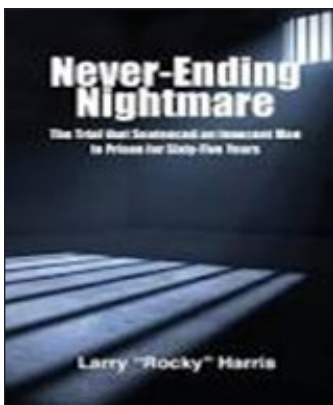
unstable inmates act out in suicide attempts and aggression towards officers they see that even being a model prisoner makes little difference. The staff, in turn, sees the community could care less about inmates, so staff sexual misconduct incidences rise, and unprofessional behavior becomes the norm. This behavior becomes so egregious, outside attorneys file lawsuits costing a near-bankrupt state millions.

IDOC continues to thwart reform and not follow Illinois law. In 2009, the Illinois Legislature passed the Crime Reduction Act (CRA). CRA caused the establishment of the Risk, Assets, Needs Assessment Taskforce (RANA). RANA called in the Vera Institute and Orbis to make a computer program called SPIn, costing \$900,000 to assess each prisoner on what they need to do to rehabilitate and function in society.

I have been incarcerated for a decade with others who have been incarcerated decades more, and none of us have been assessed using SPIn. Currently, Logan Correctional Center releases inmates without SPIn assessments, IDOC states it is too understaffed to assess inmates in a timely manner, making excuses for breaking the law for the last nine years. Instead of working smarter, using technology and resources on hand, not harder, they continue to make excuses, making the IDOC mission statement a farce.

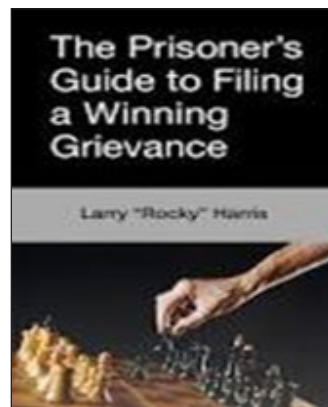
A community that cares and victims that want restorative justice instead of vengeance will critically review the Stateville Debate Team proposal and support legislation to bring back a true Parole Board System to Illinois, making IDOC and the justice system accountable and Illinois safer for all. ■

BOOKS BY LARRY "ROCKY" HARRIS



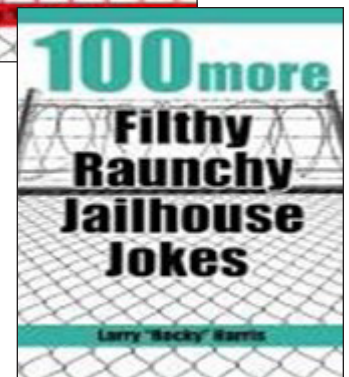
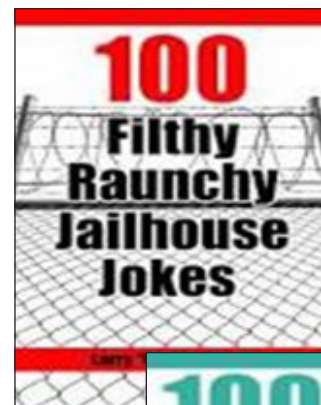
Never-Ending Nightmare: The Trial That Sentenced an Innocent Man to Prison for Sixty-Five Years

An ex-con vows to get his life together. He wins custody of his daughter and devotes himself to providing a good home for her, working two shifts, and then starting his own business. But one day the police come to his door and arrest him for a crime he did not commit. All his efforts to have a fair trial are thwarted by a judge and district attorney determined to convict. What he first believed was some kind of joke turns out to be...a never-ending nightmare.



The Prisoner's Guide to Filing a Winning Grievance

Has your loved one suffered a civil rights violation while imprisoned? There is a legal process to help your loved one fight back against injustice committed from within the prison's walls. In this book, Larry Rocky Harris explains step-by-step how to file a successful grievance. His twenty-four years of experience from inside the Illinois Department of Corrections is quintessential and applicable to any inmate. Help your loved one and yourself hold prison staff legally accountable for their actions. No one is above the law!



Also Available:

100 Filthy, Raunchy Jailhouse Jokes

100 More Filthy, Raunchy Jailhouse Jokes

REFLECTIONS UPON THE CURRENT

By Carlton A. Nixon

Mental visions of a dispensation

A time when blackness stood in solidarity across the nation

Above and below the Mason-Dixon existed no divide in the struggle for equality

Today I question the substance of men and wicked ideologies

Please stop, take a moment of silence for murder victims of violence – too great a number to count

More killing, then healing

Open scars upon hearts of children with fathers behind bars

Living to gamble with life as the odds

A high stakes game with no winners

Deadly beginners blowing holes into future generations

Influenced by substance which control broken souls

Pardon me for holding up a mirror

What I'm trying to see is me, however, the background reveals I may likely be killed for being me – black

My own appears more enemy than the boys in blue

Hands up don't shoot, it's hard to know whose worst

Could it be he who pulls his gun first?

Kids killing kids, that's the KKK

Who introduced us to guns in the first place?

We were once considered three-fifths a man by he who stress the right to bear arms throughout the land

He bears arms against us, never upon his own; we bear arms against self, which act is a greater wrong?

Freedom of speech, peace talks killing my vibe

Damn near died over foolish pride gangbanging with tribes

Blood on my hands, still I'm not a lost soul

Praying I'll be able to embrace my victims at the crossroad

Why so much decadence amongst a people?

Why to live we must witness evil?

Could they be one and the same?

Check the spelling before you complain

Feeling like Bobby Seal before Cointelpro?

Where did our black pride go?

If black lives matter, stop the killing in the streets of Chicago

S.O.S., Save our sons

Please young brothers put down those guns ■

STIMULUS, from page 6

The UPLC produced and provide a package including a letter of explanation from the firm, the necessary IRS form and instructions, to each prisoner (approx. 35,000). Once at each prison, IDOC delivered them to each cell.

Volunteers from Northwestern University's Pritzker School of Law then drove to each prison to retrieve the completed forms, check to ensure the appropriate form was submitted, and organized and boxed them for priority mailing, directly to the IRS.

While donations were raised to help defray the costs for this extremely ambitious project, it must be noted that UPLC took an enormous leap of faith financially, to embark on this project. Additionally, the last-minute orchestration of getting packages together, into the prisons, collected and mailed on a heavy deadline was extraordinary, as was the guidance of the staff fielding all of the associated questions.

But the "equity & justice" doesn't end there, as according to Alan Mills, Executive Director of UPLC, "...the IDOC has committed that those checks would be deposited into prisoner's trust accounts-unlike most checks which have to go through JPay." ■



OUT OF TIME

By Preston Gresham

I remember the stares I got as I prepared to enter the cell. The guys that stood around were whispering to each other so much so that I could not help but wonder what was going on as I took my property inside. Upon entering the cell, a guy introduced himself: Hello, my name is Ronald. After introducing myself, I continued unpacking my stuff.

While we made small talk, much to my amazement, he said: I am HIV positive. If you do not want to stay, I will understand. I knew that he was ashamed, when I replied: You do not snore do you? We both laughed, and he proceeded to explain how he contracted the virus from a prostitute while addicted to crack cocaine.

He related that he had forgiven her but was having a problem with his stupid decisions. He felt he had been delivered a death sentence. I tried to change the subject by asking about his family, and he said he only cared about getting out in eight months to see his son, Ronald, Jr., graduate from high school.

Before moving into the cell with Ron, I had other cellmates, but being in there with him taught me a lot about people. Ron was a barber, an artist, a cook and one heck of a guy. I found myself hoping that he would live to see his son walk across the stage.

About three months after I moved in, Ron found out he had developed full blow Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (A.I.D.S.). Ron's demeanor changed. He was transferred to the healthcare unit, and I did not see him for a while.

One day I went to see the dentist, and I saw Ron! He was smiling, but one could see that he had lost weight, and his hair was missing in spots. He also had lesions on his arms and face. I invited him to church, and he said he would think about it. Several weeks later Ron showed up at church! I prayed for him and gave him a hug.

I never saw Ron after that, and I received word that he had died earlier that week. A tear came to my eye as I thought about his one wish, to see his son graduate.

Rest in power my friend. ■

URGENT! ARTWORK NEEDED

Stateville Speaks needs artwork for publication in future issues. Please send us your illustrations or political cartoons. Artwork will be published in color. Unfortunately, we may not be able to return original work.



Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 in IL State Prisons

Locations	Staff Confirmed	Staff Recovered	Staff Current	Staff Tests	Offenders Confirmed	Offenders Recovered	Offenders Current	Offenders Tests
Big Muddy River	73	67	6	123	107	73	34	364
Centralia	108	102	6	100	83	80	3	410
Crossroads ATC	1	1	0	0	5	5	0	0
Danville	132	81	51	1610	679	116	563	3296
Decatur	46	41	5	318	76	45	31	379
Dixon	237	221	16	2080	560	527	33	4682
East Moline	61	59	2	211	343	342	1	766
Elgin TC	17	14	3	145	0	0	0	56
Fox Valley ATC	9	8	1	5	4	4	0	0
General Office	24	13	11	0	0	0	0	0
Graham	146	103	43	563	160	68	92	2493
Hill	62	56	6	309	145	122	23	633
Illinois River	91	83	8	1269	205	128	77	1961
Jacksonville/PWC	154	149	5	501	472	471	1	731
Joliet TC	65	62	3	246	7	6	1	261
Kewanee LSRC	39	38	1	2006	15	15	0	118
Lawrence	172	157	15	1334	750	450	300	3624
Lincoln	77	71	6	854	273	258	15	777
Logan	182	155	27	1866	433	374	59	4781
Menard	254	241	13	656	186	177	9	1031
Murphysboro	29	23	6	133	48	4	44	139
North Lawndale ATC	6	4	2	0	6	5	1	0
Parole	36	35	1	0	0	0	0	0
Peoria ATC	16	16	0	52	14	11	3	49
Pinckneyville	111	85	26	806	215	13	202	1676
Pontiac	279	265	14	2433	275	250	25	2165
Robinson	75	70	5	1819	378	378	0	5785
Shawnee	77	75	2	59	178	158	20	585
Sheridan	103	97	6	1135	248	198	50	2123
Southwestern IL	83	77	6	270	44	44	0	95
Stateville	156	153	3	474	300	296	4	2662
Stateville NRC	112	105	7	550	233	224	9	5111
Taylorville	82	78	4	641	441	408	33	1459
Vandalia	109	104	5	1124	491	470	21	1291
Vienna	88	82	6	409	85	82	3	287
Western IL	92	85	7	108	93	78	15	548
Total	3404	3076	328	24209	7552	5880	1672	50338

Source: IDOC Website. Information as of December 29, 2020

STATEVILLE SPEAKS STAFF • WINTER-HOLIDAY 2020

Senior Editor: Gayle Tulipano

Managing Editor: Dawn Larsen

Consulting Editor: Bill Ryan

Editors

Aldwin McNeal
& Anavriel B. Rakemeyahu

Assistant Editors

Stanley Howard, Janene Clay, Vincent Galloway, Renaldo Hudson, Tom Odle, Angel Torres, Margaret Majos & Ron Kliner

Women's Issues

Millie Lee & Janet Jackson

Cartoonist: Arkee

Web & Graphic Design: Sal Barry

Send letters & submissions to:

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

Please do **not** send originals.
Please limit essays to around 500 words.

SUBSCRIBE OR DONATE TO STATEVILLE SPEAKS

Stateville Speaks is housed and creatively supported, **but not funded financially**, by the University. **Stateville Speaks is free to inmates that cannot afford it.** The \$10.00 subscription fee is appreciated and accepted from those that can help defray our publishing costs. Stateville Speaks can only continue toward positive reform with your support.

I WANT TO SUBSCRIBE TO STATEVILLE SPEAKS

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

E-MAIL (for e-mail subscription) _____

Mail this coupon along with check or money order for \$10, to:

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

POLITICAL 'TOON BY ARKEE



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