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Special

Women's Issue

STATEVILLE SPEAKS

APRIL 2007

The Time Has Come

Linda Goodman

My husband is incarcerated in the Illinois Department of Corrections. Over the past several years I have become involved with various prison advocacy groups geared toward promoting change in the DOC as well as in the state law. The IL DOC currently offers few forms of rehabilitation to long-term offenders; instead they are warehoused in two-man cells 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You may say that this is what they deserve; however most of the current prison population will, at some point, be released to our neighborhoods, with no skills to enable them to become productive members of society. More often than not, they reoffend. Illinois recidivism rate for short-term offenders is over 50%.

In spring of 2006, Illinois Prison Talk joined forces with *Stateville Speaks*, The Long Term Prisoner Policy Project (LT3P), The Tamms Committee and

Not in Vain (NIV) and created an organizational committee, The Justice Coalition, to research and provide input to the newly formed House Joint Resolution 80 Committee (commonly referred to as HJR 80). Most recently we joined forces with a newly formed organization, Citizens for Earned Release, or CER, to develop a grassroots organization and raise awareness of the mass long-term incarceration of inmates in Illinois.

Our primary mission is to influence the state legislature to bring back some form of release option for long-term offenders through successful completion of programs, such as education, job training and restorative justice. Currently there are over 5000 inmates in the IL DOC who will die in prison, should policy not change. This rise in population is due to a change in state
Continued on Page 3...

Citizens for Earned Release (CER)

Janet Jackson

While many of us are disappointed that the HJR 80 committee will not study the parole issue, we are encouraged by the formation of Citizens for Earned Release (CER). All of us have hopes CER will be able to advocate, organize and educate so that the Illinois General Assembly will enact legislation to allow certain prisoners to earn their way out of prison.

The CER needs the active support not only of all prisoners but also supporters in the community. I urge people to get involved with CER.

What makes a person eligible to have their sentences reduced and to be given a chance to be released?
Continued on Page 3...

hope / change / redemption

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Coverage

WHEN YOU NEED IT

INMATES IN EACH DOC PRISON CAN SUBMIT ARTICLES TO
STATEVILLE SPEAKS

CER Meeting Update

From meetings on Jan. 27 and March 3

The meeting began with Bill Ryan providing an overview of earned release principles. Copies of the January issue of *Stateville Speaks* and petitions were distributed.

Bill discussed a proposed system of earned release that would allow some prisoners to earn their way out of prison. A prisoner after a certain number of years, reaching a certain age and demonstrating among other things, remorse, changed behavior, completion of programs, including restorative justice and socialization skills would be eligible to apply for earned release. There would be an official finding by an independent board that she/he has earned release and no longer is a threat to public safety with whatever conditions the board may impose. As additional input and ideas are obtained during the coming year this generalized system will be refined and finalized.

Aviva Futorian discussed the FAQs regarding Earned Release. These can be found in January 2007 *Stateville Speaks*.

Illinois Prison Talk indicated there are about 1000 individuals and several organizations on our database. One can join CER by completing the IPT flyer or contacting any of the members. Information about CER is found on www.illinoisprisonstake.com and www.ilcer.org.

Committees were assigned: Petitions, Speakers Bureau, Churches, Victims, Fundraising, Legislative.

Continued on Page 5...

If you've been a victim of crime or know someone in prison...

next meeting

apr. 28

SATURDAY

CROP WALK

Paula Blew-Sims

On Saturday, October 7, 2006, approximately 200 women from Dwight Correctional Center and Kankakee Minimum Security Unit along with staff, volunteers, and church members hosted the 2006 Rev. Phil Johnson Memorial CROP Walk. This event is held inside the prison to help raise awareness and funds for local and global hungry and poor people.

This seventh CROP Walk was performed in memory of Chaplain Johnson who helped orchestrate the first Walk in 1994. He was inspiring to all he ministered to through his peaceful spirit. He retired from Dwight in the spring of 2002 and passed away June 2002. His spirit still lives on in our hearts.

As always, this year's Walk was a huge success. Over \$10,000 was raised. Each woman must have at least one sponsor in order to walk; women may even sponsor each other. The money raised is divided up, and a certain percent goes to benefit local hunger relief through Dwight Food Pantry,

Continued on Page 4...

"Yesss♦CER"

If you've been a **victim** of crime. If you **know** someone in **prison**. If you want to **end** the ever perpetuating cycle.

Get CERious.

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The Time Has Come Cont...

law in 1978 which took away parole options for inmates, as well as a change in state law in 1998 which required mandatory sentences for certain classes of crimes. Prior to 1978, inmates were required to serve one-third of their sentence, or 20 years, whichever was less. From 1978 to 1998 inmates were required to serve one-half their time. Since 1998 an inmate must serve 50%, 85% or 100% of their time, depending on the nature of their offense.

With the change in sentencing laws in 1998, more and more offenders are being sentenced to life sentences or to sentences that equate to life in prison, an astounding 1500 a year. In addition, we incarcerate another 1000 a year to sentences in excess of 30 years. In ten years the prison population of long-term offenders will triple. What does that mean to you, you ask? It's your tax dollars that are used to house these offenders. In 1978 the prison population was 12,000. As of September 2006 that number has sky-rocketed to over 45,000, a 400% increase. In terms of our tax dollars, the DOC budget has exploded, from \$115 million in 1978 to \$1.12 billion in 2007 and it's only going to continue to grow. It costs nearly three times as much yearly to incarcerate an elderly prisoner than it does a younger one. That money could better be spent on preventing incarceration through education and youth programs.

Our proposal is a system of earned release. We do not propose to "open the gates and let them out." We are well aware that there are many offenders who should not be released, who will always be a threat to public safety. But there are many offenders who have turned their lives around, with no assistance or incentive from the DOC, who would no longer be a threat to public safety and could very well lead productive lives. Studies have shown that offenders who have served over 20 years in prison rarely reoffend, especially for violent crimes. According

Continued on Page 4...



Citizens for Earned Release Cont...

First of all, release has to be earned not given. We have to demonstrate what we have done to earn release and to rehabilitate ourselves. This will include schooling, vocational training, volunteer work and possibly Bible or other religious studies. We must show our negative behavior and actions have truly changed; we know how to relate to people in a positive fashion; and we are no longer a threat to anyone.

Most importantly, what happened in our particular case will be examined. Why will this never happen again? Have we demonstrated remorse? This is a big step as those of us who go thru AA/NA know. Many of us sentenced under accountability or who are innocent may not feel we are responsible, but in the eyes of the law we are. While it may not be possible for us to take part in a true restorative justice program, we can show sympathy for victims who have suffered greatly. We can and must ask forgiveness for the actions of others and for whatever part our actions played in the pain and suffering of victims. We must recognize the pain and suffering caused by violence upon families.

Think of this as the year of grace to get it right.■

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****This issue of Stateville Speaks is generously supported by the Kenneth and Harle Montgomery Foundation.****

Other Sponsors Include: N.I.V., CURE (Citizens United to Rehabilitate Errants), LT3P (Long Term Prisoner Policy Project)
www.Resist.org, www.ILCER.org & www.Illinoisprisonstalk.com

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****N.I.V. needs VOTING CITIZEN members to be the most effective****



The Time Has Come Cont...

to one PA study, the recidivism rate for older inmates is less than 2%.

Shockingly, Illinois takes the lead in sentencing their youth. As of July, 2006, there were 100 offenders in the DOC, serving sentences of life without parole for crimes committed while they were youth (less than 17 years of age, some as young as 14). Life without parole in Illinois means just that, no chance of ever being released without any legislative intervention. All life sentences in Illinois are without the possibility of parole. There's an additional 26 juvenile offenders serving a sentence equivalent to life (meaning they'll die before they complete the term of their sentence). Imagine that, entering the prison system at 14 years of age and never leaving.

The Illinois constitution states, "All sentences shall be determined both according to the seriousness of the offense and with the objective of restoring the offender to useful citizenship". This is not happening in our court system and it's not happening in our prison systems.

We have initiated a coalition of individuals and organizations to advocate for earned release. If you wish to join the movement you can do so by going to websites www.icer.org or www.illinoisprison.talk.com Each of the websites contains much information about Citizens for Earned Release, our mission and what we aim to achieve on both websites. Please visit the sites and join us as the time has come!! ■

Crop Walk Cont...

Chicago Anti-Hunger Federation, and the Central Illinois Food Bank.

Dwight has a Walk on even numbered years and Lincoln Correctional Center has them on odd numbered years. Their Walk is dedicated to Chaplain Tockey, who passed away as the result of an automobile accident.

There is very little we can do in prison that will make life better for those who are in less than ideal circumstances. While we are blessed to have three meals a day, many are not. Being in prison does not mean we have forgotten about hungry and poor people in the Dwight area, in our own communities, and around the world. We jump at the chance to reach out and help any way we can. It is a wonderful feeling, privilege, and honor to give of our time, money and energy to assist those less fortunate than ourselves. ■

HB1695 Bill Ryan

Earlier this legislative term, an Illinois legislator introduced HB 1695 which would provide prisoners sentenced to life without parole for crimes committed before they were 18 years old a chance to try for parole after serving 20 years. Several organizations endorsed this bill, and many of your family and friends called legislators in support of the bill. As one result, several legislators have become aware of the issue and are interested in talking about it. Now we have an opportunity for a much needed discussion on sentencing children to life in prison. This is a serious problem that needs fixing and a wrong that needs righting.

The bill's sponsor - who is a strong advocate for fixing this problem in the system - decided not to call the bill for a committee vote. His purpose was to start a series of discussions about the problems and the human rights implications of locking people behind bars for the rest of their lives, for something they did before they were 18
Continued on Page 7...

Join the N.I.V. Mission in support of positive change.

I _____ (print name) Join the N.I.V. mission.

(signature) _____ (signature)

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CITY _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

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Mail slip to: N.I.V. P.O. Box 8546, Chicago, IL 60680.

The **N.I.V.** membership Database is connected with CER and Stateville Speaks



In Memory and Dedicated to Chicago Stateswoman, Mama Lou Jones, who recently passed away. Her energy and commitment will be missed.

Song of Lovana Jones

Willie Sterling

In Mansfield, Ohio, she was born. There educated and sojourned, then an epic exodus to Chicago, where with open arms the windy city embraced her wisdom, warmth and charm. Here she made her home. Inspired and fueled by the teachings and love for people and community her mother had instilled and sown. To endeavor upon her divine destiny the robe of righteousness and humility she proudly put on; the garments and tapestries of politics, community, activism and a public servant she prudently adorned.

Elected as a State Representative, she courageously sounded the horns calling to arms the campaigns on housing, healthcare, juvenile and prison reform, thereby championed an allegiance to change things, going against the mediocrity and apathy of the norms. No business as usual with this tough lady, always a new day and a new better way. To ameliorate, to educate, to rehabilitate has been the constant song and slogan: and mandate she tried to orchestrate and legislate.

Never afraid to raise or ask the poignant hard questions and to listen wisely and attentively to the workers, parents, experts, lay persons or even prisoners' suggestions. She bravely stood up for social, political, judicial justice, fighting daily and diligently to succeed in her mission. She

challenged those in opposition regardless of their positions. To help improve the voiceless and disenfranchised conditions was her ambition. Begging no one's permission, with relentless conviction helping humanity was her commission.

Whether addressing issues or measures concerning children, citizens or convicts: The poor people or the rich, she rendered keen professionalism, dedication and wit. She personified more than plain politics, savvy statistics or routine rhetoric. Mama Lou Jones as many colleagues and friends often times called her was prolific. Symbolizing change lives, enriching communities, legitimate standard quality of life benefits, prudent ethics, along with espousing remedies to rid chaos and conflicts.■

CER Meeting Update Cont...

Participants were urged to contact churches and organizations to discuss Earned Release initiatives. A goal was established for each member to bring at least 15 signed flyers to the next meeting along with at least one visitor or one other person who might be interested in volunteering to join our efforts. It is expected there will be a lobbying day in Springfield sometime this spring.■

LOST?

**Wanna Help But
Don't Know
Where to Begin?**



Here are some ways you can help the many organizations committed to positive reform

1.

Subscribe to Stateville Speaks

\$10.00 keeps you informed and us going. Inmates, encourage family members to subscribe

2.

Join the N.I.V. Mission

The N.I.V. is a lobbying force. With a large number of voting members, N.I.V. can help influence legislators

3.

Get on the Web

www.ILCER.org ♦ www.LT3P.org
www.IllinoisPrisonTalk.com

4.

VOTE

Get Registered TODAY. Call 312.603.0906

5.

SHOW UP

Attend announced HJR80 meetings, CER meetings and whatever you get an invitation to. Not getting an invitation? Join the mailing list by subscribing to Stateville Speaks, filling out the IPT insert and joining the N.I.V. mission

Essays, Letters and Insight

PROPOSALS AND PERSUASIVE EDITORIALS



Suspended Love in Motion

Tarnelle V. Waller

The seasons change, holidays come and go, and the previous year makes way for a new year. It's often during these times that women are inclined to succumb to feelings of nostalgia. This may ring true for incarcerated women as well. How they deal with those emotions can influence their daily lives. Though every woman is unique, the one thing we all have in common is our need to love and be loved. Which brings me to "family."

Whether it's a blood relative or a close friend who has been like family to us, we all share an unspoken bond which is this: prison walls separate us from someone we love. Wherever there are conversations among women, the most interesting and likely topics are of loved ones. We, as women, whether mothers, daughters, grandmothers, are prone to do our best at making the transition from "family life" to prison life less traumatic as possible,

which is not easy. The most endearing aspect about this is that she does it more for the ones she loves than for herself. She knows, as do thousands of incarcerated women, that a child cannot be tucked in at night through a phone call. Tears can't

be dried from a precious face through a letter, nor can a husband, brother, son or father be comforted or softly spoken to with words of encouragement at just the precise moment when needed.

However, she firmly refuses to allow circumstances to deter her from being an active part of her family's lives. It's somewhat difficult to hold the threads together of a functioning relationship from the outside world when you're living behind bars. While not entirely impossible, it does require a great deal of effort and understanding from everyone involved. These ties can ultimately keep an inmate grounded, so to speak, and able to find meaning and solace in an otherwise unsettling life. All around us restrictions and rigid rules dominate our way of living. But the time we're allowed to spend with loved ones can give us some peace of mind and remind us that not everything in our lives has crumbled, as we may sometimes be feeling. This is when we are also reminded that things can be much worse and to count our blessings. The main focus has to be perseverance, which helps us to keep it together!

In fact, of all the ladies I've talked with, several informed me that she has left a husband and/or teenage children at home. So now, in retrospect, roles have been reversed. The husband is tending to the children while mom is "away." And even though these fathers possess the love and courage it takes to

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Women's Health and the Power of Meditation

Marjorie Majos

There is a power that is in all of us under the surface. Whether expressed or hidden, it's still power. People look in amazement or shock when I mention the word "meditation." What is it really? What benefits does it bring? The benefits are enhanced awareness, cognitive ability, stress reduction, decreased blood pressure, improved heart and breathing rates, and emotional well-being.

Take it from someone who lived it all and overcame it: It's a process. To

Continued on Page 7...

04.28.07
Save the Date

ATTEND
The CER Meeting

@

The YMCA

2700 S. Western Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

12 P.M.

The presence of Family members of the
Incarcerated as well as Victim Family
Members is imperative.

Suspended Love In Motion Cont...

adequately rear a child, or in some cases several children, he is now faced with the challenge of being two parents. To some, this may not seem like such a big deal, but to an imprisoned mother this can make all the difference. Even the teens, both male and female, have been noted to be more attentive and helpful concerning their younger siblings. It's been said that this kind of obligation forces a child to "grow up."

Undoubtedly it actually teaches family support in the midst of adversity and no amount of statistics can measure the love of someone who's supportive. In life, an advocate can do so much more than skim the surface of who we are. The effect can be soul stirring and it reaches bone deep. It may also define our source of productivity. We all look forward to the profound joy that it brings. Though there are moments when the desire to resume our rightful positions among society can be overwhelming, the truth of the matter is a little nostalgia every now and then could be just the fuel we need to maintain.■

Women's Health and the Power of Meditation Cont...

meditate is to still your physical being and ponder on something positive, perhaps a word like "healing" or a phrase from the Koran, Bible, etc. It's an exercise to train our minds and spirits to think positive thoughts or perhaps to face the negative and overcome it. How much time do we spend on matters that don't even benefit us? Often we state that we don't have the time or the place to meditate. Perhaps it's too weird or too difficult. Let me confess that for many years I did not meditate until I faced a terrible time in my life. After many painful situations in my life I gave it a try. I ended up beating my head against the wall, not moving forward. The close-mindedness of others



discouraged me from the practice of meditation. Some said it was evil or spooky.

Being a strong-minded person, I decided to learn it on my own. I searched, I read, and I talked about it to Bo Lozolf, founder of Human Kindness Foundation, and finally I started doing it daily at night time in my bed. I can not express the benefits I began to see. It is an absolutely wonderful exercise. It's not evil or spooky, but it requires discipline energy, and a little time and perseverance.

Meditation will clear your mind and broaden your positive thinking. It will help to start or end your days with a positive mind. I do it almost daily and today I can say that no matter what comes my way I immediately still my mind, close my eyes and meditate. The tension and the pain go.

Choose the time best for you. Sit comfortably or lie down. Close your eyes and still yourself. Forget what's behind or around you. Think about the positive words and thoughts. Repeat them, soak them in, and rest for a few minutes. Have a good time learning positive thinking.■

HB1695 Cont...

This discussion should take place before the bill comes to the floor in order to strengthen understanding and reduce opposition to the bill.

We intend to use the time to work with the sponsor of this bill to strengthen it so that as wide a constituency as possible can support it. There are over 103 juveniles in Illinois

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From the Publisher

Bill Ryan

Citizens for Earned Release (CER)

CER continues to gain supporters and momentum. Our database and *Stateville Speaks* enable us to reach several thousand people. Also, two websites www.ilcer.org and www.illinoisprisonstank.com contain much information. I encourage everyone to visit. We have made progress but much, much more remains to be accomplished to insure earned release is enacted into law. CER needs many more active participants. Come join the CER movement!

I want to take this opportunity to remind all of us of important CER principles as we move forward.

- The most basic principle of CER is that people, including some prisoners, can and do change. It is inconsistent with democratic principles, Illinois constitution and a just society to continue to warehouse human beings who are reformed, no longer a threat and have paid a price for their actions against other citizens.
- CER means a prisoner has to actively and positively demonstrate among other things changed behavior, socialization, remorse, participation in education and other programs, and restorative justice. Age and/or time served also make one eligible for consideration, although specific numbers have not been established. That will come later after we have listened to opinions and ideas, and then we will develop ideas for legislation.

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Victim No More

Marjorie Majos

On behalf of women in prison, especially long-timers, I am prompted by my inner strength and God to write. I've learned courage and bravery in the face of opposition, abuse, and accusations. The time away from my loved ones has not hardened me. It has built my character and given me energy to reach out to the youth and others to prevent crime and promote freedom. I want to give back what was given to me by faithful supporters outside these walls, and that is courage, love, faith, support. I can't stand passively by anymore and not share what I have to share to help others.

I refuse to look at myself as a victim or a criminal. I'm a mother, daughter, wife, someone's friend and a child of God. Please understand that I am not excusing crime, only trying to explain it. Sickness, perhaps addiction, is killing young people. Postpartum depression and PTSD almost killed and destroyed me. I say "almost" because I am alive and not dead.

Years ago there was no such a thing as legal assistance from DNA or a medical diagnosis of postpartum depression. Sadly, most of us sit in prison because of this lack, and I am ready to speak-out, reach-out, tell the story.

What prison did for me or to me? In my opinion, only 30% of residents are truly rehabilitated but they exist and deserve another chance. Education? They've got it. Faith? Definitely, to survive in this horrible place. Yet! That's not enough to

prove ourselves to outside society. Some say, "lock them away for ever." It's simple but does not solve the overall problem. It does not stop crime.

Fear has no power over me anymore, only love and courage. Too many families are hurting. I've been abused beyond comprehension, raped. Depression overwhelmed me. I was suicidal. I lost two children. I can go on and on, and I am willing to share my story. I was in the shadow of death but God had a plan for my life. Here I am 16 years later with education and undying faith, writing books, reaching out to others, praying for someone to listen. We can make a change. ■

Dear *Stateville Speaks*,

I am writing because I have been reading the *Stateville* paper, and HJR80 has sparked my interest. I have been sentenced to 30 years at 50%. So I have to do 15 years and the 3-year Mandatory Supervisory Release.

I would like to see more of an individual screening process. During the seven years in which I have been incarcerated, I have seen a number of ladies return through the prison doors that were sentenced to minimal time. However, the ladies that I had the opportunity to get to know, who had to serve eight or more years have not come back.

Also, I have seen ladies receive ticket after ticket, receive school days or other days and leave early, while a number of ladies (including myself) don't qualify for any days, do abide by the rules, and receive nothing but the reminder that we are following the rules and doing what we are supposed to do. Something needs to be done about this issue.

I strongly believe that proper screening of both males and females, via institutional records, would be beneficial to inmates, the state of

Continued on Page 9...

From the Publisher Cont...

- As we continue our advocacy and seek opinions it is extremely important that supporters of CER treat people with whom we are in contact, especially those who have suffered as a result of a crime, the victims, with respect and understanding as they have experienced much trauma.

Legislation

Two pieces of legislation recommended by prisoners are pending in the Illinois House of Representatives. State Representative Art Turner introduced HB 1290 and HB 1291.

HB 1290 amends a statute to allow defendants to petition the court for Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBIS) testing in order to prove innocence. This legislation was recommended by Patrick Pursley in the January issue of *Stateville Speaks*. IBIS technology was not available when DNA and fingerprinting legislation was passed.

HB 1291 amends the Post-Conviction Hearing Act to allow defendants ten years to file post-conviction petition instead of the three years and sometimes six months that is allowed now. This legislation was recommended by Joe Dole in a previous *Stateville Speaks*. In the 1970s a person had 30 years to file a petition but the time frames have been reduced over the years, making it very difficult if not impossible for many prisoners representing themselves to comply with the time frames.

Please contact your legislator and urge support for both these important pieces of legislation.

Resist Grant

Stateville Speaks wants to express appreciation to Resist (Somerville, MA) for awarding a grant that will be of significant assistance as we advocate for substantive change in the criminal justice system in Illinois. Our struggle will continue. Special thanks to Robin
Continued on Page 9...

Letter to Stateville Cont...

Illinois, and the community into which the offender would be going. I also strongly believe that there should be a way to create work release programs that would benefit Class X felons. This would help all who were involved with such a program. Community service work should also be incorporated. It is beneficial when you help others and focus on something other than oneself.

I would especially like to see the implementation of good time for Class X offenders, within reason of course, with the possibility to earn points for extra good time benefits. I suggest that the length of time imprisoned and the age of the individual be considered for early release. And maybe this could be worked but with the re-enactment of the Parole Board Hearings vs. Mandatory Supervised Release.

Thank you for your time and patience.
Deborah Grenko

P. S. Also, health issues should be strongly considered for both for the inmate and the needs at home.■

Dear *Stateville Speaks*,

At the age of 19, I was sentenced to 18 years under the Truth-in-Sentencing Law, which has me serving 15 years of the sentence, the same amount someone sentenced to 30 years serves under 50%.

When I came to prison seven years ago, I had just turned 20, but I was determined to better my life and learn new skills before I went home, continually attending college classes and earning certificates.

I have come to realize that those of us who are sentenced to long-term sentences are overlooked when it comes to chances for earlier releases, even though we strive to better ourselves, attend school, and get in less trouble. It really bothers me when I see the same individuals returning to prison 3 or more times, yet they are eligible for contract days and work release, where long-timers don't get that chance.

My sentence has not only impacted my life, but my family as well. I am a completely different person than I was 7 years ago. I as well as my family continue to hold out hope that if I do not receive relief from court, that laws will change that enable long-timers, like myself, to prove that we have been rehabilitated and can be productive members of society again.

Theresa Heater■



Prisoners Against the War Contest

Stanley Howard

Prisoners Against the War, formed by Stanley Howard and other Stateville prisoners, in conjunction with the Military Project, are pleased to announce an essay contest for Illinois prisoners. Participants must write in 250 words or less an essay concerning why they are against the war and why they support bringing the troops home now. Each essay will eventually be sent to the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan via the Military Project in New York City. Each essay must be printed clearly or typed and postmarked no later than June 1, 2007. Mail to Stateville Speaks, 2237 Sunnyside, Westchester, IL, 60154.

The four finalists will receive special recognition, a prize and a copy of the Anti-War Novel: *Homefront* by Tony

From the Publisher Cont...

Carton of Resist for support and encouragement, to Katy Ryan for writing the grant, to John Howard Association for being our fiscal agents. Thanks to all.

Subscriptions

We need donations and subscriptions. *Stateville Speaks* has grown and expanded, and our costs have increased as well. We are fortunate to have received the grant from Resist, and the Haley foundation has been very generous, but much more is needed if we are to work and insure change. So help if you can. We want to continue to provide subscriptions at no cost to prisoners but donations are welcome.■

Christini. *Homefront* and other books about social issues may be purchased at Mainstaypress.org. Winners will be announced and essays published in future *Stateville Speaks* and GI issues. Good Luck!■

HB1695 Cont...

...serving life sentences for crimes they committed when they were 14, 15, 16 or 17. In many of these cases, the judges had no choice but to sentence them to life and indicated as much in the sentencing hearings; in others the child committed brutal crimes; and in yet others, the child acted as no more than a lookout.

We will keep you posted on any new developments. ■

Announcement

To Prisoners: If you've been transferred, please send a letter to let us know your new location. Send letter to:

**2237 SUNNYSIDE
WESTCHESTER, IL 60154**

Postpartum Awareness Facts

- 80 to 90% of new mothers suffer the "baby blues." Many women feel moody or weepy in the days and weeks following childbirth, a normal response to the hormonal changes and exhaustion of caring for a newborn.
- Ten to 15% of new mothers suffer from postpartum depression, which is a clinical condition where sadness is more severe and persistent, lasting longer than two weeks and up to one year if she receives no treatment, counseling or medication. Other symptoms include trouble eating, sleeping too much or not enough, anxiety, frequent bouts of crying and changes in self-esteem.
- Three percent of new mothers suffer from postpartum OCD, obsessive and compulsive thoughts surrounding childbirth that my develop concurrently with postpartum depression or separately.
- One-tenth of 1% of new mothers suffer from postpartum psychosis. This is a very serious mental illness. Unlike women with OCD, mothers with psychosis don't see their thoughts as illogical and may be a danger to their children, themselves and others without treatment. Women can lose touch with reality, including hearing and seeing things that aren't there. Suffering and terrible tragedies can be prevented by caring and supportive fathers, partners, friends, family and of course by professionals.

Where to get help: For support and information, don't hesitate to consult your physician and visit www.PPDIL.org; PSI.com; Postpartum.net; DepressionAfterDelivery.com; PPDSupport.Page.com, 1-800-944-4773, or 1-805-564-3888. ■



Dear *Stateville Speaks*,

I am writing to ask you to take into consideration the hundreds of thousands of women locked up daily. Every year the numbers continue to grow, putting a strain on the government to provide homes for motherless children as well as the cost of clothing, food, and schooling.

In light of all this, the state has to cut budgets and pinch pennies here and there. I ask you, wouldn't it be helpful if some of these women, who have been locked up for long periods of time and show signs of rehabilitation, were given a chance to prove themselves? They could go into the world and become productive members of society. They could take care of their own children, work, go to school, and even pay taxes. Don't you feel like they have earned the right to do things that everyday people do?

What I mean by "earn" is they have completed the self-help programs that apply to them and taken college courses. Some have even learned a new trade. They have been model inmates. They have complied with the rules and done everything they can do to better themselves here. At this point, there is nothing more this place can offer them. They are just sitting here in this facility taking up bed space and the taxpayer's money. In fact, some of these women have completely changed their life and others have come a long way. I feel that if given a chance to apply the tools they have picked up, they could make it.

Isn't the purpose of incarceration is to rehabilitate, change, and make better, not

to place someone in a facility and just forget about the problem. If you were to look into some of these cases, I am positive you would find that some of these women were sentenced too harshly or unjustly. Some of these women were misrepresented or simply railroaded to make a statement or set an example due to an election year or some other prejudice. Nonetheless, here these women sit year after year while prisons become overcrowded. The need to build more prisons grows rapidly as well as the need to hire and train more guards with money the state doesn't have.

In closing I ask that you consider other options such as home detention, work release programs for those with violent offenses or even parole for those who have been rehabilitated. You could clear out some of the prisons rather than try to build new ones. Instead of scraping pennies, you could save some for a better future.

Rochelle Sephus ■

N.I.V. Welcomes

50 new members this month
N.I.V. has over 700+ members

The N.I.V. Mission Statement is to better society by assisting to reduce overcrowding of prisons, reduce recidivism and improve societal productivity by strengthening rehabilitation, reforming sentencing and implementing programs to advocate positive change, productivity and restorative justice for the benefit of society as a whole.

Join the mission and help us Support Legislation in line with our goals.

N.I.V. cannot respond to all correspondence
Voting Citizens are the most influential members
Correspondence sent without a signed membership slip does not count as membership

*To end membership, contact any N.I.V. affiliate or send a letter to N.I.V. Unsubscribe, P.O. Box 8546, Chicago, IL 60680

Announcement

May 9th is *Lobby Day*.
Springfield, Illinois

Go to www.ILCER.org for more details.

Creative Corner

WHEN INSPIRATION HITS...POEMS WRITINGS. CONNOTATIONS...



Abused-Abuser

Janet Jackson

Many men say they will never hit a woman and just as many men hit a woman each and every day. Domestic violence is the biggest killer of women, surpassing cancer and heart disease. Every 18 minutes a woman dies at the hands of her abuser. As men, real men, its time that this ended.

Yet even if it ended tomorrow there would still be after effects, such as physical scars, emotional scars and mental scars. Each scar carries its own pain.

The physical scars of abuse can effect a woman for her lifetime. If she suffered sexual abuse along iwth physical abuse she may be unable to bear children or to carry a child to full term. She may have broken bones that knit improperly and cause her to ache and hurt. She may have head trauma which later in life could result in her death.

Emotional scars are the result of physical, mental and emotional abuse. She maybe unable to enter into a loving relationship with anyone, feel unworthy and seek out peop0le who abuse her feeling that these are the only people she is attractive to. The abuse she suffered may cause her to be unable to love herself, her partner and even her children. She may have bouts of depression and consider suicide. Mental scars frequestnely show themselves in the form of BWS or battered woman syndrome. While many of us have seen the more staring Farrah Fawcett called the Burning Bed this is an extreme example of BWS. More frequently the battered woman suffers nightmares and flashbacks as a result of abuse. BWS is a form of post traumatic stress disorder.

The Illinois domestic violence act first went into effect in 1986. Since then it

has been amended many times. Yet abuse still continues, with both men and women as abusers and victims. while the damage that has been done cannot be changed we can stop future abuse today.

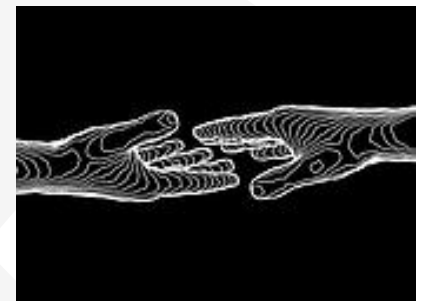
If we are the abuser we can get anger management, walk away and go to a counselor. If we are the abused we can leave the situation, get counseling and if necessary go to a shelter and relocate. Nothing is worth a life or your freedom. Seek help an if necessary leave.■

The Green-Eyed Monster

Millie R. Lee

Jealousy is that green-eyed monster that stunts a woman's growth. Why are you so jealous? Women spend more time focusing on other women and their attributes than they do on themselves. Why hate her when you should be focused on you? God has blessed us with our own attributes and gifts. All we have to do is open our eyes and keep our focus on ourselves, then we'll see the true nature of our jealousy. Jealousy is the same as hate. So it is what we hate in others that we hate in ourselves. So stop it, please!

Open your eyes, dear ones. You are beautiful, you are special, you are worthy of love. Everyday enhance one thing about you that makes you feel good. Smile more, laugh outloud. Put on some lipstick, stand in the mirror and find reasons to love you. Go crazy and come back. Just find reasons to focus on you. Kill that green-eyed monster for good! Conquer your demons and learn to love yourself. Life is beautiful when you're living it to the fullest. Try it, you might like it.■



Reaching Into the Divide at Tamms

Anonymous

No matter how much I know there is glass between us.
No matter how much the state holds you at bay.
My hands, my fingers work across the imposed divide
And I feel for you.

As I talk with my hands like an Italian lover
I reach through the glass
Like it is not there and our emotions connect
Because I only need your eyes on me
To feel beyond the restrictions
That hold you beyond my arms, but never my mind.

What they don't know is our imagination,
And our creative souls are boundless
And cannot be shut down by glass and steel.■

C

Citizens

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

- Margaret Mead

Get on our Mailing List
Join the N.I.V. Mission

E

Earned

Be the change you want to see in the world.

- Ghandi

Show Up
Attend the next CER Meeting
April 28th – Sat. @ YMCA
2700 S. Western - 12PM

R

Release

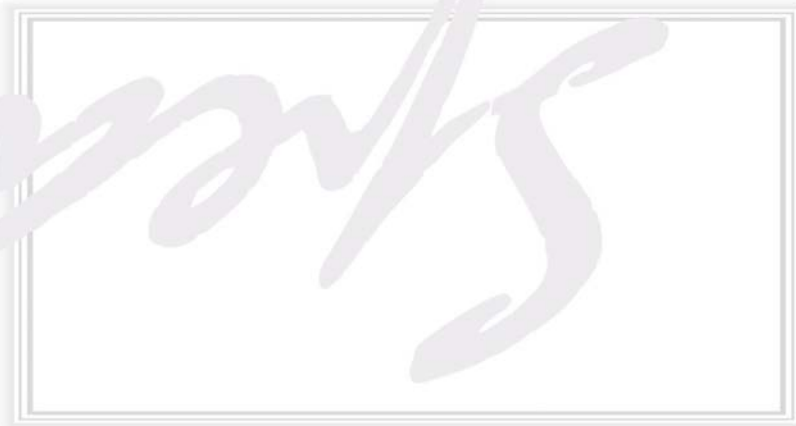
America is the land of second chance and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.

- George W. Bush

Contact Your Legislator
www.ilga.gov

www.ILCER.org

Help CER convince lawmakers to enact a system of earned release. Earned release will better protect society, encourage rehabilitation, save millions and is consistent with democratic values



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