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VOICES FROM INSIDE...

# STATEVILLE

## SPEAKS

SEPTEMBER 2007

# The Impact of Crime on Victims

## Teaching Restorative Justice

Bernie Farmer

Envision a roomful of hardened criminals—murderers, rapists and robbers—incarcerated in a maximum security prison. What do they look like? If you're like most people, you'll picture a group of snarling, tattooed animals planning future crimes. What do you think happens when a panel of crime victims is introduced into the room? Do the two groups begin to yell at each other or start to fight? What happens to the inmates when the victims begin to describe how they have been terribly hurt by people just like them? Do the criminals laugh? Are the victims re-victimized?

I've seen this same scene unfold monthly for three years, and I can tell you what happens every time. The roomful of criminals sit nervously as

the victim panel enters the room. They pay close attention as the victims tell their story. Their heads will nod as they recognize elements of their own lives. Often times men cry as the stories awaken their long repressed sense of humanity. Many of the inmates will express sincere sorrow, both for the things that the panel experienced and for the pain that they've caused their own victims. Even the most hardened criminal will leave the room deep in thought, questioning the life choices that he or she has made.

What I've just described for you is a typical victim panel in a rehabilitative program called Impact of Crime on Victims (ICVC). Restorative Justice is a concept where

Continued on page 3...

## On Forgiveness and Broken Hearts

Anaviel Rakemeyahu, Editor

I would like to acknowledge and apologize for the pain and suffering that is brought into this world. Ignorance and self hate are manifest in violent acts against people. For myself I apologize and am truly sorry for the pain and suffering I have caused others.

When we think about the act of forgiving someone, what shall we say? Shall we say, we see forgiveness as absolving the guilty of the offense by allowing them to escape accountability for their actions? Or shall we say, forgiveness is a necessary element in our own growth and development? Sometimes we must be willing to even forgive ourselves for what we have done.

Continued on page 3...

*hope / change / redemption*

# Coverage

WHEN YOU NEED IT

INMATES IN EACH DOC PRISON CAN SUBMIT ARTICLES TO  
STATEVILLE SPEAKS

## Public Event Reaches into TAMMS Supermax Prison



Cynthia Kobell

On Thursday, June 28, the Tamms Poetry Committee put together a public letter writing event at Gallery 400 on the University of Illinois at Chicago campus for the men at Tamms Supermax Prison. Part of the Gallery event was artwork created by men at Tamms. The work came from a collection of the New Day Prison Ministries in Carbondale, Illinois, and the title of the show came from one of the artists: *Thank You for Reaching In*.

The event brought approximately 60 people out to hear two former Tamms prisoners as well as family members of those at Tamms, and several words from me as head of the Tamms Committee. I explained that the men are held in confinement for 23 hours a day, with one hour in the “yard” by themselves, without any equipment or the ability to really see out into nature. Their cells are approximately ten feet by eight feet, with solid steel doors with a small opening to slip in mail, food, and books (when a volunteer librarian is available). The austere cell is built with a stainless

steel bed, a slim mattress, a desk, toilet and sink.

The audience wanted to know about the transition from an isolated confinement back into the community. “It’s difficult; there is anger and rage after being in that environment. An environment that keeps you from all freedom. Everything you do is watched by the guards. You can’t help but be angry,” one of the former inmates said. “The place makes you hate. When you go out into the yard, well, it’s not a yard; it’s a 60-foot walkway. You don’t see the sky or hear a bird and if, by some way, a butterfly gets in and they catch you with it, you get seg time (segregation). Well, you are already in seg, but they take your commissary away (where you get a snack or your toothpaste) and take away your visits. They use every trick in the book to make you angry, make you hate. I was lucky; I had someone to come home to. I had support, but some people are coming back with that anger and they don’t have the support to end the anger and they come back into society, down the street from you.”

Another inmate, who has been out of Tamms for five years, said, “Tamms is a cruel place. I did a lot of reading and writing. You need

to expand your mind so they can’t take control of it. A lot of guys break down and do a lot of things to themselves you couldn’t conceive. Tamms was designed to have someone in there for one to two years. Some guys who went down there March 9, 1998, are still there, in total isolation. You have to be very, very strong to survive Tamms,” he said.

Continued on Page 4...

### Prisoners Against the War Essay Contest

Winners of the Prisoners Against the War Essay Contest will be announced in January, and the winning essay will be published. The second and third place winners will be published in future issues. Many thanks to all who entered. The essays were thoughtful, compelling, and well done. Each writer should have received a copy of the book, *Homefront*, by Tony Christini. If you have not received a copy, please let me know. Anyone wanting a copy of *Homefront* or other books regarding social justice should go to Mainstay Press ([www.mainstay.org](http://www.mainstay.org)).

### Stateville Speaks Staff

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*On Forgiveness, Continued...*

One thing is for sure, with the anger and hate prevalent in today's society, forgiveness appears to be the forgotten concept.

Recently, I found myself watching the Hallmark Hall of Fame movie, "Crossroad: A Story of Forgiveness." The movie was based on a true story about a grieving man who befriended the teenager who had killed his wife and daughter. By the end of the movie, this grieving husband and father came to the realization that, in order to free himself from the bondage of anger and hate, he had to first forgive the man who had killed his family. The only road to true healing.

When we show compassion and mercy to those who have caused us harm, we are expressing those inner qualities that give us our humanity, that make us civilized. Forgiveness is not only an act of Godliness, but an inherent quality of a civilized society. When we continue to have anger and hatred in our heart towards those who have wronged us, we hurt ourselves. This anger and hatred eat away at us like a cancer until it becomes a part of our daily existence. This process will continue until after years of hate and anger we grow more bitter and resentful.

While harboring anger and hatred, the pain will never heal, and we are unable to spiritually evolve. It is only when we learn to embrace our humanity and forgive that we grow close to God and His wonderful peace. May we all be blessed with the healing power of forgiveness in order to heal our broken hearts.■

*Teaching Restorative Justice Cont...*

offenders take responsibility for the crimes that they've committed and acknowledge the harms that they've caused. The inmates then work toward making amends for their offenses, both to the individual victims and the

community at large. The Impact of Crime on Victims program is usually the first step that offenders take toward that goal.

The Impact of Crime on Victims program at my institution is somewhat unique in that it is taught to the men by their fellow inmates who are supervised by prison staff. This set-up has several advantages. First of all, the inmates are more comfortable learning from "one of their own." They feel more relaxed and are



much more willing to share their thoughts and get real with someone who can relate to them on their level. And for those who are not yet open to the experience, it's a lot harder to con a con, so they're picked out fairly quickly. And there is an additional benefit: in this time of tightening budgets and scarce tax dollars, the inmates teach for free, so the program costs the taxpayer only a very small amount.

ICVC is a 40-hour program, which is spread out over five days. The curriculum provides comprehensive coverage of the major types of crime and how each affects the victims: child abuse, domestic violence, substance abuse, property crime and gangs are just some of the topics covered. The men learn that their criminal choices effect not only the primary victims

*Continued on Page 7...*

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## Public Event Reaches Tamms Cont...

“One of the most successful means for ex-prisoners to re-enter society and to stop recidivism is to keep families together,” I said. “However, to have a loved one at Tamms causes a schism in the relationship with family. Tamms is seven hours south of Chicago and it is expensive to make the trip downstate. Because of this expense, many men have no visits. It is also difficult to plan a trip to Tamms. A visitor must write to request a visit two weeks in advance and then wait for approval. People’s lives are in transition so often and it may be hard to plan two weeks in advance and for many it is hard to get a ride there. There is no public transportation.”

“It is a constant shock to me that so few people in Illinois know that there is a Supermax Prison here,” I said. “Not only are we mistreating people’s human rights at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Graib, but this is happening at home as well,” I said.

During the discussions many people signed letters and sent messages to the men at Tamms. “It is our way to communicate with people who need a word from the outside,” Laurie Jo Reynolds, head of the Poetry Committee said.

The Tamms Committee is working on other venues to show the artwork and to talk about Tamms. ■

## Legislative Agenda for Next Year

Bill Ryan

Legislative advocacy will focus on five areas during the Illinois General Assembly session in January 2008. There will be more details provided in a future edition of *Stateville Speaks*.

Elderly Sentence Adjustment: legislation will be introduced to provide that prisoners who have reached age 50 with 25 consecutive years served will be eligible to submit a petition for sentence adjustment. Prisoners will have to demonstrate in a variety of ways behavioral change and insure that they are no longer a threat to public safety. A

restorative justice program is to be implemented by the IDOC.

HB 1695 (Juvenile Assessment Bill) was introduced last session without final legislative action taken. This bill provides that people who were sentenced to life without possibility of parole for crimes committed when they were under 18 years of age would, after serving 20 years, be eligible to submit an Application for Review and Assessment to the IDOC who will forward the application, along with additional information, to the Prisoner Review Board for their review and decision.

HB1291 (Post -Conviction) was introduced last session without final legislative action taken. This bill provides that if defendants do not file a direct appeal, a post-conviction petition shall be filed no later than 10 years from the date of sentencing (rather than 3 years from the date of conviction).



HB 1290 (Integrated Ballistic Identification) was introduced last session without final legislative action taken. This bill provides that defendants may make a motion before the final court that entered the judgment of conviction for the performance of Integrated Ballistic Identification System testing. This could be used on evidence that was secured in relation to the trial which resulted in a conviction, but which was not subject to the testing which is now requested because the technology was not available at the time of the trial.

Abolition of the Death Penalty (SB 328) was introduced last session without final legislative action. This action would abolish the death penalty. ■



# New Publisher for Stateville Speaks

Bill Ryan

The time has come for a new publisher for *Stateville Speaks*, and Cynthia Kobel, Director of the Tamms Committee, has agreed to assume the responsibility, effective January 1, 2008. I will remain as a consulting publisher during the transition period. Cynthia has given her assurance that there will be no changes in the advocacy position of *Stateville Speaks*, which will continue to educate, advocate, and provide a forum for prisoners to express opinions. The editors and assistant editors will remain the same with the responsibility of encouraging submissions and supporting *Stateville Speaks*. If anyone would be interested in becoming part of the newspaper staff, please contact Cynthia at the Tamms Committee, P.O. Box 147130, Chicago, Illinois 60614.

I asked Cynthia to assume the publishing responsibility of *Stateville Speaks* in order to provide a permanent base for the newspaper and to allow me more time for legislative activity and for my family, especially the 12 grandchildren! *Stateville Speaks* has grown incredibly in the past four years from a mimeographed four-pager in 2004, initiated under the leadership of Renaldo Hudson. Now we have about 3,000 members on our mailing list, about one-half of them prisoners from practically every IDOC institution. The combined talents and dedication of Ibi Cole, Shaena Fazal, and Katy Ryan

have enabled us to develop a quality newspaper written primarily by IDOC prisoners. I am also grateful to the writers and subscribers who have supported *Stateville Speaks*. Ibi, Shaena, Katy, and I will continue to provide whatever support and assistance is necessary to Cynthia.

*Stateville Speaks* will be published three times a year in January, June, and October, with special issues devoted to special topics when appropriate. Deadlines for articles will be December 1, May 1, and September 1. Articles should be submitted to:

Stateville Speaks  
Cynthia Kobel  
P.O. Box 147130  
Chicago, Illinois 60614

Articles mailed to me will be forwarded to Cynthia.

Cynthia Kobel brings considerable experience in journalism to *Stateville Speaks* in addition to a strong history of activism, including the formation of the Tamms Committee. She worked as a police reporter in Texas and a photo journalist in New York City. She worked as Director of Communications for Stamford Center for the Arts and a writer for Dartmouth College. For the past 11 years she has worked for prison reform. She is the Executive Director of the Kenneth and Harle Montgomery Foundation.■

# LOST?

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Don't Know  
Where to Begin?**



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**1.**

**Subscribe to Stateville Speaks**  
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Sign the CER Petition. See Pg. 13 for Details.

**3.**

**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

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**6.**

**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



Dear *Stateville Speaks*,

I am serving a 40-year sentence and have 11 1/2 years in counted towards my prison sentence. I have read about some of the proposed criteria presented by Citizens for Earned Release. I agree with this program as a financial solution and as much needed relief to inmates who have been reformed.

There are many men who have been incarcerated much longer than I, but I am a living testament to change of thought, change of life; in other words, reform. The most important thing in my life that I have changed was the willingness to accept compliance in my life. I have accepted God into my life and that has made a profound difference in how I think and act. I know that may mean little to the committee, but it has been the only thing that could change me.

I have received a Heating, Ventilation, Air-conditioning Certificate. I will graduate with my Associate's Degree in two months and continue to seek the programs that I.D.O.C. offers.

I hope some way, somehow, I can be a

participant in the benefits this program would offer the rehabilitated inmates.

Thank you for your time. May God Bless.

Bert Berrios ■

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## Can We Change?

Donald "Talib" McDonald, Editor

Dear Brothers,

It has come to my attention that a lot of us have failed to notify families and friends about the Committee for Earned Release, and its mission to work for some of us to have an opportunity to earn a sentence adjustment. We have, so far, failed to talk to each other to make sure every one knows about the committee. Don't assume someone knows!

Brothers, regardless of the popular belief to lock everyone up and throw away the key, it's human to make mistakes. You know how babies crawl before they walk? We have the opportunity to change. Some of us have hurt a lot of people in our ignorance. But if we have the ability to change our minds, we can change our conduct and deserve to earn our release from prison.

In other words, play time is over. Let us come together with our friends, family and each other and work for our freedom. If you would know real power, find the power of self that dwells within the human heart, your heart. ■

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## Book Review

Joseph Dole

Man's Search for Meaning  
by Viktor E. Frankl

A prisoner of Auschwitz during World War II, psychiatrist Viktor E. Frankl

endured a horrific existence like so many others in concentration camps. He and his sister were the only members of his family to survive the genocide. The rest, his father, mother, brother, and wife, all died in the camps or were sent to the gas ovens.

He came away with the belief that "life holds a potential meaning under any conditions, even the most miserable ones." Prior to his death in 1997, Dr. Frankl often quoted Nietzsche, who said, "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how."

Originally published in Austria in 1946 (the book is still in print today), Man's Search for Meaning is divided into two parts. Part One, "Experiences in a Concentration Camp," details his own time at Auschwitz. Part Two, "Logotherapy in a Nutshell," is a breakdown of his theory of logotherapy, which is that man's primary motivational force is his search for meaning.

I highly recommend this book to all prisoners, especially those with life or other long sentences, as well as those in the free world. I found it worthy of rereading more than once, as I'm sure many of the millions of others who have purchased copies worldwide have.

I would also recommend reading Elie Wiesel's book titled Night along with Man's Search for Meaning. This is another first-hand account of life and survival in a Nazi concentration camp. Both books are short but powerful reads.

### **GREAT BOOKS**

*Continued on Page 7...*

*Teaching Restorative Justice Cont...*

and their families, but they also negatively impact themselves. But Impact of Crime on Victims isn't just theoretical book learning. Just like the victim's panel, there are other exercises designed to encourage participants to open up to the world around them. For example, on the second day a staff member will bring a puppy to the prison. During that day's lecture, two of the toughest students will be called out of class.

Most of the time they're nervous; they don't know why they're being singled out. The inmate facilitator will then lead these students into an empty classroom where the staff member and puppy wait. The effect that this puppy has on most men is incredible! Many of us haven't touched an animal in many years, and the joy of having a puppy lick your face is indescribable for most. The puppy's role is to put men back in touch with their feelings, to reawaken their sense of compassion. Not everyone responds positively, but most do.

At the end of the five-day workshop, the facilitators ask the men to write out something that they are willing to do for their own personal restorative justice effort. The paper is collected and will be mailed back to them in six months as a reminder of their pledge. Most of the time, the inmates continue to stay on track.

I've been incarcerated for almost twenty years, and I've never seen anything that has impacted a prison population like this program. The concept of restorative justice works. The Impact of Crime on Victims program works. I'm not saying that it's a miracle cure for society's ills, but I've seen first hand how it has inspired many men to better themselves and end their criminal lifestyles. I'm proud to say that I'm one of them. ■

*Great Books Contined...*

The following books are all titles that I highly recommend to anyone interested in reading about the history of America. Most of them deal with Native Americans / American Indians or at least include them as part of the story. All of them dispel incorrect teachings we've learned through grade school and in popular fiction. They are well-researched and well-written. You can find them pretty easily through used book stores and on the internet to save money.

1. 1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus by Charles C. Mann, (2005) (Try to get the 2006 paperback edition with the new afterword).
2. The Indian Slave Trade by Alan Galloway (2003).
3. The Unknown American Revolution by Gary B. Nash (2005).
4. Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World by Jack Weatherford, (1980).
5. In Bitterness and in Tears: Andrew Jackson's Destruction of the Creeks and Seminoles by Sean Michael O'Brian (2003).
6. The Civil War in the American West by Alvin M. Josephy, Jr. (1990). ■

## Fast Facts

Joseph Dole

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, of the 298 people sentenced to die in Illinois between 1973 and 2005, 97 (almost 1/3) of

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## Important Announcements

### Prisoner Denied Care?

The National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression – Chicago is gathering evidence about medical care in Illinois prisons. The denial of medical care to prisoners who are sick or injured is a denial of the Constitutional right of all prisoners under the Eighth Amendment to be free from cruel and unusual punishment. We are interested in all prisoners with undiagnosed or untreated medical problems. Prisoners with chronic diseases and conditions seem to have the most difficulty, especially people with hepatitis C, diabetes, cancer, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, multiple sclerosis and other debilitating conditions, and mental health issues.

If you are interested in participating in this process, write to Ted Pearson, National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression – Chicago, 1325 S. Wabash Ave. Suite 105, Chicago IL 60605, 312-939-2750.

## Time for Action!

Now is the time for people interested in reforming the criminal justice system to step up to the plate. We will have an ambitious legislative agenda this year and supporters are needed. For much too long, critical issues facing prisoners, their families, and supporters have been ignored. This can and must change. You can join our movement by contacting Stateville Speaks, Citizens for Earned Release, Long-term Prison Planning Project, Illinois Prison Talk, and N.I.V. There will be a very important legislative meeting held by CER on October 27. The time and place will be determined later and members will be notified.

The N.I.V. builds a database of signatures and members to collectively create a lobbying force to influence and push for legislation, or law changes that are in line with our mission statement. (See ad on page 4) The N.I.V. cannot respond to correspondence making requests due to very limited staff. Our purpose does not allow us to take on or work on individual cases as we have no legal staff. Our mission is to change laws that best effect all who are effected by these laws.

**Subscribing to Stateville Speaks also strengthens N.I.V. Subscribe today to help us make positive law changes!**

# Pro Se Litigation Tips

## A. Fillmore

Requirements for the Healing Art Malpractice Act: 735 ILCS 5/2-622

Those seeking relief in any state circuit court or the Illinois Court of Claims alleging medical negligence, malpractice, or other form of improper medical treatment by I.D.O.C. medical staff, you must provide an affidavit by a health professional or medical doctor stating that said medical professional has reviewed your medical records and determined that indeed you have a “reasonable and meritorious cause for filing of such action”. 735 ILCS 5/2-622(a)(1). If you claim malpractice, etc. and fail to attach said affidavit, your complaint will get dismissed. Obtaining this affidavit from an outside medical professional is almost, if not entirely, impossible for an incarcerated person.

However, there is a way to avoid the requirements of the Healing Art Malpractice Act. That is, by “Common Law Negligence – Violation of Statute” or “I.D.O.C. Rule, Regulation, Institutional Directive or Administrative Directive” for which caused your injury. For example, for those of us incarcerated within I.D.O.C., the law mandates as well as Administrative Directives, that we receive medical care and treatment. 730 ILCS 5/3-2-2(1)(a); 730 ILCS 5/3-7-2(d); Administrative Directives #04.03.121; #04.03.101; #04.03.103; #04.03.105. Illinois law also mandates that inmates do not receive “arbitrary or oppressive treatment” 730 ILCS 5/1-1-2(c) and also mandates I.D.O.C. restore offenders to useful citizenship” 730 ILCS 5/1-1-2(d).

If you were denied adequate medical care and were injured which did not amount to “deliberate indifference,” then “Common Law Negligence – Violation of Statute or I.D.O.C. Rule” will be an avenue for you to pursue. Example: “Plaintiff alleging injury from statutory violations rather than any breach of the standard of medical care do not need to comply with Section 2-622 of the Healing Art Malpractice Act”.

Collins v. Lake Forest Hospital, 343 ILL. App 3d 353, 360; 798 N.E. 2d 143 (ILL. App. 2<sup>nd</sup> Dist. 2003).

Your arguments would be that medical staff were not at liberty to exercise their own medical judgments. Instead, they were obligated to observe specific requirements codified by the legislature or I.D.O.C. Rules, Regulations (i.e. I.D.s or A.D.s) as to the appropriate manner to provide

medical treatment, and for that reason you are not subjected to the requirements of Section 2-622. See: Chadwick v. Al-Basha, 692 N.E.2d 390; 295 ILL. App. 3<sup>rd</sup> 75 (ILL. App. 2<sup>nd</sup> Dist. 1998); Collins v. Lake Forest Hospital, 798 N.E. 2d 143; 343 ILL. App 3d 353 (ILL. App. 2<sup>nd</sup> Dist. 2003); In re Massey v. Hickory Point Bank & Trust, 841 N.E. 2d 1084; 362 ILL. App. 1211 (ILL. App. 4<sup>th</sup> Dist. 2006).

Also, any medical staff who performed a procedure against your consent or will, committed a tort of medical-battery. If you did not consent to the medical professional to touch you or the treatment was a substantial variance with the consent granted, that medical person is guilty of medical-battery. See: Curtis v. Jaskey, 759 N.E. 2d 962; 326 ILL. App. 3d 90 (ILL. App. 2<sup>nd</sup> Dist. 2001).■

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## The C.E.R. Redemption Factor

Patrick Pursley, a.k.a. Bilal Shakur

Peace! I am a wrongly-convicted prisoner going into my 14<sup>th</sup> year behind bars. I am a law man, a jailhouse lawyer. I'm also a writer and I thought I'd throw a few ideas at you regarding this C.E.R. campaign.

Right now a lot of things are happening that have people rethinking their way of doing things. War, terrorism, political corruption, and climate changes are happening at such an alarming rate that people are being forced to change. For many of us who came up in the streets doing crime, the hustle is or was a way of

life. Then, bang, disaster strikes and we are headed to prison with 40, 50, 60 years or natural life.

Now I know the prevailing thinking in society is “Hey, lock ‘em up and throw away the key!” Don’t get me wrong, as a law man, I have read thousands of cases. The brutality and violence that people are capable of is shocking and sickening on the most primal levels. However, there are things that must be addressed: Why does America have more people in prison than anywhere else in the world? Why is the biggest part of the Illinois State budget allocated to the



prison system and not the education system? Why are one in four black males incarcerated or on parole or probation? What, do you think we come out of the womb trigger happy with crack clutched in our tiny grip, ready to hit the block?

There is a disconnect in society, whether you are shut up in your ivory towers, in your barbed wire cul de sacs, or going down the street silently praying to the god of indifference that that homeless man doesn't come within smelling distance. We are living our lives in the same spaces but worlds apart. We are gleefully separated into different races, classes, and religions; never the twain should mix.

The problem is that this is a false premise, an illusion, which

*Continued on Page 9...*

*CER Redemption Factor Cont...*

propagates our divisions. We are all connected. Everyone's actions affect the next person. We all have a responsibility to the other. This is good will. Societies, tribes, nations, and governments are built upon this premise. A commonwealth looks out for the common good of each and every member of that culture. Nevertheless, this notion has fallen by the wayside in our nation.

However, times are changing and a growing number of people are becoming more politically, socially, and spiritually conscious. Underneath all the hard-boiled hawkism and conservatism there is a compassionate mindset being born. These are the people who realize we can bomb the world into pieces but not into peace. They also see that packing prisons is not the answer. The way I see it, severe sentences with no chance for parole is not the answer.

Society must come to grips with the causes of the criminal mindset, which include environmental, social, and cultural conditioning. In plain English, the ghetto, the lack of education and opportunities, as well as peer pressure and the lure of fast cash are the main driving forces leading to street crime. Moreover, we must deal with the social and cultural influences of music and movies which glorify crime and celebrate the villain.

We must understand that America sends mixed messages where our leaders can lie, steal, and kill, yet society as a whole seems to be forgiving of the crimes of those at the top. It is time for that same sentiment to be extended to those on the bottom. I'm not saying we should excuse or condone murder and mayhem. What I am saying though is that we should be as forgiving as much as we want to be forgiven.

Within this grace should lie an opportunity for a second chance. There should be a set of meaningful programs instituted that not only

allow prisoners to earn an early release but also an education system that can change the inmate's paradigm.

Right now in Illinois maximum security prisons there is virtually nothing for the majority. There are few jobs and even fewer programs. Most are simply locked in their cells 22, 23, or even 24 hours a day with a TV and radio (if they can afford them).

This process of perpetual wasting away needs to be reversed and not just so a

*Concluded on Page 10...*



## Thoughts on Medical

Madeline Ward

In prisons, most care is done outside the premises. This increases the costs and the time it takes. The infirmary lacks the fundamentals that even a home sick room offers because of restrictions on inmate involvement. The beds aren't changed, sheets don't fit, and disinfecting is done on a haphazard schedule.

The blood pressure machines are antiquated, the scales broken, and that is only the tip of the iceberg. If an outside

physician wants to volunteer, the red tape discourages the help. The HMO's would be proud of the profit management inmates make do with, such as re-used Ace bandages, old braces, etc.

If outside tests are needed, the process for approval is long and involved and discourages all but the most persistent. If the State assumes the responsibility of a human being, then they have accepted the responsibility to provide for their basic needs. If nutrition was better, illnesses would be less. Competent staff should be available when needed, and replacing antiquated equipment would be a start.

Allowing prisoners a means to obtain what they need for minor ills would alleviate a burden placed on the prison medical system. Band-aids, Cortisone cream, and sinus tablets could be bought at commissary and/or by medical staff. Another avenue would be providing preventive sunscreen and hats for the ground crew, fruit and real fruit juice. The fruit juice is only 10% or 30% ; the rest is filled with high cholesterol producing additives. ■

*Dear Stateville Speaks:*

I've been a loyal reader of your newsletter from the beginning. I appreciate all the work done on our behalf, the information, and all the stories are wonderful. I am the Senior Peer Counselor and have been teaching prevention of HIV/AIDS and STDs for over 8 years. We were blessed to be videotaped and broadcasted throughout the facility. It was a great thing, but not enough. I've been given training with the Illinois Department of Public Health for years, plugged in with CDC, and am able to gather information weekly and provide confidential counseling with positive residents. I look forward to working together.

Anthony Spencer, Sr. ■

*CER Redemption Factor Continued...*

convict can earn early release either. The truth is, you John and Jane Q. Public taxpayers should be outraged by the lack of rehabilitation because the majority of us will be getting out one day, impoverished, skill-less, and angry.

What we go is a non-stop barrage of nit-picking with a hyper-abundance of meaningless rules. There is a never-ending line of new rules just waiting to be implemented. Inmates are put in the hole for the smallest infraction. The adjustment committee rubberstamps the charges and the grievance process is meaningless.

The problem with this is that prisoners are not changing or growing. They are simply submitting to force. This may be punishment but it is not rehabilitation. It is not good for the prisoner, the prison staff, or society at large, for many inmates walk around with a smoldering resentment. The taxpaying public needs to insist on rehabilitation and education for prisoners. After all, it is called Department of Corrections. But with a recidivism rate of 60-70%, I ask you, what is being corrected? If a profession has a failure rate of 60-70%, it would be shut down.

For a lot of us a lengthy prison sentence was that catalyst which caused us to rethink our actions and thinking. Whether we gain freedom or not, we are forever changed for the better.

Ultimately it will be up to you, the public and lawmakers, to decide if prisoners are to get an opportunity for C.E.R. Of course, as a prisoner, I am all for it, but not just for the reasons you may think. The way I see it, in practically every religion or ancient epic saga all the way down to our times, the truly great stories are about redemption and second chances.

To me, C.E.R. doesn't just stand for Certified Earned Release. It also stands for Change Equals Redemption. What do you think? Feel free to hit [www.ILCER.org](http://www.ILCER.org) back with a response. Also check out [www.illinoisprisonstank.com](http://www.illinoisprisonstank.com) ■



## A Little Perspective

Joseph Dole

Going by what the media has been trumpeting lately, one would think violent crime is rampant, climbing at a dramatic rate, and out of control nationwide. What they fail to report is that in half of the country crime rates are falling, holding steady, or are at 30 year lows. Out of the last seven nightly news reports on violent crime that I've seen, they cite solely cities where crime is on the rise and point to this as evidence of a "nationwide epidemic." The average person would be led to believe the situation is the same in Illinois.

What was never cited in a single one of those reports were any numbers on Chicago or any part of Illinois, nor any area where crime rates are falling. What's even more worrisome is only NBC made comment of the bias of the organizations that put out the reports they are citing. For instance, the latest report, "Violent Crime In America: 24 Months Of Alarming Trends," was put out by the Police Executive Research Forum whose board of directors consists of seven police chiefs and police commissioners. Since the "War on Terror" has consumed more and more of the state and federal budgets, the police and sheriffs departments across the country have found their budgets shrinking. What better way to argue for increased funds for police than the age-old proven scare tactic of "rising violent

crime." Why else would you have major reports on crime rates or crime statistics that cover such a short period? The reason is that if they were any more encompassing they wouldn't show any "epidemic." In 2004 the Justice Department reported that violent crime has dropped 57% since 1993.

"Violent Crime In America: 24 Month Of Alarming Trends" looked at statistics from only 2004-2006 and from only 50 cities in the U.S. The results were those of cities that had increases in violent crime. Only one city was cited from Illinois: Chicago. Though never mentioned in any of the news stories about the report, these were the statistics for Chicago:

1. Homicide rose 4.01%, from 449 in 2004 to 467 in 2006.
2. Robbery dropped 4 0.71%, from 15,974 in 2004 to 15,860 in 2006.
3. Aggravated Assault dropped 7.34%, from 18,820 in 2004 to 17,438 in 2006.
4. Aggravated Assault w/a Firearm dropped 9.74%, from 5,136 in 2004 to 4,636 in 2006. ■

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*Fast Facts Continued...*

them later had their sentence or conviction overturned; 156 (more than ½) had their sentences commuted; 12 were executed; 14 died of other causes before their sentences were able to be carried out. Seven others were still under a sentence of death as of December 31, 2005 and 12 others fell into the category of "Other Removals."

### Resources

Do you have someone whom you correspond with regularly who has internet access and an e-mail account? If so, they can keep you informed of all the latest criminal justice news, studies, and reports and prison news through the following

*Continued on Page 11...*

*Fast Facts Continued...*

three sources:

1. Get e-mail notification of Bureau of Justice Statistics releases from JUSTSTATS. Subscribe for free at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/juststats.htm>
2. Sign up for Prison Legal News' free listserve to receive prison and jail news and court rulings by e-mail at [www.prisonlegalnews.org](http://www.prisonlegalnews.org)
3. Get bi-weekly lists of all new grants, publications, and press releases from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority's periodic emailing called the CJ-Dispatch by signing up at <http://www.icjia.state.il.us> or [cja.irc@illinois.gov](mailto:cja.irc@illinois.gov)

**Notice of New Studies**

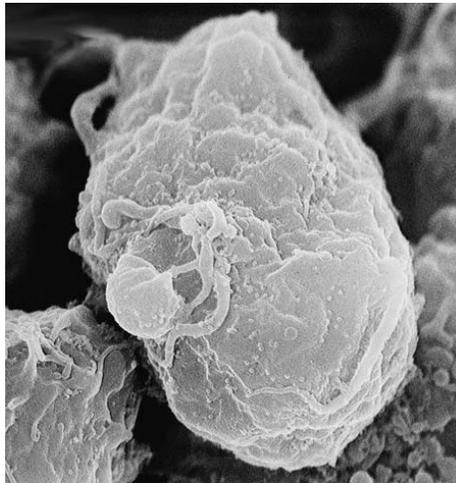
The following Research Bulletins were released in January 2007 by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. Both were authored by ICJIA research analyst Jessica Ashley and can be obtained free of charge by calling (312) 793-8550; or by writing to Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 120 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 1016, Chicago, IL 60606-3997; or online at [www.icjia.state.il.us](http://www.icjia.state.il.us).

1. "Examining incarceration trends among minority youth in Illinois." (Research Bulletin, Vol. 5, No. 5, January 2007)

Of the 3,106 juveniles that were admitted to an Illinois youth center in fiscal year 2004, this report studied the 1,691 youth who were committed by court only. Of these, 52 % were black, 37% were white, 10% were Hispanic, and less than 1% were Asian and American Indian youth. The report concludes that only black youth were overrepresented in I.D.O.C. court commitments, and that blacks were more than 4 times more likely to be committed to a youth center than whites.

2. "Examining trends and data on incarcerated youth in Illinois." (Research Bulletin, Vol. 5, No. 6, January 2007)

This report was also done with statistics from fiscal year 2004, revealing a 23% reduction in commitments to Illinois youth centers since 1999, when the Juvenile Reform Act took effect. In fiscal year 2004, 83% of committed juveniles were convicted of felonies. 2 juveniles were convicted of murder and sentenced to the I.D.O.C. juvenile division. More than half of those committed to youth centers had no prior arrests.■



## “What is H.I.V. and How Can I Get It?”

Anthony Spencer

H.I.V. The human immunodeficiency virus – is a virus that kills your body's "CD4 cells". CD4 cells (also called T-helper cells) help your body fight off infection and disease.

“What is A.I.D.S.?”

A.I.D.S. – the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome – is a disease you get when HIV destroys your body's immune system. Normally your immune system helps you fight off illness. When your immune system fails,

you can become very sick and can die.

“What Do I Need to Know About HIV?”

The first cases of AIDS were identified in the U.S. in 1981, but AIDS most likely existed here and in other parts of the world for many years before that time. In 1984 scientists proved that HIV causes AIDS. Anyone can get HIV. The most important thing to know is how you can get this virus.

- You can get HIV by having unprotected sex – sex without a condom with someone who has HIV. The virus can be in an infected person's blood, semen, or vaginal secretions, and can enter your body through tiny cuts or sores in your skin, or in the lining of your vagina, penis, rectum, or by sharing a needle and syringe to inject drugs or sharing drug equipment used to prepare drugs for injection with someone who has HIV.
- From a blood transfusion or blood clotting factor that you got before 1985. (Today it is unlikely you could get infected that way because all blood in the U.S. has been tested for HIV since 1985).
- Babies born to women with HIV also can become infected during pregnancy, birth, or breast feeding.

“How Do I Know If I Have HIV or AIDS?”

You might have HIV and still feel perfectly healthy. The only way to know for sure if you are infected or not is to be tested.

Talk with a knowledgeable health care provider or counselor both before and after you are tested, and remember this....if you didn't sign a consent form you weren't tested for HIV.■



## L.W.O.P

by Theodore Knox

If you think too much about the letters, you might go crazy. LWOP: Life Without Parole. It is a tough pill to swallow. It is difficult to explain to someone outside these walls what a life sentence is like. Imagine being in this world with a population of 6.5 billion people and not having one person to share your ups, downs, dreams, thoughts, and tears with. Imagine having a nightmare, then waking up and not being able to tell the nightmare from the reality. Imagine a tall wall that you continuously climb and never reach the top. Imagine taking a walk in space and being left up there, waiting for time to end. Imagine being marooned on a desert island where your only hope is the unlikely chance that you will be spotted by a passing ship.

Each of these illustrations gives a small sense of the kind of anguish and despair involved in being imprisoned for life. The sentence Life Without Parole is among the most unjust, immoral, cruelest, least effective, and most barbaric of punishments in the United States of America. It is nothing short of execution by installment, the death penalty in slow motion.

I applaud those who, because of their deep concern for life, oppose the death penalty. But we must not replace the

horror of legalized execution with the icy hopelessness of life in prison without hope of parole. Of course, many people in their opposition to the horror of the death penalty would see the sentence of Life Without Parole as a viable alternative. But to embrace LWOP means that you do not believe human beings can change; it is like selling humanity out. People can and do change and those who do deserve a chance to earn their way out of prison.

No one knows the lifer's experience better than a lifer, so who better to help bring awareness to the Silent Death Sentence than me. Serving Life Without Parole is like nobody knows you are here, there is no date to anticipate, no date to rally around, no date to protest. LWOP—there are no numbers at the end of it. LWOP—it is empty of all substance. In here you must create a whole world within yourself in order to avoid having all the LWOP sucked out of you prematurely.

If a genie gave me one wish, I would ask that genie to deliver the lawmakers in Illinois an acceptable reform bill that could restore hope to the hopeless, a bill simply stating that those who demonstrate true change and achieve an ability to function as valuable contributions to our society will be given a second chance to re-enter. Until next time, keep hope alive that there is a genie in a bottle.■

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## Life as a Level “E”

Anonymous

In most states, prisoners are classified as minimum, medium, or maximum security and placed in an appropriate facility. In Illinois, the Department of Corrections has so many different ways to classify its prisoners that it's hard to keep track of them. One way that the IDOC classifies its prisoners is by "escape risk level." Every prisoner is designated as low, moderate, high or extremely high (Level E). Illinois' maximum-security facilities house

prisoners of every escape risk level. Prisoners of each level are treated pretty much the same, except for Level Es. The treatment of Level Es goes the extra unpleasant mile. While Level Es are housed in maximum-security facilities, IDOC feels they need more than maximum-security conditions. It makes no sense that anything could be more than maximum, but that is the essence of Level E. And once you are on Level E, there is no criteria to be removed from it. Nothing short of a miracle will get you off of it.

I was justifiably placed on Level E status twelve years ago for an escape attempt. Over the past nine years I've only had two petty tickets, but that doesn't matter to the Department. Good behavior is irrelevant once you are a Level E. The ordinary rules of the prison no longer apply to you. Your level E status sets you apart. The best way I can give you an understanding of what it means to be a Level E is to share my day with you.

I woke up this morning to the sound of an officer shouting my name over and over. When I asked, "What?" he just looked at me wrote, something down on his clipboard, and walked away. He did this even though my ID card was left in the bars of my cell for his convenience, and I was in plain sight as I slept. This happens in the middle of the night too. So my day began in the way my days normally do.

An hour later the special Level E shakedown team materialized at my door. I was strip-searched and taken downstairs to the bullpen. While I was down there, I could hear the sounds of my property being tossed around. When I returned to my cell twenty minutes later, I surveyed the aftermath of a tornado. It was no surprise. It took me another twenty minutes to sort through what property I had left and to assess the damage. Only a few things were missing and  
*Continued on Page 15...*

# Creative Corner

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



## Prestamped

Cari Carpenter

Another thing  
I cannot say--  
squelched before  
it makes the page.  
My travels--  
literal or otherwise--  
across Time  
Space  
Imagination  
And if I censor  
so much  
Have I said  
anything  
at all?  
So many things  
I cannot send--  
Stamps  
Address labels  
Postcards--  
What are they  
Afraid  
I'll send?  
a piece, prestamped,  
of Humanity?■

## Concrete and Iron City

David A. Smith

Concrete and iron city

what an awesome sight,  
From outside it looks peaceful  
inside there's nothing but fright.

Men housed in cages  
stacked row upon row,  
The Despair, hopelessness and fear  
from outside, who would know.

It's a battle from within  
waged from dawn to dawn,  
To overcome the feelings  
of a life gone wrong.

Segregated, denigrated,  
deprecated and worse,  
Times more than your sentence  
It's been your life your lifelong curse.

Always struggling within yourself  
to make it day to day,  
To maintain a shred of sanity  
to help you along the way.

But the way is fraught with dangers  
of the most fearsome kind,  
Self-destructive behavior  
products of a diseased mind.

The world outside moves on  
without giving any thought,  
The diseases most suffer  
are ones society has wrought.

It's easier just not to care  
than to take responsibility,

It's easier to simply say:  
"Lock 'em up, throw away the key."

But that is not the answer  
to this problem that we face,  
A problem with no boundaries  
of religion, class, or race.

Instead we need solutions  
to heal the sickness in our land,  
To help restore the dignity  
of this fallen man.

Help him understand the man  
God intended him to be,  
Lift him up, make him realize  
his noble destiny.

Now the time is growing short  
and something must be done,  
A faithful voice must be heard.  
Question is: "Will yours be one?"■

## Trapped in Time

Teresa Heater

Isolation, degradation, captured lives  
inside a cage.  
Repression, inhibition, a domain of  
bottled rage.  
Corridors of madness, a challenge of the  
mind,  
Beckoning one's sanity, a factor in its  
design.  
Some fold within its grasp.  
The strong will prevail and the weaker  
will collapse.  
The key lies not with repudiation.  
It rests within the burden of reality, and  
man's self-preservation,  
conditioning of the temple and  
discipline of one's wits.  
These things combined enable any man  
to survive life's most hellish pits.■

# Release Me God To Thee

by R.P. Rego

Cleanse me of the past and the never ending pain,  
Place my scars beyond man's sight, let not me live in vain.  
Accept my burdens and my hurt, and my pent-up agony,  
Take me from the one I am to the one I'm meant to be.

Accept the folly of my way, the mis-steps all along,  
Transform me with your gift of love and help me right the wrong.  
Open my heart to your pure path, clean and make me free,  
Enable me to live secure in your truth an harmony.

Jesus, be my Shepherd now and cleanse me of all sin,  
Enlighten me to God's pure will and let my joy begin.  
For unto me the Son was born to bring me home to thee,  
I honor, love, and praise you God, your gift makes all men free.

The freedom now your love provides releases me to you,  
I see through your unselfish love just what I need to do.  
I praise you my Almighty God, for now the way is clear,  
I need to freely share your love, without a doubt or fear.

In concert with my brothers and my sisters, joined in love,  
Enable us, All-Knowing God, with guidance from above.  
Unlock the just, reveal the truth, encourage us to care,  
Instill in us the will to act upon your love sincere.

Help us to be beyond deceit, not easily misled,  
Provide the courage to respond in your pure love instead.

Unmask the vain, the false faces and the empty remedy,  
Fill our hearts with truth and love, release us God to Thee.

Release me, mighty Father, to the only way to be,  
Release me, blessed Savior, release me God to Thee. ■



## Because of Women

by Samuel Karim a.k.a. Unity

When I came to life, it was because of that woman!  
When I learned to talk, it was because of that woman!  
When I learned to walk, it was because of that woman!  
When I learned to pray, it was because of that woman!  
When I learned my ABCs and how to read, it was because of that woman!  
When I learned to care about others, it was because of that woman!  
When I started to change pace, it was because of that woman!  
When I started to live, it was because of that woman!  
When I wanted to live, it was because of that woman!  
When I was at my best, it was because of that woman!  
It is because of this woman of the light that has man thinking he is better than what he is and can do better than what he does. For this woman is hope, love, and faith all in one. For it is she who will never turn fake and at the end of the day, this woman I speak of will forever be great. ■

## A Poem

Mandi Heater

I said I didn't do it, Mom  
But still they say I did.  
I'd never try to hurt him, Mom  
Not my little kid.

He's such a special baby, Mom  
I know you understand.  
You get that warm, good feeling,  
Mom  
When you touch that tiny hand.

There's bars all around me, Mom  
And I haven't slept in weeks.  
The food is hard and salty, Mom  
And the piping has a leak.

I miss my little boys, Mom  
They're all I've ever had  
I'd always go and hold them, Mom  
When times would get bad.

I'm all alone and scared, Mom  
I'm losing all my hope  
Without my kids I'm dying, Mom  
I will never learn to cope.

I love my little boys, Mom  
No matter what they say  
I'm coming home real soon, Mom  
This I know and pray. ■

## Epoch of Time

L. Darnell Hawkins

From the pyramids to the sphinx and the garden in the sky,  
a sign of a glorious people oh my, my, my  
Who was this intelligent people who left their footprints in the sands of time?  
You can be sure of one thing; their skin was as brown as yours and mine.  
They set at the head of the table of humanity and civilization they created,  
How is it in this epoch of time they have become so degraded?

*Continued on Page 15...*

*Life on Level "E" Continued...*

nothing was broken this time. It could have been worse.

"Stand-by for chow" was announced, so I put on my special green-striped clothes. When I was let out of my cell, my special triple number was spoken into the officer's walkie and then it was yelled up and down the gallery. On my way to the chow hall and back, all the officers were watching me, as if they were expecting me to do something crazy at any moment. I felt crazy by the time that I got back to my cell.

A couple of hours after that, I was told that I had a visitor. I was taken to the disciplinary segregation noncontact visiting room, even though I'm in general population. There I was chained to the floor, like I was Hannibal Letcher or somebody. My mother watched me being chained to the floor through the plexiglass that separated us. After our one-hour time limit had expired, I was locked in a 3 x 4 cage for forty minutes while I waited for an officer to come get me.

At supper-time, I again took the walk of paranoia to the chow hall. The Lieutenant who confiscated my coat last month was mean-mugging me in the dining room because I filed a grievance on him. He took my coat because it's suddenly contraband when a Level E has one, even though they sell them to us at the commissary.

Now that I've made it back to my cell, I am glad that the day is almost finished. To you my day probably sounds like a bad day. But to me, and the other Level Es, it was just a normal day. Some days are worse, though no days are any better. This is my status quo for as long as I'm classified as a Level E. Though two wardens have approved me to be taken off of Level E status, administrators in Springfield have

denied their recommendations without giving any reason.

So tonight I will lay down to sleep, knowing that I will be yanked from my dreams once or twice by menacing officers before my tomorrow will begin. And I know what tomorrow will hold for me and other Level Es here. ■

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## I will hold on

Lloyd Saterfield

I am down with no hope,  
looking for a way out.  
My mind is running from reality,  
locked in a prison of nonexistence.  
Held down with thoughts of letting  
my true Identity be revealed.  
Overwhelmed with pain and hurt.  
Thoughts of destruction.  
I must hold on to the rope that  
was given to me.  
If I let go, I would lose all  
that I have gained.  
And be out of the grace of him  
that gives life.  
For this I would Stand Strong and  
be the creation that I was created  
to be.■

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*Epoch of Time Continued...*

They gave the world science,  
mathematics, and music, and they knew  
astrology too.  
I say unto you my sisters and brothers,  
those were our people  
Yes, the ones we never knew!  
And our legacy was taken out of the  
pages of history to be hidden for all  
times.  
It was replaced with this story of  
murderers and thieves not worth the  
value of a dime  
Wake up you mighty people and give  
the world a sign  
Refuse to let the winds blow over the  
footprints in the sands of this epoch of  
time ■

## Positive Re-enforcement

Creative Writing: Jesse Cunningham

"Alright, let's get started. I want to thank everyone for coming, for taking time out of your day's activity to come here, to check in. Now I know this is a Correctional Facility, but we like to think that those of you under our mental health care are in the wellness manufacturing sector. It is your centering, your mental sensitivity within these surroundings to a higher consciousness, whether or not you believe in a higher power, that's what's important to us really. It's become cliché that doing time must be a waste of time, but here at Milton, we try to look beyond that. Now, who among you feels that they're on a more positive track in their stay here today—yes, Theo?" ... "That's true, I agree Theo. Did everyone hear what Theo said? He said that time here is what you make of it. Does everybody agree with that? Yes, Eugene?"

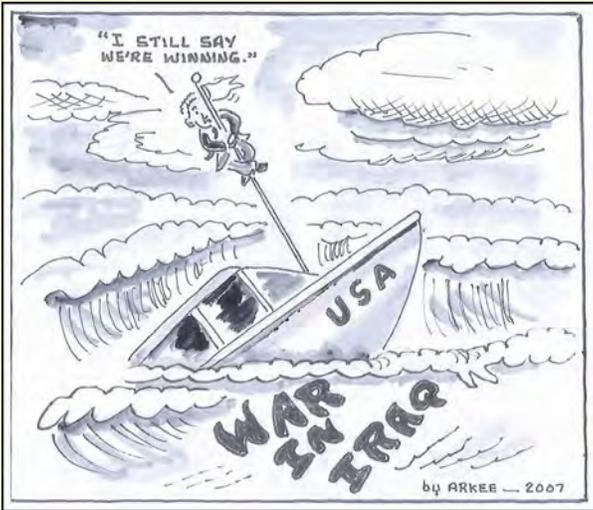
"Well, that's certainly one view—that nothing ever happens here. Of course, to a large degree that's up to you. I mean, if you get out of bed: it's cloudy or it's too hot. Some people don't even feel like getting out of bed. I think if you try to stay positive, think of some of the smaller things, ways you can change yourself. If life's—yes, Walter? Walter, did you want to say something. I see you had your hand up."

"Now that's true. Life can be difficult wherever you start your day. If you can work or clean things up. Did everybody hear Walter? You can't live life if you're not doing something. David?"

"What David raises is a good point. Keep your living space clean—how else would someone really want it? We like to teach that, if nothing else, at Milton you have 'a cell of your own.' Again, things are what you make of it. What is it, Eddie, were you going to say something?"

"Did everybody hear Eddie?"

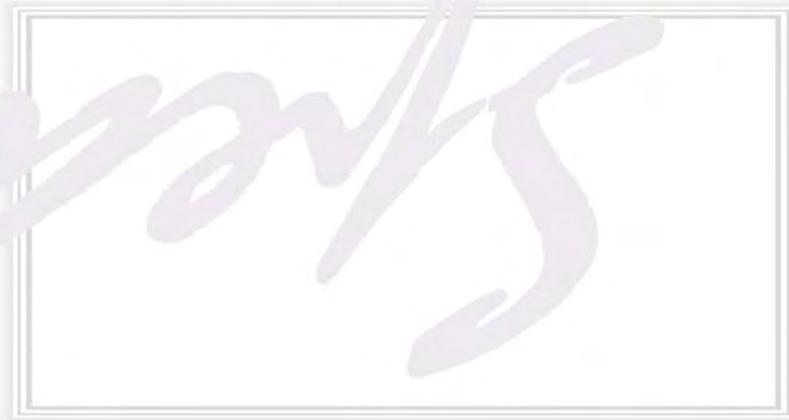
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