

TWO ROADS

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An honest chronicle of the stories and service of the Incarcerated Women and Men of
the Illinois Department of Corrections

Volume 27

To All Readers

Our monthly newsletter focuses on three phases: *Rehabilitation*, *Restoration and Re-Entry*. These are the necessary phases of a successful incarceration and transition back to society.

Rehabilitation involves the struggle for change one confronts during incarceration.

Restoration reflects the refined version of one's self that we've become and our restored self seeks service of self-worth to the world.

Finally, *Re-Entry* is the ultimate goal one accomplishes through class study, self-study or modification programs completed during one's incarceration.

We are TWO ROADS, and we want to be a viable resource for our readers. We serve you by sharing the honest chronicle of the stories and service of the incarcerated women and men of the Illinois Department of Corrections. Join our movement.

TWO ROADS Editorial Staff

****Please Note:** All letters, emails and photos will be reviewed by personnel **PRIOR** to being received by the TWO ROADS editorial staff. All information that is not pertaining to TWO ROADS will be discarded. Thank you for respecting the guidelines.

Our Mission Statement

“We are committed to empowering those most impacted by harmful systems to become dynamic leaders and agents of change. Using the connecting, restorative power of these stories, we hope to do our part in bringing us all together to overcome societal ills, such as violence, poverty and mass incarceration.”

DISCLAIMER

TWO ROADS is built for bringing integrity and honesty about the people who are submitting their stories. There are times where the editors are required to make changes due to spelling errors or grammatical structure. Please know that **we will never take away your voice**; however, understand that we take pride in our work and strive to be the best in our representation of your voice.

Thank you.

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**TWO ROADS
RE-ENTRY FEARS
Volume 27**

TWO ROADS

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idoc.illinois.gov/news/tworoads.html

We encourage you to screenshot this page with the hashtag:



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Then LIKE and SHARE the post!

The Road Not Taken

by Robert Frost

Two Roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both,
And be one traveler, long I stood,
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there,
Had worn them really about the same,
And both that morning equally lay,
In leaves no step had trodden black.

Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads onto way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh,
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

*Sometimes it's good to remember where
you came from.*



Editor's Take

There are many things that make you say... "What are my fears?" A lot of men will say that they don't have any fears. Others call them concerns, but let's examine this analogy. Many men and women have been in a psychological mind trap for many years due to the crimes that were Committed and the time that has been served. In this time, we have learned to move and balance our life the best way we have known how, the way of the prison and that is not always right and just. Our town population is exactly which penal institution that we're in. For some, it was 3000 (like Menard or Stateville), and others it was 500 (Illinois River or East Moline). Many had to deal with the trials and tribulations that occurred during their time, and we all had to deal with the pandemic, COVID-19 – having the bare minimum and surviving with some injuries while others perished.

Now, a lot of men and women are getting close to the door, re-entering society, unaware of all the changes that are ahead and the challenges that will

surely surface. We all face change, but a person from prison, their families and close friends are the ones who are under the microscope.

Prison has changed their concepts of "rehabilitation" to "psychiatric help" by finding the cracks and leaks in our movement and then treating us with medication. Many men and women are just "coasting" through their time, so they haven't accomplished much or have just given up on life as a whole.

"“Hurt People Hurt People”, and when those who go to prison are not relinquished of the hurt, they return to society STILL HURT."

Society has two sides: 1) the one that cares for their brethren and, 2) the other that still believes in harsh sentencing and punishment. Because of this, many people don't care about the headaches and heartbreaks of those re-entering society, and even less of their changes. This leads to challenges and struggles that typically lead individuals back into prisons.

If we believe that “hurt people hurt people”, and when those who go to prison are not relinquished of their hurt, they return to society **STILL HURT!** This leads to the same point I just mentioned, which is another stint in the prison system. Re-entry is defined as “*the act of reentering; to come back (to society)*”.

Approximately 95% of the men and women in the Illinois Department of Corrections **WILL** Re-Enter back to society, but at what cost?

What are we doing in the prisons that are bettering the lives of those who are hurting, so that they can re-enter with the changes that need to be made? The day and life we live in is getting drastically worse. The world (including the prison) is filled with negativity. It spawns from the people who are hurting—which is every one of us!

Look at it from this point: when a rocket leaves the atmosphere there is a force to move forward, but, as it is re-entering the Earth’s atmosphere, there is a pushback. The fire that’s engulfing the shuttle, doing its’ best to burn it to a crisp. That is our lives on re-entry, those who want to attack the outside of

us, mentally draining the little life we have left. But yet, we push on!

“Once having 3-5 years left on their sentence, they were now cut down to 3 to 5 days...”

So, I believe that re-entry has its own “*barrier to entry*”, but it is vital that people understand that in order for us to reform, modify or transform, we need help! We need our Mothers, Fathers, Sisters, Brothers, Cousins, Friends, people from the church to **STEP UP** and help us, as we are coming to the little towns and the big metropolitan areas, looking to go out there and find work (**ANY JOB**) and earn a decent paycheck and take care of the kids, and see the Parole Agent and all of the things that are necessary to have a successful reintegration. Now, I am not calling for a handout, but we as a group tend to do better when we have positive support.

Many of us have time to complete, and many of us don’t. What I would like to see is for us, as Individuals in Custody, do all we can while we are inside.

Never believe that the little you do to earn a certificate is in vain. Continue to take any and every class, so that you can learn and earn as much as you can. You never know what might be coming down the pipeline. Always be in contact with your correctional counselor about things you can accomplish.

When you are less than 9 months out, get information about going to your resource room (**EVERY JOINT HAS ONE...DON'T BE FOOLED**) so that you can work on a resume and cover letter. Be mindful that all of your accomplishments are in your Master File. They are quick to note the bad things that you have done, but not the good things that you have accomplished. (EVERY certificate should be in your Master File).

Never forget how important you are, and the thing that you want to do is on you, but family members, I ask of you to get behind your brother, sister, cousin, niece, nephew, grandson, etc. that is an individual in custody and help them get on their feet **BEFORE THEY TOUCH DOWN.**

Included in this e-zine are some helpful instructions from the Education Justice Project. I would like to personally thank **Mr. Michael 'Saadiq' Cannon** and **Mr. Ricky Hamilton**, for their non-stop work to improve the communities after their incarceration and their continued support for TWO ROADS!

PLEASE BE AWARE that there are limited spots left in the upcoming HERstory. It is solely for the women individuals in custody and the working professionals. We would love to have your story to tell, but the deadline is approaching quickly (3/22/24).

Also, the **TRUTH-IN-SENTENCING** deadline is April 12th. Many men and women want to be a part of the mission, but "everyone can't go". If you genuinely want to be a part of the mission, please submit in time. We hope to share your stories to the world and hopefully, they will listen and learn.

In Parenting From Prison, the Article "Tools" by Associate Editor LaKeisha Woodard was actually called "I Didn't See This Heartbreak Coming."

Prepare for Challenges

Education Justice Project

Before leaving prison, work on practicing patience, both with others and with yourself. You will need to accept that things may not be perfect or easy. Forgive yourself if you make mistakes. You will probably have some awkward talks with people on the outside. Let yourself laugh them off. People in the outside world have awkward experiences all the time! You may think everyone will know you've just gotten out of prison, but they probably will not. Patience is important on the outside.

Everything may not go the way you want it to. Sometimes you will feel confused by how much things have changed since you went away. Go slow. Breathe. It is normal to feel stressed sometimes, but you don't want it to get out of hand. How will you relax once you're out in the world? Life on the outside can feel very rushed. Some have said visiting the lake, taking long walks, biking, and gardening have helped. How can you include activities like this in your life?

You might join a group that is learning to practice mindfulness, offered through some hospitals, social services, and a few churches.

Let's be honest. The first few days, weeks, and months after release are really challenging. This is why it's a good idea to make plans to get help before you are released. It's best if you can set up a time to meet with a treatment provider within 2-3 days of release. Join a support group, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, right away or make an appointment to see a counselor. Don't wait to get help.

Here are a few places you can start:

- Call 311 (Chicago) or 211 (rest of Illinois) to get connected to resources including substance use services and housing.
- Call 911 if you have overdosed and need immediate help.
- Call (800) FACT-400 (800-322-8400) for mental health and substance use emergencies (Chicago and suburbs). Get help from mental health professionals.
- Illinois Helpline: Call (833) 234-6343 or text "HELP" to 833234 if you or a loved one is struggling with opioids or other substances. They can help you find services near you.

<https://ilhelpline.thsmartice.com/findhelp>

- National Helpline: Call (800) 662-4357 for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Administration's national helpline.

Get confidential free help from public health agencies to find substance use treatment and information.

<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>

- Illinois recovery home directory:

<https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=101165>

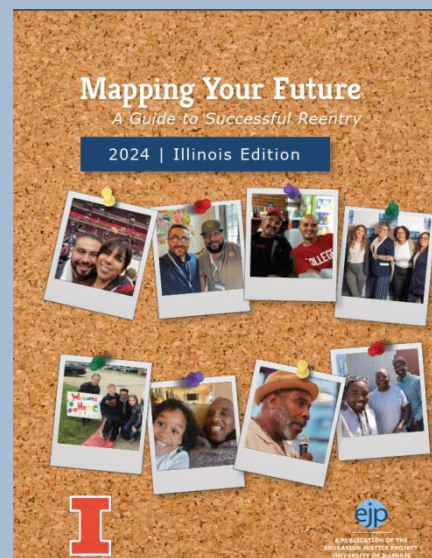
- National sober house directory:

<https://soberhousedirectory.com/>

- Peer support groups: Find an Alcoholics Anonymous support group by calling 855-977-9213

or going to aa.org. Find a Narcotics Anonymous support group by calling 818-773-9999 or going to na.org.

There are also non-religious support group.



Brought to you by:

**EDUCATION JUSTICE PROJECT
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www.reentryillinois.net

Katie Manning - Decatur

My name is Katie, and this is my third incarceration. After my release in December of 2015, I was right back out doing the same thing that got me sent to prison in the first place. Eight months later, I was back in jail, heading back to prison for a second time. Different facility but same circumstances; I was out after 23 months. I did a little better this time with staying sober. I made it 3 months instead of a week or two; honestly, I did little to nothing to work on myself the first two times I was here.

I was one of those “oh, I’m never getting high again” people – every prison has them, I am sure. I was not just lying to everyone around me, but also to myself as well. Things have happened in my life that have made me a different person than who I used to be. I can be honest with myself, and others these days; I want to change my life for the better; I want to work on the things that keep dragging me back into the depths of my addiction, so I can let go and move past them.

It is downright embarrassing when people ask me how many times I have

been to prison, and I have to tell them three. Two of my kids are teenagers and one of them is following my example; it would be amazing to show them that you can redeem yourself, no matter your mistakes, and that there is a better way of life than what they have seen me living.



I have squandered so many chances for different opportunities; I am worried about how many I have left. I am tired of doing the same old thing, I cannot guarantee I will never get high again; however, I am working to stay away from it.

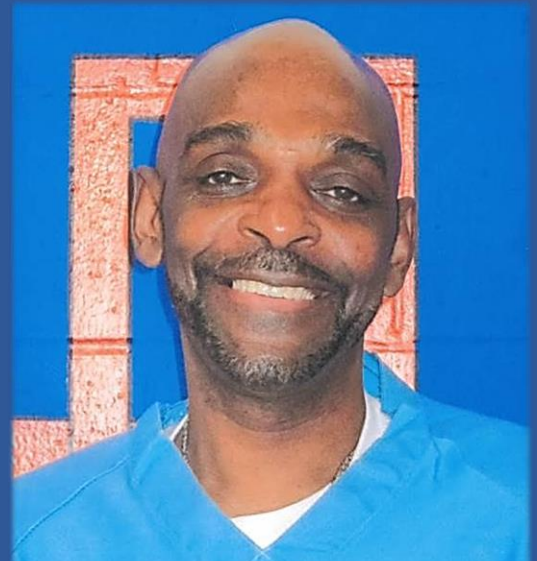
To begin I believe this topic, should be about Returning as a citizen, in all honesty I have always been a part of the society just a different part of it. I continued to feel all the hurt and pain my family experience; I have also grieved when there was a loss; I just grieved alone.

I believe the term Re-Entry is just as derogatory as saying "in the real world" to an individual in custody, the world we individuals in custody reside in is just as real as the Administration's, the counselors', the C/O's and also the healthcare department's. In my opinion many individuals can relate to the term Re-Entry differently; however, to me it has always been a process of getting prepared to return to my life.

Yes, there are many concerns, but most of my fears are minimal; you see, returning to a life that has somewhat left me behind leaves a great void that must be filled. That itself will be a challenge to say the least, I have continued to do the work necessary to be a productive returning citizen, yet the relationships with certain people have suffered greatly.

That area of my life draws the most attention—dealing with expectations... theirs and mine. This is all a part of returning to the people that were once considered family. Most of the people I have been incarcerated with over the years know that love makes us family and blood just makes us relatives.

That shifts the nature of relationships I may have going forward with those same relatives, with or without their knowledge, and that creates awkwardness. Dealing with that will be a source of frustration to say the least, for all involved and those not involved just the same.



Kelly 'KB' Bennett

TWO ROADS
Associate Editor

Now, as I move closer to the day I return to my family, I do have concerns that most of my younger siblings have grown out of the traditions laid down by our ancestors. Such as always respecting your elders, saying yes ma'am no ma'am, no sir yes sir, the simple things. You see, returning to a society where the moral compass has shifted so far to zero, [I fear] that unconsciously I may place myself in a situation that may prove detrimental by just voicing my opinion.

“This is all a part of returning to the relatives that was once considered ‘family’ Most of the people I have been incarcerated with over the years know that love makes us family and blood just makes us relatives.”

I also have concerns about my trust and expectations, where do I place them, and in whom I place them with? I do know and understand I will need a support system to survive, yet some of the same people have let me down before or have proven themselves untrustworthy along this journey.

I am going home to a lovely loyal wife; however, we have never actually lived together and that has embedded

within me some concerns. Nothing major, you see this amazing woman has taken the time and effort needed to forge a foundation of open, honest communication, a vulnerability to each other allowing our authentic selves to always be acknowledged and appreciated. Also keeping in mind, the power of our words towards each other, and the value of them, and never use them as weapons.

Now please try to understand this is by choice: *I” live a life full of fear, things will occur that will keep me in fear. If by choice I live a life of hope, I help to make a hopeful world. One of the most interesting paradoxes of our existence is that most people believe we form perceptions based on the world around us. When in fact the world around us forms itself, based on our own perceptions.”*- “As a Man Thinketh” by James Allen

Thank you for your Time
Kelly (K.B) Bennett

Hello, my name is Katrina Battiste; in 2004, I was locked up and pregnant with my second child. Being pregnant and locked up takes your mental plus, your emotions into a spiral especially while having a baby shackled and chained with no family present while hoping for a good C/O to support you. Bringing another child into the world I could not be there for was killing me; my Godmother encouraged me to have this Baby stating, "This child is going to be my miracle."

I had my miracle February 20, 2005, just seeing his face brought joy to my life regardless of the situation. I was only with my son for 4 days, as a mother not only was my soul crushed, I did not understand how to get the cries from my son as the nurse rolled his crib away.

There is no manual to being a good parent, but I was worried because my son's father and I are on the same case. We had no clue as to when we would return to society. Now here is another child, who did not ask to be here or to grow up without any parent. It was many days, which I felt inadequate as a mother thinking, and feeling, how I could leave my baby. My son has visited me, however a physical visit happened when

associated himself with me because he did not know me. After a couple more visits he finally became comfortable with me, it was hard many nights trying to help with homework through the phone, birthdays, and as a black man keeping him on a straight path.



Today, my miracle name is Khamani A. Battiste. In grammar school he was valedictorian, in high school he worked also played baseball, while graduating # 3 in his class, also received a full scholarship to Norfolk University with architect as his major. I am very proud of myself because having a child while incarcerated is not easy, but this boy, my boy, now is a man and has knocked down all the odds making his future great even though neither me nor his father are present.

Khamani (my Miracle) you have given me the strength I need to do everything possible to get back to you. I LOVE YOU SO MUCH !

Re-Entry Fears ...I'm finally going home after so many years. But I've missed so much...just being realistic, I have to admit that I'm immensely out of touch. Will I use this realization as motivation, or will I allow it to become a crutch? Or will the time and dedication devoted to rehabilitation and fortification come in clutch? Only time will tell... Am I destined to fail, or will I prevail? Am I really ready to be a law-abiding citizen, and all it may entail? Things like legitimacy and the responsibility of having to apply my newly acquired financial literacy. Am I man enough? Can I withstand enough that when times get tough I'll be able to reach deep inside of my resolve and know that I've planned enough? Cause seriously, haven't I been slammed enough? Not only that, but haven't I studied and crammed enough to be able to rest assured that I've de-programmed and reprogrammed enough?

Yet still there's the question of whether or not I can weather the storm. Can I be at my lowest point and still show up if I'm called upon to perform?

Because no matter how good it looks, not everything is as it appears. And for that reason alone, I can't shake these Re-Entry Fears.



Ronaldo "Eastside" Crawford

Newest TWO ROADS

House Poet

Linrod Thames - Kewanee

My method of re-entering back into society was always, geared towards chasing legislative bills, writing organizations, filing clemencies, and appeals. I saw freedom through the courtroom doors for many years, until a recent casual conversation with another Individual in custody (Former Senior Editor Tyrone Delaney) – it shockingly opened my eyes, to the fact that I would soon be a returning citizen.

How would my children accept me, my housing, and my financial situation? All of this causes me to fear the unknown. Mentally the anxiety of wanting to give back to those who have supported me over the years overwhelms me, but on the other hand, the fear of not being able to let go of these ill feelings for the people who have forsaken me still plays in my head. (Resentments)

I am aware that my freedom comes with the mental burden, of knowing that another man's life was taken away, regardless of how I may feel about the

surrounding circumstances, it really angers me to have murder attached to my name as I return to society. Upon my release from this prison, I will be In fact re-entering another prison on the outside.

I must be careful with whom I come into contact, report to the police once a year for up to 10 years, and also complete 2 years of parole. The only way I see myself living a peaceful, productive, normal life is by turning my re-entry fears into re-entry faith.



Who Will Tell My Story?

Who will tell my story?
When I am not around,
Who will speak the truth of me
When truth can not be found?

Who will let the people know
Who will help them see?
Who will point out who I was
And all I tried to be?

Who will tell, what I did right?
And overlook my wrongs,
Who will explain all the pain
I kept inside so long?

Who will paint, that perfect picture?
Who will make it clear?
Who will tell the ones I love
That I, had no fear?

Who will talk, about my heart?
Who'll make them understand?
The depth of me, they did not see
Nor did they comprehend,

So many tears, I did not shed
Who will make them known?
Who will speak, about the boy
That NEVER had a home,

Who will tell, how strong I was
Those times, that I was weak?
All the love, I could not find
Though still, I chose to seek,

Who will tell my story?
The good and the bad and all
Who will tell how I got up
Those times, I took a fall?

Who will tell my story?
Who will help them see,
How I tried, to be the man
That I was meant to be.



By: John 'Jay-R' Williams

Concern Not Fear

Not long ago you could have laid the topic of any type of fear in front of me and if I was willing to be honest, I could have written for days. I was full of fears, worries, and anxiety. I ran from and hid from my fears all of my life. I let fear fall upon me until I was buried in it to the point I felt I could not breathe. Due mostly to truth, today I choose not to live in fear. If I feel at all fearful then I have to deal with it. I usually pray about it or find someone to talk through it with. If I do not it threatens to bring me back to where I started, the pit of incomprehensible self-demoralization. So going back into society free of fears for the first time in my life is a prospect I am quite joyful about.

Of course, there are some things I am concerned about, and rightly so. As returning citizens, it is natural to be concerned. Since I plan to relocate (from my original area), I am concerned with how often I will get to visit my family. What type of good and productive things will I find to do in my spare time? How am I going to do at being a father, now that my daughter is a woman? How

am I going to be at being a grandfather? I sometimes think of the awkwardness of jumping back into the lives of my family. How will they take to the new me? How will the new me take to them? I have had phone conversations with many of them but have hardly seen any of them in over a decade.

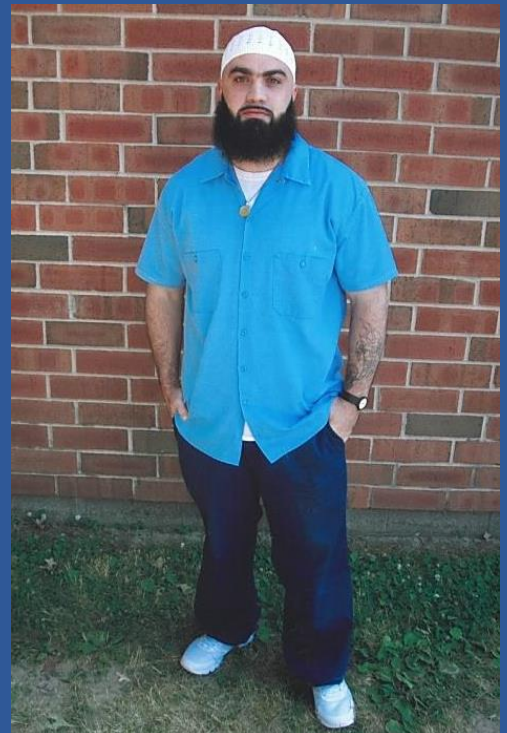
Of all my concerns, my biggest are not for me, but those I love. I have placed a burden on them by stepping out of and stepping back into their lives. In addition, this is not my first incarceration. I have been in and out of jail my entire adult life. I will be 43 when I get out and will have spent approximately 18 years of my life in jails and prisons. The hope, faith, and love my family has poured into me are endless. I hope that coming back into their lives will not cause them too much fear, grief, and concern. Some have lost faith in me, and I cannot blame them. I have a record of accomplishment that says I let people down. They are just using the facts I gave them.

That is why it is so important for me to stick to the program, to live by and stand on certain principles. I must continue doing the work I so diligently do now. As one of my good friends always says, “I do prison well, but it’s time I start living well.”

“I have placed a burden on them by stepping out of and stepping back into their lives.”

In closing, I mostly feel concern for the victim of my crime. I am sure that my actions caused her great trauma. In addition, I can only imagine when perpetrators of crime are released what it might be like for their victims. Up until several years ago, I took little to no accountability and thought only of the harms done to me. In truth, the harms in my life were few and very miniscule. I am grateful to step outside of my selfish, self-seeking, self-centered nature for once. I can now see that I caused harm to others and that some of my past actions could still be causing them hurt, grief, and trauma. Fear does me no good in a world where I am trying to move forward. Fear does me no good in a world in which I wish to make amends. Moving forward I will

do my utmost to set worry and fear aside and be the brave new me. I will take life moment by moment and day by day. I will be a man who lets good actions speak for themselves. One who helps others not one who hurts. One who gives and receives instead of one who just takes. My hope is that my actions will at least bring those I have harmed some relief and peace of mind. In addition, that moving forward I will cause no more harm to the world and people that have given me so much. (Al-hamdu-lillah) All praise, and thanks are due to Allah.



Abdullah Khabir

TWO ROADS
Associate Editor

The Affliction of My Soul

The inward all-consuming inferno that afflicts my very soul. Ten times worse than heartbreak. A lonely sojourner, a stranger amongst men. The burning away of all dross is necessary. Must my soul be inflamed as well during the process of its purification. The pain of the shedding of the old ways in which I used to walk.

Now instead of brewing I experience a smoldering indignation brewing as my patience is tried and proved. As I walk in the ways of love, I find that love unrequited is deeply disappointing. Also, I find kindness disrespected is strongly off putting. Rejection threatens to turn love cold. This is the affliction of my soul. Fighting to prevent this great love from turning into hate and resentment. I fight to keep love's gate open while half of me wants to shut it forever. The affliction of my soul is painful.

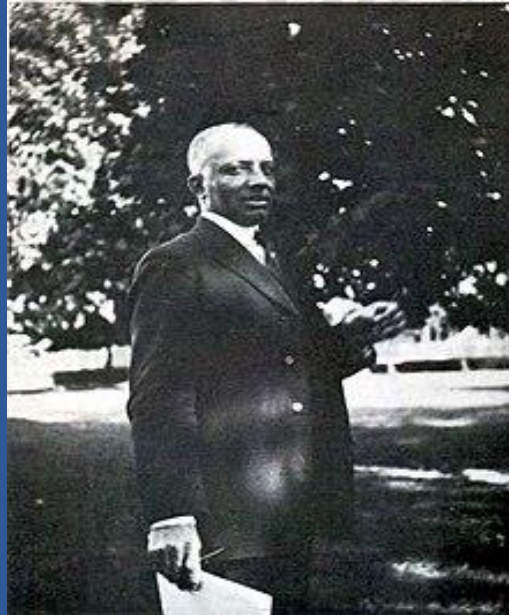
A Trial...A Test. When will I find my rest? To do well and to do right in spite of social pressures is a struggle and a battle.

But, I stay in the saddle knowing that one day the tempest will break, the storm will settle, and sun will warm my skin. In the midst of it all My Soul truly calls; When? When? When?

When will my affliction end? How? So I prevent myself from becoming callous, cold, and indifferent? The fire of affliction is refining, but that doesn't stop my soul from crying. I know it has a purpose as does every little thing. Just because it has a purpose doesn't mean that it doesn't sting. In the end of my affliction my weather-beaten soul will be stronger, deeper, and better. All the dross that I shed is surely to be shredded. As I push through the flames, I know that I won't regret it. I am grateful for the light at the end of this tunnel. But I won't forget this dark trip. I'm invested in the process and do not wish to skip a page or chapter in this book that I call my life. Gradually, I am purified in the Affliction of My Soul.

By: Earl Milton, Jr.

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH



In 1926, Carter G. Woodson pioneered the celebration of "Negro History Week", designated for the second week in February, to coincide with marking the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln (2/12) and Frederick Douglass. (2/20) Woodson wrote of the purpose of Negro History Week as:

"It is not so much a Negro History Week as it is a History Week. We should emphasize not Negro History, but the Negro in History. What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world

void of national bias, race hatred and religious prejudice."

The idea of a Negro History Week was a popular one, and to honor Negro History Week, parades, breakfasts, speeches, lectures, poetry readings, banquets, and exhibits were commonly held. The Black United Students and Black educators at Kent State University expanded this idea to include an entire month beginning on February 1, 1970. Since 1976, every US president has designated February as Black History Month.

Hurt People...Hurt People

As a child growing up in a single parent home stricken with poverty and abuse, I could not help but wonder: what prompted my father to abandon us without warning and/or support? I guess the reality of parenthood was too much for him to bear. "What a coward," I thought. In any case, we never seen or heard from him again, good riddance!

My father's actions greatly stressed my mother, causing her to have a meltdown that would create a ripple effect of pain and distrust which would haunt us for the rest of our lives. Someone once said; "Hurt People, Hurt People!" I didn't get it at first; until mom relayed how much pain and suffering she was in, and boy . . . did I get it then!

I know people always like to blame their parents for their misfortunes in life. But in this case, I don't believe I had much of a choice in the matter. Don't get me wrong, I love my mother

to death, and I greatly appreciate how much she sacrificed for our survival; but damn, nothing hurts more than to get hurt by those you love.

I was only eight years old when she started leaving me on the church's front steps in the middle of the night. The first time lasted about an hour or so, but then, the next couple of times, the noises in the dark became terrifyingly unbearable. On one occasion, I had been there until the break of dawn. I thought, wow, how beautiful the skies looked at that very moment, all the while chewing on a piece of gum that I had found on the sidewalk to help subdue my hunger.

At age eleven, my mother had found "True Love" again and got remarried. "Yeah!" I thought, thinking that my "nightmare of a life" had finally come to an end. I wasn't so lucky though—in fact, my troubles "Double Bubbled!"

Here I was, hoping for a loving and righteous male role model to help with my homework, or to at least show me how to ride a bike. Nope! Instead, I was blessed with a “Drunken Master” for a stepdad. He would always be intoxicated, shouting out commands. Like, do this and do that and do it again, this time better! He basically had me clean the entire house, the yard and the cars. Hell, I felt like his own private butler, janitor, and landscaper. Didn’t they outlaw child labor? I guess he never got the memo!

So, I finally got pissed and mustered up the courage to defy him and that’s when he introduced me to my very first Kung Fu lesson.

He karate kicked me so hard, I flew across the living room and right onto the kitchen floor, where I was holding my chest, in pain and gasping for air. I cried out, "Please mom, help!" And I’ll never forget it; she looked down at me, shaking her head in disgust saying, "Well, maybe next time, you’ll do what you’re told," and then stepped right

over me to continue preparing his supper. Talk about adding insult to injury.

Once, I had even taken a very bad beating for protecting her from his drunken rage, but when the police arrived, she actually lied to them about what had happened and left. I couldn’t believe it, how could she, after all I went through? And that’s the day my beloved mother broke my heart. I couldn’t help but wonder if that’s what she felt like on the day my father left us, so long ago.

Well, now thinking that I truly have nothing and no one left in this world, I began to act out. I had become more intolerable, rebellious, and menacing, behaviors which would eventually lead to homelessness and becoming an astute “Ward of the State,” being placed in alternative homes and juvenile detention centers for my own safety, knowing that’s where “Hurt Kids, Hurt Kids.” How traumatically ironic, right!

By: Antonio Aguirre

Ojo Webb - Kewanee

I have been incarcerated since I was a young 17-year-old; now I am 42 years of age, - yes, that is 25 years straight. So, I grew up in prison. I have more time in the joint, than I have in the free world. Now that I am coming to an end of my bit, I have come face to face with something that I have wanted since the day they slapped the cuffs on me. All I ever wanted was to go home; I have thought about home and my freedom every single day, some days more than others, but every single day for the last 25 years.

Now that I am coming to the end of my bit, instead of happiness and joy I thought I would have, it is replaced with mixed emotions. Of course, it is excitement, happiness, but it is also apprehension, those questions start to creep into my mind. Am I ready? Do I have the tools to be a productive member of society, and not come back to prison? Can I handle the tremendous responsibility of being a grown man in the free world, finding employment, paying bills, etc.?

All these things are new to me; thank Allah that I am, blessed with a support system; however, that only goes so far. Eventually you have to sink or swim. I think back on all the years that went by, I used to think that all I needed was to go home, and everything would be well and easy. Now with the wisdom of 25 years jammed up, I realize that I had it backwards, jail is easy, going home to the free world, and not coming back is the hard work.

Peace, Ojo Webb





HERstory 2024

Submissions are now being accepted for the HERstory 2024. **This is strictly for our female population**, as well as the professional women in IDOC, as well as our free society.

This is a time to encourage, reflect and to pay homage to those who have paved the way in our time. HERstory will be issued during Women's History Month (March).

Without staff support:

Mail submission, photo to:
TWO ROADS EDITOR
2021 Kentville Road
Kewanee IL 61443

Outsiders, Staff and Individuals-In-Custody (WITH Staff Support)

Please send your submission and scanned photo to
doc.tworoads@illinois.gov
"ATTN: HERstory"



DEADLINE IS
MARCH 22, 2024

Space is Limited!!!

Rehabilitation, Restoration and Re-Entry

By: Darrell Wright

Greetings Two Roads readers,
I am answering the call to share topics touching on Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Re-Entry. I have unfortunately been incarcerated in the IDOC five (5) times. I have spent approx. 23-27 years overall counting this incarceration.

I place no fault, nor blame on misguided upbringing by parents, guardians, etc. I do not put weight on the educational system-not properly preparing me or being discriminatory, as with available resources and such. My peers did not mislead me, nor pressure me into my lifestyle decisions, activities, mindset or choices. I developed my own angers, my own beliefs and reasons to judge others' actions. I decided to experiment with and continue to explore drugs in response to my life circumstances.

I give thanks to the personal decisions, above & beyond all the failures I've endured! To turn 180-degrees and follow in Faith-Ministry and Message and victory of Jesus Christ!

It is through belief, faith, and continual success in the virtues, wisdom, and teachings of Jesus Christ that I am becoming, and able to reflect & exhibit characteristics and values which I failed so often before to even recognize I had! Truly, as 1st John 4:4 reads;

"...because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." To become truly, seriously, humbly committed to my belief & faith, as a follower of the Ministry of Jesus Christ, I am being transformed.

Today's Scriptural verse for my daily study could not have been happen stance.

For today, I believe more so in Divine things; so today's Scriptural spoke to my spirit of divine change done and to come! I pray that many optimistic hearts & minds become willingly open to receive the Hope God has always had and continues to have towards His most profound creation...Mankind!

And as designated stewards on earth, we can & will change things!

Especially, as we faithfully turn towards God's Goodness!

Romans 8:19 reads...

“The creation waits in eager expectations for the children of God to be revealed.”

I want to thank Kewanee's Two Roads platform for the opportunity to share this faithful reflection! True “change”, positive “change” can come about! Sincerely,
Darrell Wright



CELEBRATING

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

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This former slave was making cars long before Henry Ford

C. R. Patterson
1st African American-Owned Automobile Manufacturer

A FIRST AUTO MANUFACTURING COMPANY
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Charles R. Patterson

Dr. Charles R. Patterson was founder, owner and operator of one of the first automobile manufacturing companies in America and the world. Patterson was born into slavery to Charles and Nancy Patterson on a Virginia plantation in April 1833. He became a metal welder by trade. He escaped slavery by hiking across the Virginia Allegheny Mountains and West Virginia, then swimming across the chilly Ohio River. Eventually, he made it to the friendly town of Greenfield, Ohio, a major station along the Underground Railroad.

Charles got married and had four children that he educated well. His oldest son, Fredrick, joined the family carriage business after graduating from Ohio State University, where he was the first black football athlete.

The Pattersons reportedly produced their first car in 1902, which is around a year before Ford Motor Company started. Other reports show that the Pattersons began automobile production and sales in 1915. The Pattersons developed the bus (multi-passenger auto).

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The End of This Road

As I approach the end of my prison term, several reentry fears are on my mind. Even though I've been planning for this day for ten years, there are things I can't foresee. I'll pursue a career in event planning, open several businesses and invest my finances in real estate and the stock market, but there's the fear of uncertainty and doubt. "Are my plans too ambitious?"

"Do I have what it takes?" "How will others, like my victims, feel about my success when I reach it?" "Will people want to do business with a convicted felon?" "Will they trust me?" I ask myself these questions at night when reflecting on the day.

I participated in many educational courses, clinical and mental health groups and outside-led programs during my incarceration and the common message in every class and program is, "Having a felony doesn't hinder you as much as you think it does. Companies *want* to hire people like you!"

I know staff is trying to encourage us and raise our self-esteem, but there's a side of me who doesn't believe companies would rather hire convicts over law-abiding citizens. I know I'll probably hear "No" several times before hearing "Yes," but it's still a fear of trying so hard to obtain something and others denying me because they don't see the value I bring, due to my felony. The fear of not being accepted by society because I'm a convict is a reentry fear.

"Marcus, you going to prison is the apology. You're paying your debt to society. You need to move on, and so do they."

I remember watching the TV show *Orange is the New Black* and one of the Latina characters, Aleida (Daya's mom), paroled from prison. Aleida's boyfriend's baby momma picked her up from prison and immediately took her to a restaurant to eat. While dining at the restaurant, she felt everyone there knew she just got out. She said, "It's the clothes, I'm telling you. They all know."

Another reentry fear I'll be facing soon is the fear of being institutionalized. I fear when talking on my cell phone in the world, I'll rush conversations because I still think the calls are only twenty-minutes long. I fear I won't realize I'm taking showers with shower shoes until someone points it out. I fear I'll have some anxiety not being in my room at 3:15pm and 9:30pm due to it being count time. I fear I'll get nervous and tense up every time I hear keys jingling.

I fear I'll get nervous and paranoid when I hear shoes screeching the floor due to that being a universal sound in prison for someone fighting. I fear I'll get nervous and paranoid when I hear complete silence due to that being the universal sound in prison for something bad is about to happen (like the deck's about to go up). This stuff sounds silly, but it happens.

No one talks about this, but no one wants their victim(s), or relatives of victims, to confront them while they're free. I wouldn't know what to say if one of my victims confronted me. I was an immature 19-year-old when I chose to commit armed robberies and at 23, right

before turning myself in because I was on bond, I asked my lawyer if I could apologize to them. He responded, "Marcus, you going to prison *is* the apology. You're paying your debt to society. You need to move on and so do they." I always wondered if my victims felt that way. Did they forgive me and move on? How are they going to feel when the state notifies them, I'm returning to society? Will old wounds reopen? Will their hatred towards me resurface? My victims confronting me when I've finally started the next chapter in my life is one of my reentry fears.

Not living up to my expectations and my family's expectations is another reentry fear. My family and I have planned for my release for almost a decade. They've been with me every step of the way, and I *have* to do better and be better. There's no relaxing and taking days off because I've technically taken the last decade off being removed from society—being a burden on your family for ten years takes a toll on one's psyche. I want to be successful, not only for me, but for my last name as well.

I want to actually believe it when my relatives say, “Marcus, I’m proud of you.” I hear returning citizens in documentaries encouraging soon-to-be parolees to “take it slow” when returning home, but I, like many others in IDOC, are *impatient*. Why should I wait for something I think I deserve? I deserve to see what my life would look like if I gave 100%. This doesn’t mean I’m going to work three jobs and use no vacation or personal time because I want to work really hard for money.

The truth is, I’ll never work hard to earn money. I’ll work hard to “create systems” that earn me money. If I’m a warehouse worker and the warehouse shuts down or closes, I don’t get paid. However, if I create systems that earn me money, I’ll always get paid because my addiction is creating systems not chasing paychecks. I have to keep this mentality, so I don’t let myself and my family down.

The last reentry fear is not reaching my full potential and self-actualizing. Prison isn’t a conducive environment to self-actualize, but being released from prison doesn’t mean you’ve found

long-lasting happiness either. There are stressors in the world that don’t affect me because I’m incarcerated. Stressors like worrying when the next meal is coming, paying bills and caring for others financially will be overwhelming.

“I fear when talking on my cell phone in the world, I’ll rush conversations because I still think the calls are only twenty-minutes long.”

Upon release, a major burden will be lifted from us, but we’ll face more complex challenges and even more distractions. Self-doubt can seep in slowly—enhancing our self-limiting beliefs. When reaching my full potential, I can’t be fearful about what I’m doing when I know it’s the right thing. I may not be happy with how long the process takes, but I’m willing to be unhappy grinding for seven straight years in order to live happily for the rest of my life.

Sincerely, Marcus Harris

Prepare for Your Job Search

In the facility where you're locked up, can you earn certificates, learn new skills, or work? Any experience like this can help you find a job on the outside. They can also make you more confident and help you build skills you didn't know you had. School is another good way to get ready for work on the outside. Enroll in school programs, from Adult Basic Education to college programs. School records can also show employers you are intelligent and dedicated. Try other things too. Arts, parenting classes, and other programs will give you new skills and confidence. Another important thing you can do while you're in prison is to write your resume.

A resume *is a summary of your skills, education, and work experience.* You will need a resume to search and apply for jobs. Even if you don't have a computer or typewriter, write your resume out while you are still incarcerated. You can type it out after your release. Your resume should have several parts:

1. Your name, address, and contact information. If you are not sure of your

address yet, ask a friend or family member if you can use theirs.

2. Education. Your resume should have a list of schools you've attended. Add any education you had in prison, especially if you earned any degrees or certificates.

3. Work experience. List your jobs, including volunteer work. Include where, when and for how long you held each job.

4. Other professional skills. This includes certifications, technical skills, and languages you speak other than English.

5. Awards (optional). If you've ever received an award for your work, like employee of the month, or a scholarship, list them at the end of your resume.

Are you worried about what people will think when they see school or work you did in prison? You do not have to put those on your resume if it worries you.



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Mansa Musa (reigned c. 1312 – c. 1337) was the ninth-*Mansa* of the Mali Empire, which reached its territorial peak during his reign. He was extremely wealthy; it has been suggested that he was the wealthiest person in history, but the extent of his actual wealth is not known with any certainty.

It is known from local manuscripts and travellers accounts that Mansa Musa's wealth came principally from the Mali Empire controlling and taxing the trade in salt from northern regions and especially from gold panned and mined in the gold rich regions to the south: Bambuk, Wangara, Bure,

Galam, Taghaza and other such kingdoms over many centuries. Over a very long period Mali had created a large reserve of gold. Mali is also suspected to have been involved in the trade in many goods such as ivory, slaves, spices, silks, and ceramics. However, presently, little is known about the extent or mechanics of these trades. At the time of Musa's ascension to the throne, Mali in large part consisted of the territory of the former Ghana Empire, which Mali had conquered. The Mali Empire consisted of land that is now part of Guinea, Senegal, Mauritania, Gambia, and the modern state of Mali.

Choose A Side

Al-Hamdu lil-lah (All Praise Be To Allah) for this opportunity to be a part of the Two Roads family.

Although it's been deeply rooted in me, it hasn't been in my habit to be the voice of reason. I choose to keep it to myself. Although I'm a quiet natured woman, I'm also straight forward. I've always spoken how I felt without caring how I said it. My actions stood on my words. Whether or not I agreed 100% with those words or actions, no one else ever knew.

Coming into prison at 19-years old with a 45-year sentence was overwhelming, to say the least. I was such a naïve kid. I knew how to survive in the streets, but not prison. There were so many women here advising me to go to school, get all the education I could, and stay out of trouble. Although school was boring to me, I, of course, followed the advice of those who had been there and enrolled in the G.E.D. class.

I passed the exam on the first try. Guess what? I never made it to graduation....

because I was in segregation. It was like I was on a human roller coaster for 17-years – one minute I'm in school obtaining a certificate for one of the college courses being offered, and the next minute I was in segregation. I couldn't choose a side and stick with it, because both sides gave me a drug-like rush.



Evelyn "Qimayah" Jackson

TWO ROADS
Associate Editor

While in the Cook County jail, in 2000, I converted to Al-Islam. I learned the salaats (prayers), went to Jumu'ah every Friday, and stood strong in my belief (so I thought). I lived Islamic-ly on the outside but not within my soul. I talked the talk of a true Muslima. I wasn't walking the walk of one.

On the 1-year anniversary of my son's death, I was on 15-minute suicide watch. I was broken down, lost, unsure of what was to come for my life without my only child. I let out a cry that I didn't know I had in me. I was being strong for everyone else, not realizing how weak I really was. That was the start of my breakthrough. I didn't instantly begin walking the walk 100%. So, I experienced more heartaches of losing close family members. After two major loses, I finally said, "Okay Allah, You have my attention. I can't keep going through this pain alone.

In 2019 I gave it my all. I decided to choose a side. A huge weight of guilt was lifted from my shoulders. I was able to seek true Forgiveness for those I've hurt and extend forgiveness to those who hurt me. Being incarcerated, the greatest loss you can experience is losing a loved one or losing your faith. I know, because I sort of lost both. In reality, we can never lose either. Our faith can be restored at any moment, and our loved ones remain in our heart.

Choosing to remain on the right side, making the correct decisions, and doing the right things has me feeling the greatest rush ever. I've accomplished more in this past year than in my entire time incarcerated. Allah Ta'ala (The Most High) is allowing me to see the woman He created me to be. Using my experiences to encourage & inspire others to stay on the right track is fulfilling. No matter what my future holds for me, I will forever use my voice to help others, instead of hurting people.

“Coming into prison at 19-years old with a 45-year sentence was overwhelming, to say the least.”

As of today, I've served twenty-four of my 45-year sentence. I played a part in this crime. None the less, a life was taken. I take full responsibility for my actions. I'm currently waiting on a response from my Clemency Petition Hearing from July of 2022.

Regardless of what the response may be, my work does not stop. I live every day as if I'm going home today or as if I'm going to die today.

I don't allow prison politics to consume me. My body is here but my mind is not. We can't allow ourselves to become consumed by what goes on behind these gates, bars and/or barbed wire. This system will remain the same, with or without us.

We can't 100% beat it, but we can survive & thrive within it to live to tell our story.

Don't allow the "side" you choose in the beginning to remain the same if it's not the right side. You have the power to choose which way you want to do your time (hard or easy) to grow into a better you in the end.

Be safe and be smart!

By: Evelyn Qiyamah Jackson
- Associate Editor

"Just like the scars on my body, the scars in my heart tell the stories of my life. I choose scars over an unscarred, loveless life"



The Art of Not Fighting

Do not attack anyone, when someone pulls your card let, them keep that. Because you got a full deck, a full house, and a royal flush. Is that one card or offense worth giving up the hand that you have? Look at the big picture. Will it add to you, or will it take from you? In most cases, it is the latter. It does not make you less of a man or woman to defend yourself by getting out of the situation. Actually, it makes you more of a man or woman to use your mind and move with peace. How? I am glad, you asked! To have the power to respond to violence and aggression and to choose not to even fight at all – This is true power; to control *you* is very powerful, true freedom lies in not being a slave to your passions, impulses, or spur of the moment inclinations.

Few people can control themselves, without certain consequences in place to convince them to do so; you are your own worst enemy or your own best friend. Can you control your own beast, can you curb your tongue to prevent troubles that would cease if you would just keep your mouth shut and move around?

Can you take all the abuse and offenses and calmly respond with love and kindness?

Look at the big picture. Will it add to you or will it take from you? In most cases, it is the latter.

Today violence is not worth the cost you must pay, if you are not caught; always remember that karma is always on the backend of the deeds done by your own hands. Life is full of choices; people take chances everyday to prove that they matter to people who do not care about anyone but themselves. Will it matter tomorrow? Is it that serious? In most cases, in our moments of clarity, we see that it is not even worth our time, energy, or attention. Most times these moments of clarity come from the regret of a bad move as we sit and count our losses, and the troubles that we must endure on the account of someone who does not care whether we live or die.

We have to care about ourselves, enough to go to every extreme to avoid violent reactions in response to offensive treatment. To have a moment of clarity, before the mess, will reduce the stress, not afterward when you are paying the piper.

This is the way that you prevent anger from poisoning you like a viper's bite; I know sometimes it takes all you have just not to fight, whether that fight is verbal or physical.

At the end of the day it really does not matter, as much as it does in the heat of the moment, so kick up your

feet , watch your TV, listen to some tunes or whatever that you do to soothe your soul, whatever you do I would advise that you do not scratch off.

By: Earl Milton, Jr.

My Harsh Sentence Won't End on the Outside

When I leave incarceration with no family or friends, if I can manage the first days and weeks after release, I then must confront the larger challenge of establishing myself in a community. More than just living in a place,

community membership involving attachment to a social compact made up of ties to family, a place to live, and a basic level of living, because freedom is a process of social integration.

With no family or friends to pick me up from the prison gate, I am more likely to be transported from prison by the State. Being transported in that way is a vivid sign of social isolation immediately after incarceration that will likely result in poor integration, later.

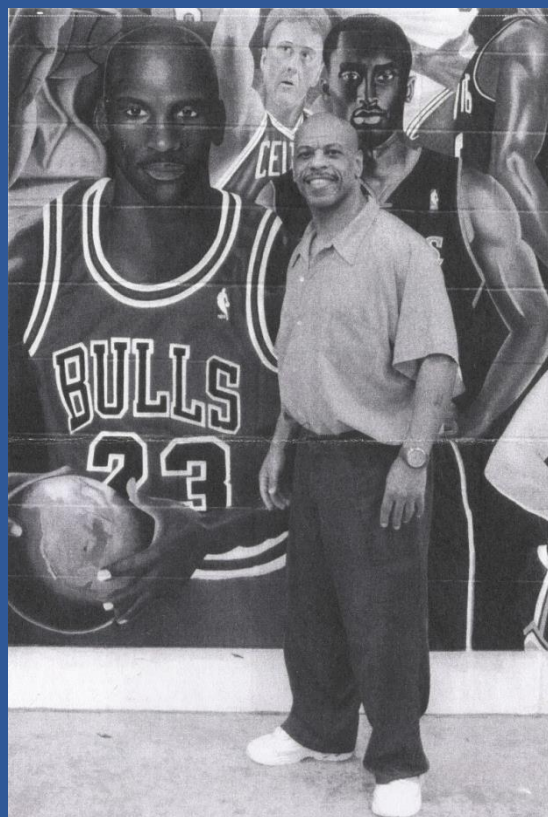
There will be no welcome home parties for me in the first week of so of getting out unless I threw myself a private party. Such get-togethers affirm bonds of kinship, signal moral inclusion, and ease the challenge of what the criminologist, John Irwin, described as “re-entering the world as a stranger”. The welcome home event is typically organized by mother and siblings, and extended family and friends will attend. The gatherings celebrate the return of the formally incarcerated family member and gives notice that incarceration has ended.

Family, more than friends are at the center of these events, particularly if friends are still involved in crime. The welcome-home party offers a forum where those leaving incarceration can make a public commitment to loved ones to stay out of trouble and where family members can express their support.

In American cities, former prisoners are everywhere, seated across from you on the subway, pushing the cart next to

yours in the supermarket, or standing behind you in line at the movies. It's impossible to pick out these ex-prisoners, of course. Once they are no longer required to wear prison blues or I.D. cards on their collars. They look just like anyone else in society.

The reality is inescapable: America has become a nation of ex-cons. Thirteen million people have been convicted of a felony and spent some time locked up. That's almost 7% of all U.S. residents. If all of these people were placed on an island together, that island would have a population larger than many countries, including Greece, Dominican Republic & The United Arab Emirates.



By: Timothy Youngblood

In some ways, America's transformation into a nation of ex-cons is not surprising. In the 1970's & 80's, policies in the 1990's laid the groundwork for an unprecedented prison boom. Since 1970, the number of people in U.S. prisons have grown more than six-fold. In 2002, the nation's jail & prison population exceeded two-million for the first time. There is another side to this prison boom story that few people have wanted to discuss. But thanks to Two Roads IDOC's Social Justice Program and its "re-entry fears" topic, I get to talk about it.

Almost everyone who goes to prison eventually comes home. The same legislators who called for "tough-on-crime laws rarely considered the long-term consequences of incarcerating so many people. And so, America's prisons population ballooned, there were few preparations made for the day when nearly all these prisoners would be set free.

Our nation's prisons, if you include jails, now release more than 800,000 people a year. That's more than the entire population of Boston, Seattle & Washington, D.C. and the numbers continue to grow, fueling an invisible exodus: men & women leaving prison and returning to the communities where

they once lived.

Most prisoners come from urban areas, and most return to the same neighborhoods they once lived. Fifteen-thousand formerly incarcerated men & women return to Chicago, twenty-thousand to New York, and thirty-thousand to Los Angeles County every year. Within the above-mentioned cities, the formerly incarcerated are usually concentrated in just a few neighborhoods. Places like the south side of Chicago, Manhattan's Lower East Side.

Such get-togethers affirm bonds of kinship, signal moral inclusion, and ease the challenge of what the criminologist, John Irwin, described as "re-entering the world as a stranger."

Men & women return from prison, changed, carrying visible & invisible scars, from their years behind bars. Some are released with HIV, Hepatitis, or tuberculosis. Others have new friends, new enemies, and maybe a new gang affiliation. All the frustration & rage that has been built up inside them while they were locked up comes home with them, too.

In prison, they may have kicked an addiction, or picked up one they didn't enter with. They may have resolved to abandon their criminal ways, or they may have learned from other prisoners the ways of becoming a more skilled criminal. Most formerly incarcerated men & women are released with no money, few job skills, little education and a history of addiction or criminal activity, not to mention that an estimated 16% suffer from serious mental illness. With little to no assistance, these men & women are expected to rebuild their lives and stay out of prison.

In other words, they are expected to "pull themselves up by their own bootstraps." Not surprisingly, the odds of success for them are slim. *40% of people released from prison are back behind bars within three years because of a new case or for violating parole.

Eighty percent of people leaving prison are supervised by parole officers. In many ways, parole functions as sort of an invisible prison. Parolees risk being sent back to prison if they miss an appointment with their parole officer, stay out past their set curfew, socialize with other felons (even if we're

involved in positive activities for our community), or leave the state without permission.

Even for those who successfully fulfill their term on parole and get off of it, their punishment doesn't end. Today, a felony record functions as an invisible Scarlet Letter, ensuring the former inmate will be treated like an outcast whose debt to society can never be fully repaid. By law, some states deny formerly incarcerated people access to Public Housing, certain types of jobs, student loans, driver's licenses, welfare benefits, voting & parental rights, and the right to own a gun.

These myriad restrictions have transformed America into a two-tier society in which millions of ostensibly free people are prohibited from sharing rights & privileges enjoyed by everyone else. The division between these two worlds falls along the lines of race & ethnicity. Nearly two-thirds of people leaving prison are either Black or Hispanic. Nowadays, almost every criminal justice dollar is spent on locking people away and keeping them there. Very little is spent on transforming them back into civilians.

Someone once said that the most talked about subject is weather, but in the last two decades, the phenomenon of people leaving prison has become a popular topic in academic & criminal-justice circles, where it is referred to as “Re-Entry”. Experts debate the subject at national conferences, in trade journals, and publish papers on it. Those public discussions usually leave out the voices of current & formerly incarcerated individuals like myself, who have experienced re-entry before, relying instead on statistics. It’s impossible to get the true story through numbers, alone. There must be personal accounts about the effects & experiences of those who have gone through them.

Re-entering society requires having an income, a residence, food to eat, enough to pay utilities, accumulate a wardrobe. It also requires the formally incarcerated person to have patience with family or community members they may have wronged, especially if it’s with their children. Re-entering society requires us to be properly equipped to control our emotions, re-discover intimacy... it’s about attaining every form of freedom we lost while paying our debt to society. My primary re-entry fear is that my

harsh sentence won’t end once I’m released, in part, because I’ve been “branded” irredeemable.

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH



Cheikh Anta Diop [Seex Anta Jóob]

(29 December 1923– February 7, 1986) was

a Senegalese historian, anthropologist, physicist, and politician who studied the human race's origins and pre-colonial African culture. Diop belonged to an aristocratic Muslim Wolof family in Senegal where he was educated in a traditional Islamic school. Diop's family was part of the Mouride brotherhood, **the only independent Muslim fraternity in Africa** according to Diop. He obtained the colonial equivalent of the metropolitan French baccalaureate in Senegal before moving to Paris to study for a degree.

Diop's work is considered foundational to

the theory of Afrocentricity, though

he himself never described himself as an Afrocentrist. The questions he posed about cultural bias in scientific research contributed greatly to the postcolonial turn in the study of African civilizations.^[1]

Diop argued that there was a shared cultural continuity across African people that was more important than the varied development of different ethnic groups shown by differences among languages and cultures over time. Some of his ideas have been criticized as based upon outdated sources and an outdated conception of race. Other scholars have defended his work from what they see as widespread misrepresentation.

Diop's book *Civilization or Barbarism* was described as Afrocentric pseudohistory by professor of philosophy and author Robert Todd Carroll. According to Marnie Hughes-Warrington, Diop's works were criticized by leading French Africanists who opposed the radical movements of African organizations against imperialism, but they (and later critics) noted the value of his works for the generation of a propaganda program that would promote African unity.^[2] Likewise, Santiago Juan-Navarro, a professor of Spanish at Florida International University described Diop as having "undertaken the task of supporting this Afrocentric view of history from an equally radical and 'mythic' point of view".^[3]

References:

^[1] (1989) *Egypte ancienne et Afrique Noire*. Reprint of article in *Bulletin de l'IFAN*, vol. XXIV, series B, no. 3–4, 1962, pp. 449 à 574.

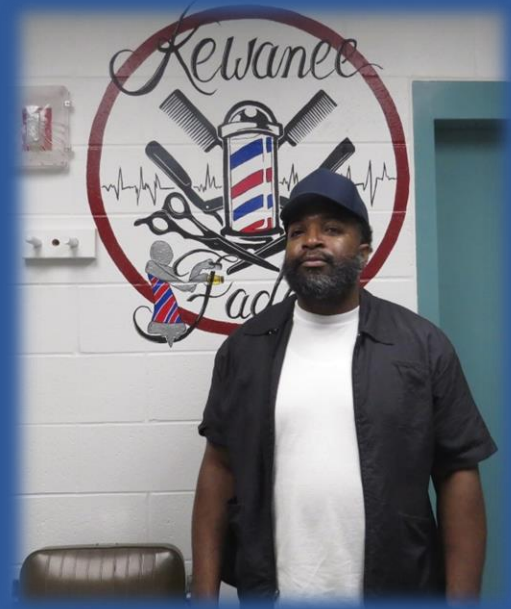
^[2] Université de Dakar. Dakar: IFAN. (c. 1990)

^[3] *Alerte sous les tropiques: articles 1946–1960: culture et développement en Afrique noire*, Paris: Présence africaine,

Home Sweet HOME?

The first thing I thought about when I heard about RE-ENTRY FEARS was the fact that people don't talk about these common fears, worries and anxieties enough. I mean, I'm super big on optimism and good energy positive vibes. However, if I'm being completely honest, if the fear of the unknown and the fact that the neighborhood and what you once called home is no longer there because your people either lost their homes or you been gone so long that your neighborhood has been regentrified, then we share the same sentiments. All this time I been reppin' my land just as hard as Jay-Z rep Brooklyn proudly throughout these institutions just to come to the realization that IT... IS... NO... MORE. (*zilch, nada, finito*) It's literally ghost town with goats in the front yards, I'm told.

Wanting to go home is one thing; being ready to go home is another, but not having a home is something entirely different that individuals in custody cannot be delusional about.



If you don't have a MSR PLAN in play about housing, skills & employment and/or education when it's your time go, it wouldn't be so farfetched that your truest thoughts would be the likes of (What am I going to do? Where am I going to go? Where am I paroling? Such and such and what's her face gotta' place but section 8 is outta the question.) Interestingly, the more guys I WITNESS LEAVING OUT THE FRONT DOOR, happily, the more anxious I get to the point I feel like I've got to go to the bathroom. (#when the things you see with your own eyes will scare the shit out of you)

Then I was encouraged:

...“The anxiety is a sign that you’re growing and stepping out of your comfort zone. The unknown will be whatever **you** manifest it to be. Mind over matter. If it don’t mind it don’t matter! The foresight that you possess will open doors and cause the lost ones to be willing to follow your lead to the ends of the earth. All they need to see is that they’re not to be misled or taken advantage of. Your struggle will be a life lesson for those who cross your path.

Life is a beautiful thing! Your appreciation for life itself will open the eyes of those who have never been in a position where it can seem that all is lost. A sliver of hope allowed you to shine in one of the deepest, darkest pits that one could ever imagine. What do you think is going to happen every day that you’re blessed to step into the welcoming kiss of the sun? *The sun/son will shine.*”

That door is open for all who dare to enter.

In solidarity, peace and blessings to all individuals in custody on your journey reentering back into society, now and later. *Banks in tha’ Hou’z!*

Has To Be HARRIS

It's been a long journey, but it's finally come to an end. I've been incarcerated for ten years because of my lack of planning for the future. When I don't plan, I plan to fail. I've dreamt of this day since my incarceration began on March 13, 2014, but I didn't know exactly what I'd be thinking. I remember telling someone before turning myself in (I was on bond fighting my cases) that I wouldn't allow prison to change who I am. Ten years later, I'm not the naïve twenty-three year old who entered IDOC's doors. I've evolved into a leader who takes action—someone who controls my own destiny and sets out to complete anything I set my mind to.

Arriving at Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center opened my eyes on what I have and haven't accomplished. I realized I spent eight years at Big Muddy River focusing on which movies were played on the movie channel and which new item commissary was selling. Albeit I completed the substance abuse program and several educational courses from two universities, I felt I didn't reach my full potential or properly plan for my future. I remember attending the

Hispanic Heritage basketball tournament three days after arriving here and was amazed how smoothly it ran. I worked in the L.T.S. department for three years, organizing sports tournaments and there was always "red tape" we couldn't get around. However, here at Kewanee, the staff supports our freedom to create and organize events and functions. I took that notion and began planning my future.

First on my agenda was celebrating Black History Month because it wasn't celebrated at the other place due to the joint being on a "flu" lockdown every February during my incarceration there (that's eight Februarys). I formed a committee and began planning. After pitching my vision to the committee members, they formulated the idea that I might be a bug because I was "too" ambitious. The truth is I'm a high flyer with the ability to see something not for



what it is, but for what it could be. I spent an incalculable amount of time planning the next move because I wanted to stay ahead. Of course, I had the fear of uncertainty because no matter how much one plans, what **can** go wrong, **will** go wrong—not to mention, I'd never planned events before, but I know I possessed the mental vigor to get the job done no matter what, or who, stood in the way.



After the success of the Black History Month events, I found my niche and teamed up with multiple staff members and individuals in custody to celebrate thirty-three additional events in 2023 relating to Juneteenth, Father's Day and Hispanic Heritage Month, etc. Guys were impressed on how I ran the events and how I incorporated culture and education into games like *Jeopardy!*, *Urban Trivia* and *Family Feud*. I enjoy planning events more than celebrating them – similar to a lion enjoying the hunt more than actually **catching** the gazelle. It's the hunt that

excites me—the process keeps me going. Because I stepped out of my comfort zone and did something new, I further developed my leadership, planning and organizational skills. I'm pursuing a career in event planning while on parole. I want to bring the games I created here to families across the Chicago land area—bringing family games that are cultural and educational to family reunions, churches and schools. My future wouldn't be as bright if I decided to just “fall back and relax” when I arrived. I chose to step out the box and get uncomfortable—dealing with individuals who couldn't see my vision or chose not to support it was difficult, but I continued pushing the envelope because I refuse to allow anyone to get in my way. “*If I can't go left, I'll go right. If I can't go right, I'll go left. If I can't go left or right, I'll go through you.*” I wanted to show people that persistence pays in the end.

I realized I spent eight years at Big Muddy River, focusing on which movies were played on the movie channel and which new item commissary was selling.

I want to thank my family and everyone at Kewanee, staff and individuals in custody, who supported my vision on the importance of celebrating and learning about different cultures. I'm glad I learned information about finances, real estate, credit-building, business management, computer software operations, the stock market and most importantly, event planning. I used the tools available here to plan a successful future for myself. Lastly, I want to thank Kenji "Truck" Haley, whom I met in BMR when I arrived there 10 years ago, and if not for him, I'm not sure that I would have seen his vision for me in the TWO ROADS family. I am happy for all my brethren who were in the trenches, and Evelyn and LaKeisha for joining us to be the balance for the team. Take care everyone. I hope to see you on the other side.



Preparing to Reunite with Children

You may have young children you are looking forward to being with. You may be excited to see your kids again or you might be nervous and stressed. It's ok to have mixed feelings. There's no right way to feel.

There are things you can do to parent from prison and prepare yourself for regaining custody of your kids, if that's your goal. Show your commitment to your children. This will make it easier to get them back when you are out. Here are some ideas:

Before Your Release:

- Stay in touch with your kids through regular phone calls and letters. Record the dates and times so that you have evidence of your involvement.
- Attend all hearings about your child. It's your right!
- Take parenting classes if offered.
- Take job training as well as academic and technical classes.

After Your Release

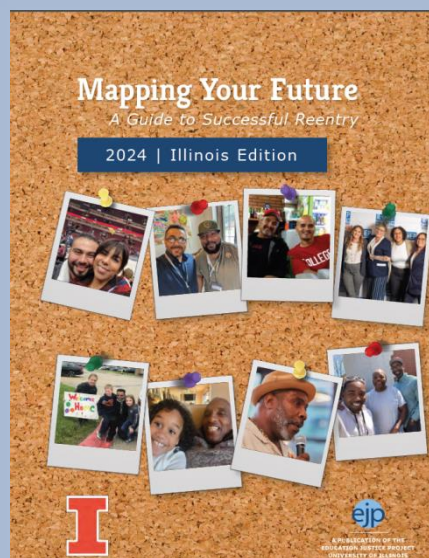
- Prioritize getting safe and stable housing.
- Follow all parole rules and requirements.

- Visit your kids as often as you can.
- Record details about the visits.

Continue to attend parenting, job training or other classes. This shows your commitment to providing a stable home for your child.

If you've been separated from your children, you may be eager to reunite with them as soon as you can. But don't rush things. First you need to have a stable job, safe housing, and sobriety. Getting your kids back too soon can cause more harm than good if you are unable to provide a healthy and safe environment for them.

For this and more, please get the book:



Brought to you by:
EDUCATION JUSTICE PROJECT
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
www.reentryillinois.net

The TIMZALE Story

Greetings Everyone: today I would like to talk to you about a different type of investment. This investment is one that has been paying and will keep paying it forward in so many ways, for me and the people in my life. I have been here at Kewanee Re-entry center for 19 months, of a 17-year sentence at 85%, with me having to do 14 year 4 month sentence for being found guilty of Armed Habitual Criminal, O-yeah it's Timothy "Timzale" Alexander.

I'm so grateful for this opportunity to be here at this place (Kewanee) as well as where I am in my life. I understand this has not happened in a one-time lesson. This is my sixth time being incarcerated for things like driving on suspended and revoked license to Attempted Murder and selling drugs. Of course, trust me, I would have been dead or worse if things would have gone on as they were. I can also say that if the person (I Love) who's gun I'm charged with would have taken his charge, he may still be alive by him being incarcerated not me (RIP). You see, when you're in

something as taking as the streets – a mob – you only have an option before you jump off that last step. When you jump off the porch in the streets it's on – it don't stop. Where I come from, Englewood (not bragging; I'm speaking about my reality) I have a way about myself that many people don't like. It's not rude; it's realness to myself. I won't allow anyone to push me around nor will I do it to others; I dislike bullies of all types, knowing this should shed some light on things and why being here is a windfall for me.

If you're doing good in life, I respect that, but if you trying to clown me or my family or friends who I still have to this day (since 7 years old), I'm gone do my part for us, I'm going to hustle like I do to give us a chance stopping at nothing, even if I got booked. I get out and get right back at it. Stupid people do stupid things, back then things wasn't as see thru as they are now. I had to learn to allow everyone to show me how they really are then I had to take the steps to adjust

to the real them but this comes with looking at self also. My faults in totality doing this showed me things and exposed me to a final thought, We gone it's over and to look ahead, stop focusing on getting back or the past that's done, play to win with the new skills from a better understanding of who I am not who I was. Once I go back home, something many of us can't do, my family, friends, and neighborhood is a feeling I don't take for granted, looking at this is nothing small, being welcomed is the first step to reconnecting with my community. I have to execute all the things I know how to do without looking at the past or holding grudges at family or friends who I love dearly, instead I must listen to them about the hurt, absence and the disappointments I caused. This is why I'm so thankful to Ms. Scott for choosing me to come here and then giving me the photos of me at a younger age then now then in my old age, in the criminal thinking class. You showed me my past, the now and my future if I don't take this last chance seriously, then giving me the space to run into myself, not the Tim who I think I am but the Tim who is losing

everything. I just shut up and went to work on me, Thank you for your help Afolabi for reconnecting me with my family, who I haven't talked to in over 20 plus years including when I was free – that is a real return on an investment (ROI). We now talk at least once a week. That's compounded interest for a better tomorrow. Thank you, Ms. Mead, for putting me in many of the classes that I needed, Defy was everything and more, Chronic Diseases, this class showed me why I keep coming to prison, because I'm doing too much of the same thing looking for different results and won't stop, self sabotaging my own success in its best, by not walking away with a little something, I wanted it all. (Insanity).

Thank you Stumphy for your classes on parenting you gave me an understanding of how and why dealing with myself as a delinquent dad first then hearing my children is the only way to get to them, then to talk and work on them trusting me again. Thank you, Mr. Price, for the one-on-one talk telling to get myself together or I won't make it, as well as the financial literacy classes.

Thank you Mr. Ross for the anger management classes showing me it's no zero to a hundred real quick, it a process to everything if you get to 99 you only have a 1% chance of controlling yourself, Thank you Ms. C for allowing me to hang in the most dangerous place in Kewanee (the library) as long as I needed until 11 am then you kick me out, asking what books am I currently reading, be careful with these books, they can seriously damage your ignorance. Thank you to Warden Carothers for your unwavering respect and the firm grip instead of a closed fist. Thank you, Warden Jones, for always helping with everything I ask you to do for the Peer-led classes; we lead Literacy & Stock talk.

Thank you to the entire staff at Kewanee for allowing me to find myself at my own pace allowing me do whatever I wanted to do, everything I want to do while trusting me to do the right thing without anybody standing over me. I do what I want to do, everyday on my own time as long as I follow all the rules. This gave me a better understanding of being always

responsible without being told or limits of time, with the help from the staff. Showing me how to go hard until I go home then doing everything I'm doing on the other side of the gate. I won't ever be back.

Thank you for this chance to reposition my life portfolio diversifying my many skills in a successful way everyday. I can now see where this is going and how I'm growing into my old age. Thank you, Ms. Scott, for the chance to self check my own self-destructive ways. Timothy O. Alexander

Timzale.