

TWO ROADS

Volume 35



REIMAGINING CORRECTIONS

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

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.

TWO ROADS

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To All Readers

Our monthly e-zine 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

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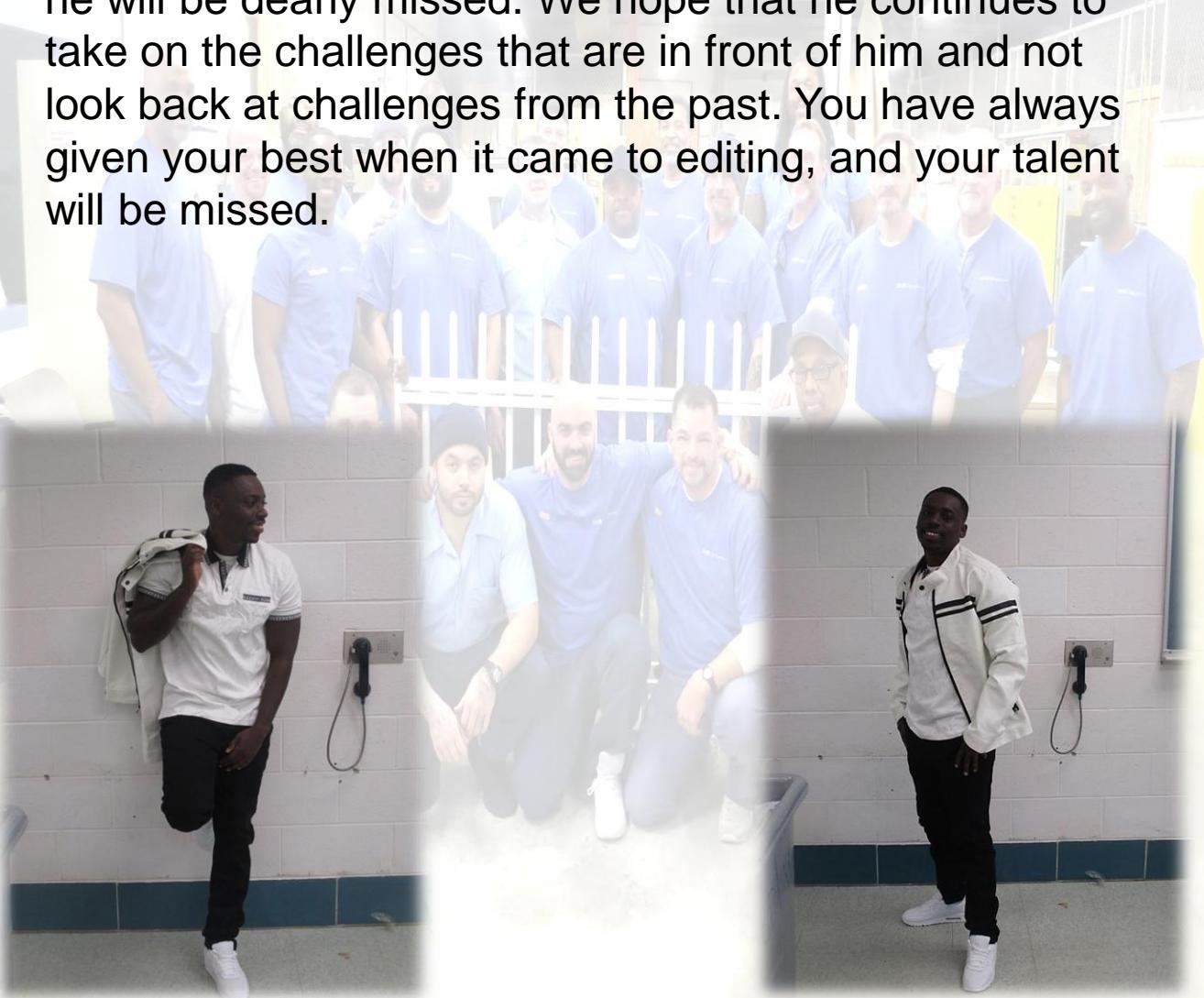
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WELL WISHES

TWO ROADS would like to send our well wishes to our Associate and Content Editor Mr. William Jenkins as he is on his way to bigger and better things. Will is responsible for this issue *Reimagining Corrections* and he will be dearly missed. We hope that he continues to take on the challenges that are in front of him and not look back at challenges from the past. You have always given your best when it came to editing, and your talent will be missed.



Those Who Control and Shape the Prison Environment Today

Michael Stone

Illinois River

"I would like to have you think of conditioning, not in the terms of politics, ethics, or morals, but in the terms of the deliberate changing of human behavior and attitudes by a group who have relatively complete control over the environment in which the others live in their populace."

These are the words of Dr. Edgar Schein. The Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) employed Dr. Schein, and his objective was to control prisoners through excessive punishment, manipulation and other methods. According to the Federal Prison Coalition, such methods belong to a program called "The Asklepion Program", which was modeled from a Chinese method of thought reform and had its first implementation in the United States at the Federal Prison (USP) in Marion, Illinois. Such objectives were:

1. Preventing contact with anyone sympathetic to the method of fair treatment and regime of the populace
2. Building a group of conviction among the prisoners that have been abandoned and is very isolated from the social order.
3. Undermining all emotional supports, from family, friends, and anyone sympathetic towards the subject.
4. Rewarding submissive and subservient behavior, and attitudes, which are consistent with the Administrator's conditioning objectives; this is done by lifting a little pressure and showing a false acceptance of the subject as a human being.

Dr. Edgar Schein was an M.I.T psychology professor, and according to an April 1999 Prison legal news magazine article entitled "The Mental Torture of American Prisoners: Cheaper than Lab Rats Part II", by Hans Sherrer, Schein became one of the western world's foremost authorities on psychological coercion.

It was at a 1962 M.I.T seminar attended by psychologists and prison wardens from around the country, where they all unfolded these more sophisticated forms of calculated cruelty and punishment.

It was at that 1962 seminar where Schein expressed the thought about conditioning. According to Sherrer, “The centerpiece of Dr. Schein’s techniques is using Psychological Isolation (PI) of the prisoners by fraying or outright destruction of the social bonds and their emotional support structure. Sherrer concluded that,” The reason he keyed on this as a powerful coercive mechanism is that, to a varying degree, we all perceive our existence as human beings from what is reflected back to us by those living beings we come into contact with.”

Psychologist Nathaniel Branden named this phenomenon the *Muttnik Principle*. In the 1960’s, he realized from his response to his dog Muttnik that all living beings, who make us feel real by accurately reflecting our treatment of them back on us, contribute to our mental health. The phenomenon can cause our mental well-being, or it can cause our mental disruption, which leads to psychological isolation, among other things, but both outcomes depend on what? Sherrer continued: “Dr. Schein learned from studying the successful techniques of totalitarian régimes, that *Isolation* and other forms of sensory deprivation, *Psychological Disorientation*, and *Pervasive Surveillance* have a significantly negative effect on the human psyche. By reducing the sensory feedback Dr. Braden identified as vital to someone’s well-being, they can be used as a weapon to induce cracks in the person’s mental defense system.”

“The phenomenon can cause our mental well-being, or it can cause our mental disruption which leads to psychological isolation, among other things, but both outcomes depend on what?”

Dr. Schein believed this predictable human response to sensory deprivation could be utilized for purposes of affecting the behavior of men and women in American prisons. The predecessors of the prison regime today understood that they were able to change men and women’s thoughts, perceptions and actions through the very conditions or environment that they created and controlled. Instead of creating an environment that rehabilitates and heals PI, they chose to focus on punishment, cruelty, and coercive manipulation over

rehabilitation, while not appearing to. I ask, is this still the agenda today? If it is not, I am sad to say, that the methods are still the same, which means all the above effects of such methods still play out amongst PI as its mutated form propagates like a cancer. Whenever controlled illegality is used as an agent for the illegality of the controlling minority, it only defends the effect more.

If the above is not the goal and the agenda of IDOC, it is the goal and agenda here at IDOC and at most facilities. PI are being destroyed on a daily basis here on a multiplicity of levels because the institutional culture is so corrupt and hell bent on cruelty, excessive punishment, coercive manipulations and the abuse of power that anybody who goes against it, this institutional culture will blackmail them into submission with the false investigation or reports as they place each other in positions of power to protect their misconduct.

“...all living beings contribute to our mental health who make us feel real by accurately reflecting our treatment of them back on us.”

Here in IDOC, every effort is made to weaken our (PI) internal defenses and heighten our susceptibility to influences controlled by others. I ask, as Foucault asked, “If the penalty in its most severe form (torture) no longer addresses itself to the body, on what does it lay hold ?” A punishment that once rained down on the physical body, was “replaced by a punishment that acts in depth on the heart, the thoughts, the will, and the inclinations” wrote Foucault.

Imagine if they created an environment that would deepen it. I once heard that, doing the same thing repeatedly, expecting a different outcome, is the definition of *insanity*. However, if cruelty is the point and not rehabilitation, then why bother? With more restrictive housing units being created like the C-grade wing in Illinois River or the Restrictive X-Housing in Pinckneyville, the predictable human response to sensory deprivation—I repeat the predictable human response to sensory deprivation is weaponized against PI to punish us more. However, if we are not treated as humans, then the punishment comes for responding like one.

In conclusion, I ask that all restrictive housing wings be shut down and to protect our Mental Health by “reforming IDOC’s policy around the use of restrictive housing.”

“No system (or institution) of punishment that asks a brave human being to surrender his or her bravery can ever work for the common good. It violates the universal stuff of the soul out of which great civilizations are built.” - Norman Mailer

TWO ROADS SAFE PLACES

Do you have a place you go during struggles or hard times? Is there a place in your distant past or your present that simply brings you comfort? Mom’s house, Grandma’s, some place in nature? Are books or music your get away? Art or writing? Prayer? A place of silence or places filled with noise? Maybe it a spiritual place – be it physical or metaphysical. Maybe you feel safest with a particular person. Or maybe you do not have a safe place and are in search of one. Well, the Two Roads team would like to hear from you. Write and share with us about your safe place. Let us journey with you and hear about sight, smell, taste, touch. Help us understand what a safe place is to you, the sensation and feelings you get when you think about it or when you go to it. If you can not go there, we want to know what it would mean to you if you could.

**Outsiders, Staff and
Individuals-Inx-Custody
(WITH Staff Support)**

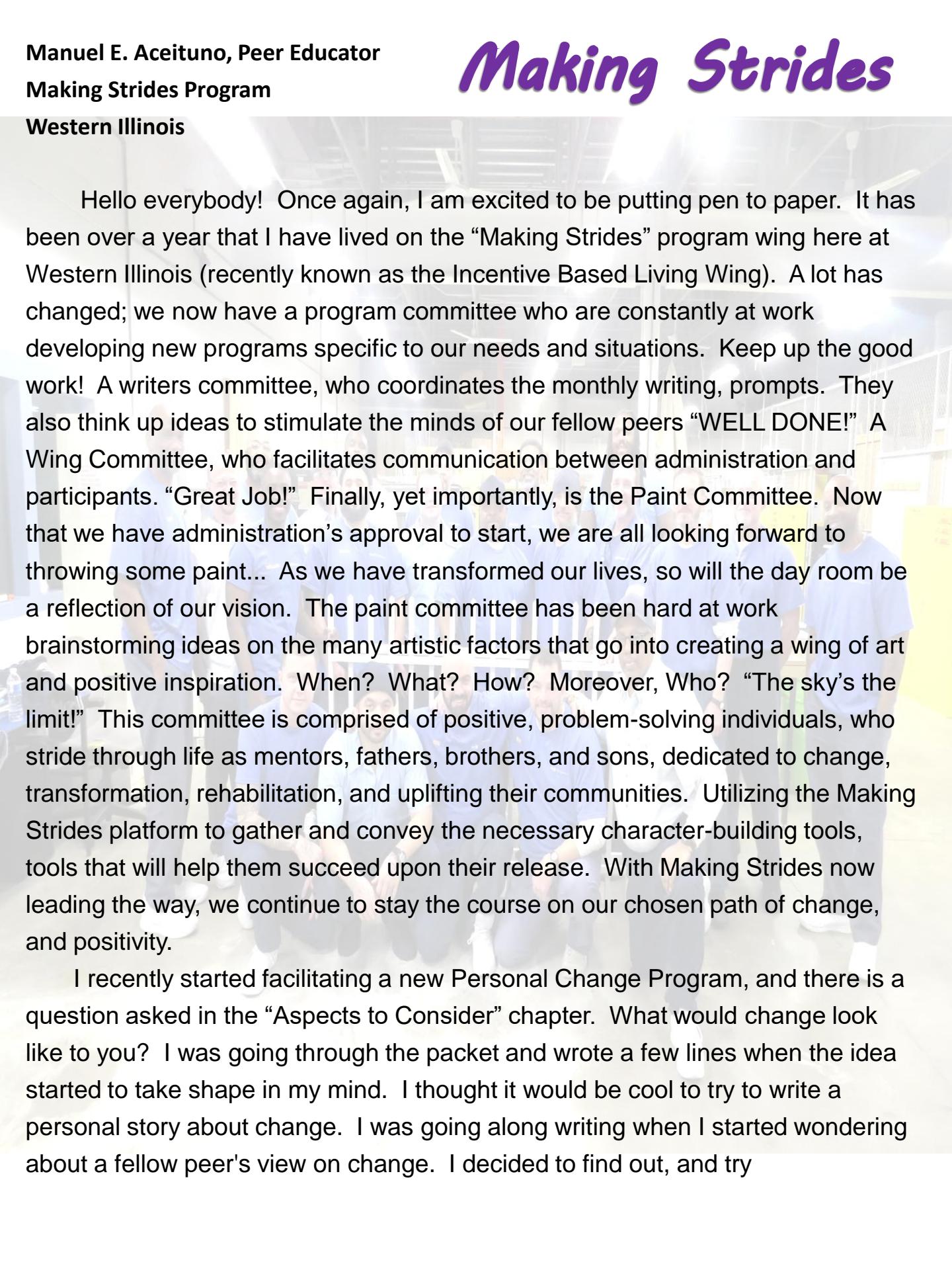
Please send your submission and scanned photo (if you choose) to doc.tworoads@illinois.gov
“PROGRESS”



SUBMIT NOW

Without staff support:
Mail submission, photo
to:

TWO ROADS EDITOR
2021 Kentville Road
Kewanee IL 61443



Hello everybody! Once again, I am excited to be putting pen to paper. It has been over a year that I have lived on the “Making Strides” program wing here at Western Illinois (recently known as the Incentive Based Living Wing). A lot has changed; we now have a program committee who are constantly at work developing new programs specific to our needs and situations. Keep up the good work! A writers committee, who coordinates the monthly writing, prompts. They also think up ideas to stimulate the minds of our fellow peers “WELL DONE!” A Wing Committee, who facilitates communication between administration and participants. “Great Job!” Finally, yet importantly, is the Paint Committee. Now that we have administration’s approval to start, we are all looking forward to throwing some paint... As we have transformed our lives, so will the day room be a reflection of our vision. The paint committee has been hard at work brainstorming ideas on the many artistic factors that go into creating a wing of art and positive inspiration. When? What? How? Moreover, Who? “The sky’s the limit!” This committee is comprised of positive, problem-solving individuals, who stride through life as mentors, fathers, brothers, and sons, dedicated to change, transformation, rehabilitation, and uplifting their communities. Utilizing the Making Strides platform to gather and convey the necessary character-building tools, tools that will help them succeed upon their release. With Making Strides now leading the way, we continue to stay the course on our chosen path of change, and positivity.

I recently started facilitating a new Personal Change Program, and there is a question asked in the “Aspects to Consider” chapter. What would change look like to you? I was going through the packet and wrote a few lines when the idea started to take shape in my mind. I thought it would be cool to try to write a personal story about change. I was going along writing when I started wondering about a fellow peer's view on change. I decided to find out, and try

challenging myself with creating a whimsical story as a combined effort of our collective view on change. I started by asking the personal change circle and extended my question to the rest of the wing. By this time, I was very excited about the level of perception and positive feed back I was receiving. The question I asked was: In one or two sentences, what does change mean to you? I have to say, these people did not disappoint in the least; on the contrary, they came through for us, while at the same time, it was inspiring my creative imagination.

I know you people are ready for the story, but before we get started, I want to give a big thank you to everyone here in the Making Strides Program. We all believe in change, I believe in you, and appreciate you all believing in me. In addition, allowing me the opportunity to express our collective voice of change. We want to express a special thanks to Warden @ Ms. Goins (congratulations on the promotion) and, most importantly Program Counselor Mr. Howell, for their continued drive and conviction in the Making Strides program. A special thanks to all who had some input in this program. Welcome new Warden of Programs, Ms. Woolridge. We appreciate all your hard work on our behalf, as well as the work still to come in the future. Now for the story. What follows is an inspired story about our collective voice of change.

Ladybug Change

I was walking the yard lost in contemplation of personal change when a ladybug was flying around my head, only to crash land on my shoulder. The necessity captured in the fluttering wings.

Hello Ladybug! I am a cognitive student, so do not be scared. My shoulders are strong, and I do not feel your weight. This thought of comfort slipped from my mind. Yet to my utter surprise, the Ladybug responded in kind. Hi Mr. Student. The weight I bear is not in body, but in spirit of the message incorporated in my being. It has been a long challenging journey with outwitting negativity every stride of my way. A breath of rest is all I require, and then I will be off to continue my quest. Your message sounds heavy;

will you share it with me? I know not your quest, nor where your travels will take you, but rest assured that I would help you find a moment of peace. "It is the seeds of humanity's perception of change that I carry. Their words of wisdom travel on the winds which bear my wings, giving me sustenance to sustain my flight. To share and be shared in its truth, this is my quest!"

Ladybug, can you tell me of the change happening within the "Making Strides Program? Can you hear their truth? Luck is the Ladybug"! It just so happens that my flight has previously taken me across their path. So, listen closely my newfound Mr. Student, and while I rest my wings, we will share in their message. Because you are not alone, nor are you the first to make this choice of me. The Ladybug started to sing. Her voice as if spoken by the wind, the Making Strides many perception came clear to my ears, and fresh to my heart.

*******Change Is*******

"First recognizing that change is inevitable and committing yourself to the pursuit of it. Until it becomes second nature in my actions". (Jeral Harvey).

"An evolved method of processing "(Michael Leach)

"The inevitable impact of a communities' collective efforts, driven by faith and hope for a brighter future" (Jermaine Baker)

"Not something to be feared" (Clifford Powers)

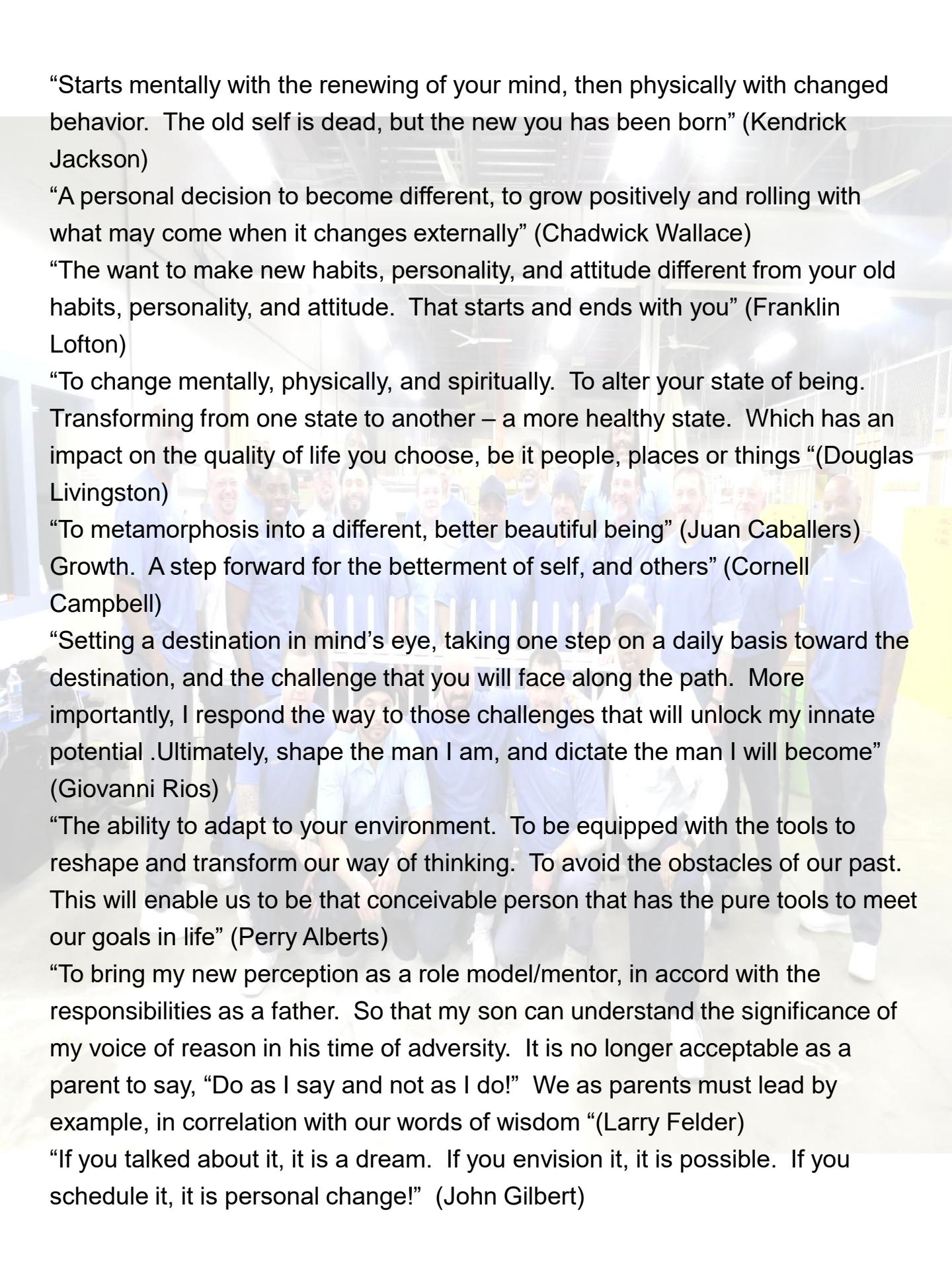
"Change is constant, change is evolution, Make it personal!" (M.Reese Chevalier)

"An appreciation of life" (Louis Regenold)

"Going in a different direction" (James Trent)

"Mental growth in mind, body, and spirit. Understanding that everything starts with a thought and being able to process those thoughts. Understanding that you have the power to look at things in a positive or negative light, which can make a big change in one's life." (Lavelle Archer)

"The greatest challenge to your former self, never fully reached, though worth reaching for" (Shawn Block)



“Starts mentally with the renewing of your mind, then physically with changed behavior. The old self is dead, but the new you has been born” (Kendrick Jackson)

“A personal decision to become different, to grow positively and rolling with what may come when it changes externally” (Chadwick Wallace)

“The want to make new habits, personality, and attitude different from your old habits, personality, and attitude. That starts and ends with you” (Franklin Lofton)

“To change mentally, physically, and spiritually. To alter your state of being. Transforming from one state to another – a more healthy state. Which has an impact on the quality of life you choose, be it people, places or things” (Douglas Livingston)

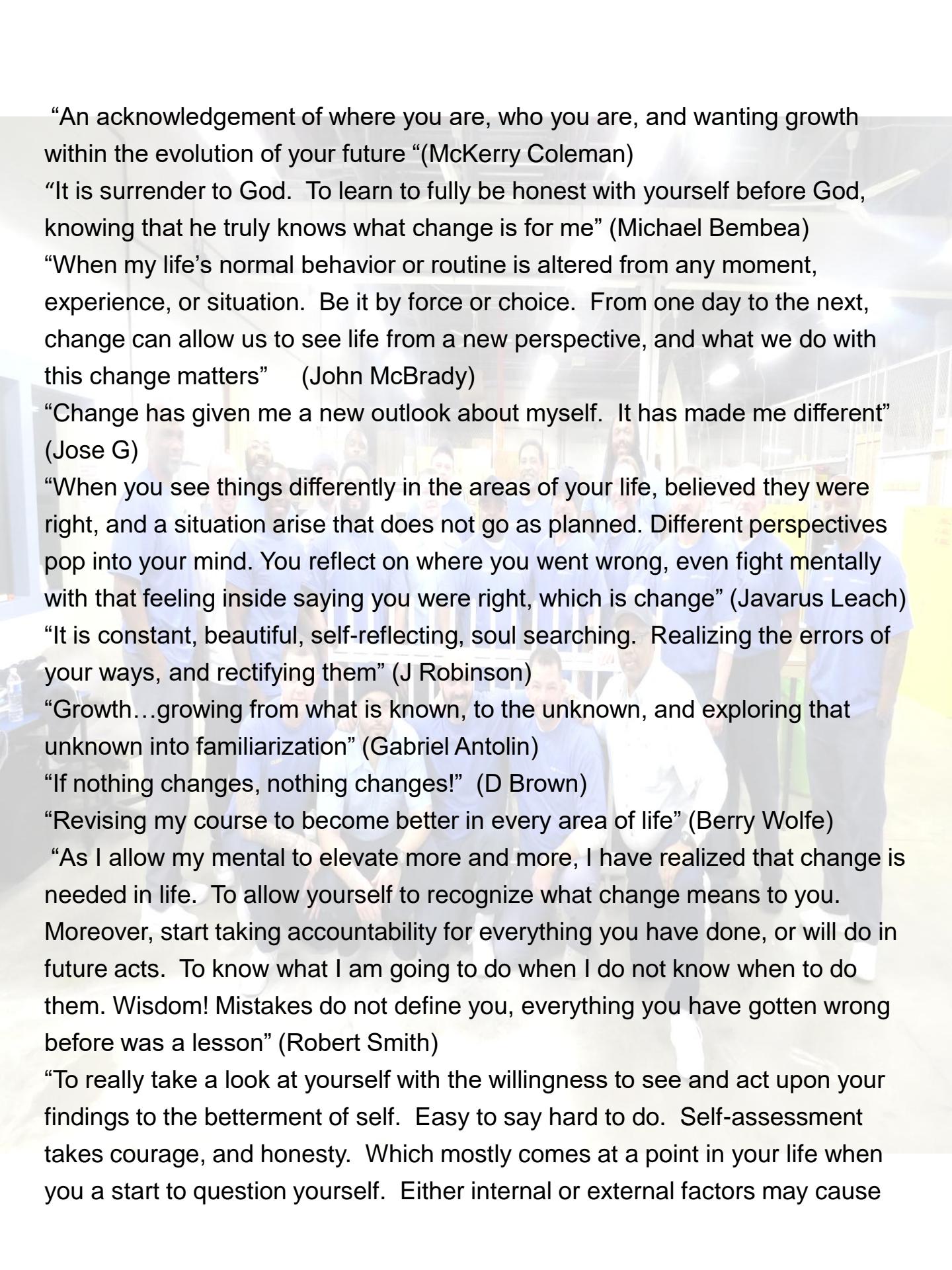
“To metamorphosis into a different, better beautiful being” (Juan Caballers)
Growth. A step forward for the betterment of self, and others” (Cornell Campbell)

“Setting a destination in mind’s eye, taking one step on a daily basis toward the destination, and the challenge that you will face along the path. More importantly, I respond the way to those challenges that will unlock my innate potential .Ultimately, shape the man I am, and dictate the man I will become” (Giovanni Rios)

“The ability to adapt to your environment. To be equipped with the tools to reshape and transform our way of thinking. To avoid the obstacles of our past. This will enable us to be that conceivable person that has the pure tools to meet our goals in life” (Perry Alberts)

“To bring my new perception as a role model/mentor, in accord with the responsibilities as a father. So that my son can understand the significance of my voice of reason in his time of adversity. It is no longer acceptable as a parent to say, “Do as I say and not as I do!” We as parents must lead by example, in correlation with our words of wisdom” (Larry Felder)

“If you talked about it, it is a dream. If you envision it, it is possible. If you schedule it, it is personal change!” (John Gilbert)

A group of diverse students in a classroom setting, smiling and looking towards the camera.

“An acknowledgement of where you are, who you are, and wanting growth within the evolution of your future” (McKerry Coleman)

“It is surrender to God. To learn to fully be honest with yourself before God, knowing that he truly knows what change is for me” (Michael Bembea)

“When my life’s normal behavior or routine is altered from any moment, experience, or situation. Be it by force or choice. From one day to the next, change can allow us to see life from a new perspective, and what we do with this change matters” (John McBrady)

“Change has given me a new outlook about myself. It has made me different” (Jose G)

“When you see things differently in the areas of your life, believed they were right, and a situation arise that does not go as planned. Different perspectives pop into your mind. You reflect on where you went wrong, even fight mentally with that feeling inside saying you were right, which is change” (Javarus Leach)

“It is constant, beautiful, self-reflecting, soul searching. Realizing the errors of your ways, and rectifying them” (J Robinson)

“Growth...growing from what is known, to the unknown, and exploring that unknown into familiarization” (Gabriel Antolin)

“If nothing changes, nothing changes!” (D Brown)

“Revising my course to become better in every area of life” (Berry Wolfe)

“As I allow my mental to elevate more and more, I have realized that change is needed in life. To allow yourself to recognize what change means to you. Moreover, start taking accountability for everything you have done, or will do in future acts. To know what I am going to do when I do not know when to do them. Wisdom! Mistakes do not define you, everything you have gotten wrong before was a lesson” (Robert Smith)

“To really take a look at yourself with the willingness to see and act upon your findings to the betterment of self. Easy to say hard to do. Self-assessment takes courage, and honesty. Which mostly comes at a point in your life when you start to question yourself. Either internal or external factors may cause

you to question, but in the end honest reflection is the key to personal change”
(Eric Wright)

“When they ask me, how I am doing? I say, every day in every way I am doing better and better” (Carlo Bedford)

“Getting up every day, and pursuing the best version of me “(Charles Childs)

“Seeing the future in a better and different way / Mirar el future en uno forma major Y diferente” (Juan Herrera)

“It is about loving and understanding self. Without love, change cannot flourish” (Noel Dejesus)

“Change is what you make of me, a lucky ladybug on the wind. As your luck is made through you, so does the value of its truth lie within.”

Well Ladybug, thank you for the sharing your message of truth of the Making Strides Program. Are you feeling refreshed? “Refreshed and relieved, Thank you very much. Good to hear that your strength is renewed, Ladybug. You have renewed my hope for the future. Each stride I take forward while cultivating the land, will be an expression of my love, empathy, and dedication for my chosen path in life. Ladybug, fly strong, fly free, according to your heart’s desire.

“Cognitive, you may call me by name. For in friendship, first names shine true. Thank you for your hospitality, sorry about the conditions of your outhouse, and remember our trust, “One stride at a time”, one choice at a time, change is possible!”

The Ladybug took to the air with a powerful flutter, but a moment that she was lost to the distance. A shout of OUTHOUSE, HEY echoed in her wake. I stared into the distance, mentally sad that she never conveyed her name. A gust of wind all of a sudden flowed around me, carrying with it the whisper of song. Cheer up my friend. You carry my name within, your heart beats with the strength, for I have always been change!

THE END! THE BEGINNING!

What does change mean to you!

Manuel Enrique Aceituno

Re-entry Forgotten issue

By Ed "Yahkhah'yil" Willingham



To whom this may concern, I'm writing you today addressing a very serious issue that is either being forgotten, or just plain left out when it comes to those men and women who are incarcerated and who are leaving prisons across America. My name is Edward Willingham, and while serving 29 years in prison and mentoring many programs throughout my time in prison, what I have found out is: there is one word that connects us all; however, it is never talked about amongst the incarcerated population. That word is TRAUMA! While so much of the focus has been on other causes such as drugs, addiction, and the environment as to the leading causes to why people commit crime, through my research amongst the incarcerated population, what I have found out is that trauma has been a leading cause to the "WHY" so many men and women commit some of the harshest crimes across America. After serving 13 years in a maximum-security prison, I went to a medium max security facility and within two years of being there, I noticed that there was a lack of MEN there. Thankfully, I was sought out by Counselor Patch, who wanted me to help facilitate a couple of peer led programs that he was doing.

In 2016, I was blessed to start my own program called "THE MAN-TO-MAN MENTORSHIP PROGRAM".

The program is still deemed a success within the IDOC, but what I learned is that the word MAN itself comes with many definitions, which led to many heavy discussions. In the program, we talked about trauma, but it was not a topic of focus. Therefore, when I came to KLSRC 3 months ago, I ran into Jermaine Brown one of the men that I knew from Hill C.C. KLSRC is a re-entry center and has allowed the incarcerated to start and facilitate many peer led programs. While in another prison Jermaine started having meetings with a group of guys called "The Trauma Unit," which would meet weekly talking about their traumas. Then he came to KLSRC and upon leaving the facility he was in, he gave his word to the guys that he would also continue the program while he was here at KLSRC, and that he did. I arrived right before the first meeting would start, and Jermaine asked if I would help facilitate the program. Mind you, I have been doing this work since 2014, and I can honestly say, The Trauma Unit has been life changing, not only for myself, but also to the men that are in the program. From this experience, I fully understand that "The Trauma Unit" should be in every prison here in Illinois and should be added to ALL re-entry programs across America. Again, one of the leading causes to men, women, and children committing crime has been due to un-faced traumas.

Trauma is re-entry's forgotten issue, and with your help we can bring light to this very important issue that is affecting communities across America. Un-dealt trauma has led to many men, women, and children coming to prison, as well as keeping the recidivism rate at an all-time high. Please help by bringing attention to this forgotten and neglected issue.

Thank you for your time, and it is my hope to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Edward Willingham K-56758

Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center

2021 Kentville Road

Kewanee, IL. 61443

Re-imaging Corrections

Kelly Bennett

Now how do you go about re-imaging corrections after serving more than two decades? Never have I thought about any of this until arriving here at Kewanee LSRC. However, after being deeply invested in functions of the Lost Time group, and also the personal relationship I had with someone who was removed from here because of a situation that was not handled properly, while too many individuals sat idly by and allowed him to be pulled into a situation that proved detrimental to all involved. So, this topic became personal to a certain extent; you see, I now re-image incarceration as a system of growth and community.

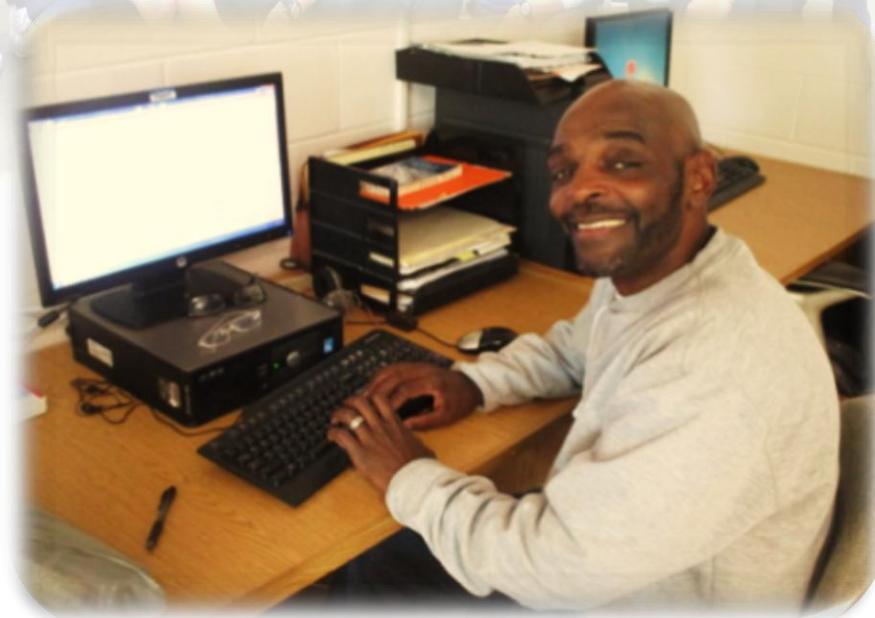
Here you have thousands of men and women incarcerated all over the state yet there is no sense of community that allows everyone to prosper and grow with each other. These places have become a breeding ground for envy and deceit, making most facilities unbearable to those who are looking to do their time productively. We have created a system that does very little to rehabilitate and even less at correcting the character defects that landed us in this system in the first place.

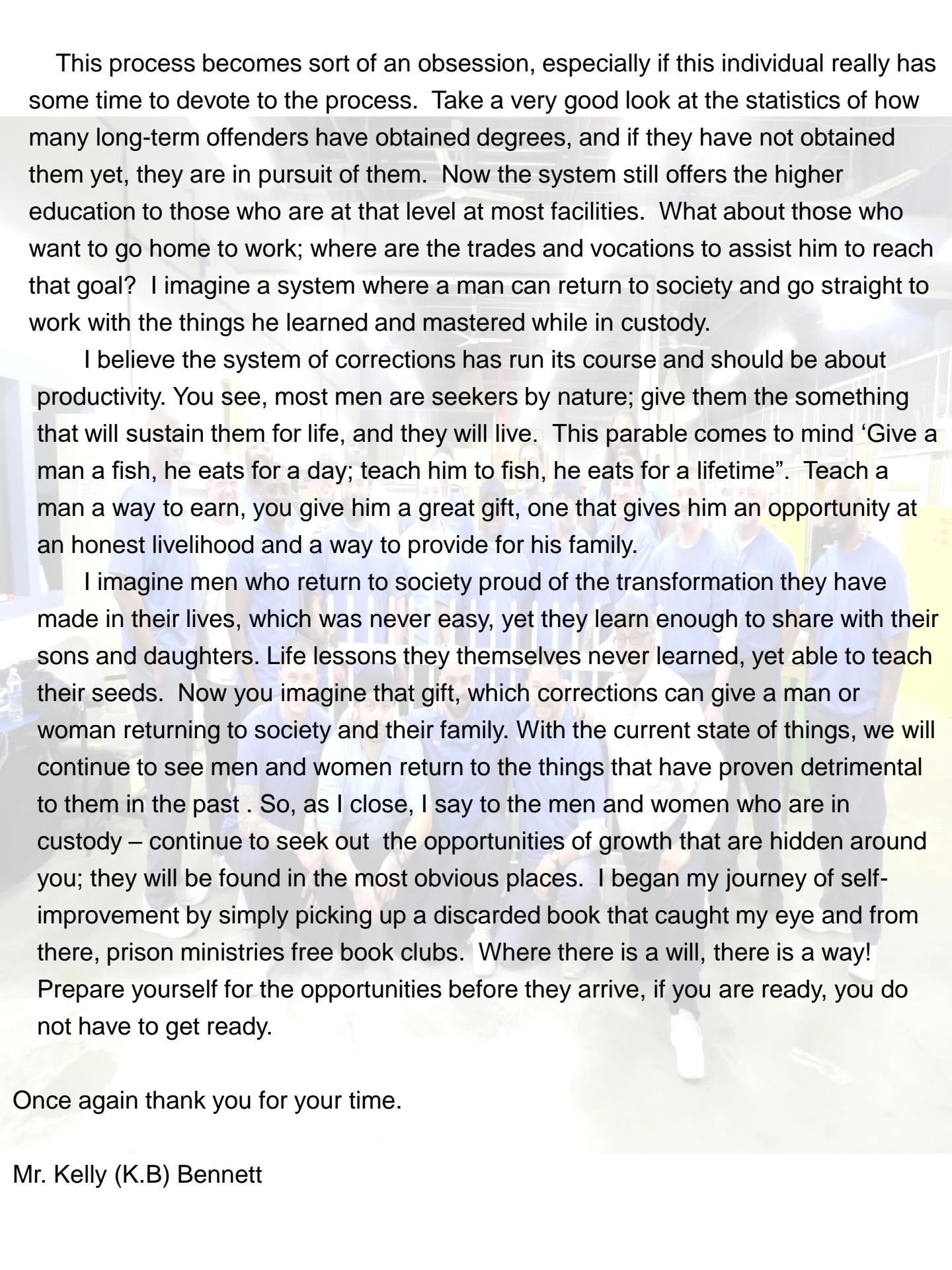
I imagine a place where we as men and women not only co-exist but also grow older together instead of just getting old. I have been around for a very long time and can remember a time when we actually looked at each other as brothers and sisters of a struggle. The struggle remains and the unity as brothers and sisters has gone to the wayside. Never am I promoting an us against them system, because I know how that plays out in the grand scheme of things.

There is room for growth for all that are a part of this system of justice, and corrections; however, where does the growth come from if we continue with the narrative, it is us against them, yet we co-exist in the same system? I imagine a system of growth wherein the individuals in custody really have a chance of success when released, instead of walking out of the gates with the sweat suit and ten dollars, to return to the place he committed his offense and left to all his own hang-ups and habits which proved to be everything but successful.

Please do not take this the wrong way; the system that exists now does offer some opportunities for growth; however, those opportunities are very scarce and are presented in a way that has proven ineffective in so many ways. I believe the opportunities should be given to those who actually seek them out, instead of to those who are slated for release sooner than those seeking the education are.

In my opinion, those seeking the opportunities are the ones who will make the very best of them, and those who are about to be released are concentrating on just that – I am on my way home...period. The system of corrections I imagine can be fruitful for all involved; however, I believe it must begin with the individual in custody or convict, whatever you prefer. One must dig deep and want better for themselves first. Self-improvement begins with self. Once that cycle has taken place, nothing stops it or slows it. A habit has been created and with that the process of productivity becomes a part of his daily ritual.





This process becomes sort of an obsession, especially if this individual really has some time to devote to the process. Take a very good look at the statistics of how many long-term offenders have obtained degrees, and if they have not obtained them yet, they are in pursuit of them. Now the system still offers the higher education to those who are at that level at most facilities. What about those who want to go home to work; where are the trades and vocations to assist him to reach that goal? I imagine a system where a man can return to society and go straight to work with the things he learned and mastered while in custody.

I believe the system of corrections has run its course and should be about productivity. You see, most men are seekers by nature; give them the something that will sustain them for life, and they will live. This parable comes to mind 'Give a man a fish, he eats for a day; teach him to fish, he eats for a lifetime'. Teach a man a way to earn, you give him a great gift, one that gives him an opportunity at an honest livelihood and a way to provide for his family.

I imagine men who return to society proud of the transformation they have made in their lives, which was never easy, yet they learn enough to share with their sons and daughters. Life lessons they themselves never learned, yet able to teach their seeds. Now you imagine that gift, which corrections can give a man or woman returning to society and their family. With the current state of things, we will continue to see men and women return to the things that have proven detrimental to them in the past. So, as I close, I say to the men and women who are in custody – continue to seek out the opportunities of growth that are hidden around you; they will be found in the most obvious places. I began my journey of self-improvement by simply picking up a discarded book that caught my eye and from there, prison ministries free book clubs. Where there is a will, there is a way! Prepare yourself for the opportunities before they arrive, if you are ready, you do not have to get ready.

Once again thank you for your time.

Mr. Kelly (K.B) Bennett

RE-imaging Corrections Education

Javan Deloney



If I could Re-image Corrections ; my attention would be focused on education, educational programs and groups for everyone in corrections . I have been an individual in custody now for 33 years and making it to Kewanee LSRC is something I had never thought I would see throughout my experience in corrections. Everyone should have the opportunity to have access to quality education even if you have life in prison or many months left on your sentence. When I had a term of natural life I was looked over, pushed down the waiting list, or told it just does not matter. The term you must serve plays a major part on the type of education you receive in corrections, when it should not matter.

The level of education you receive is most important because bettering yourself, no matter the crime or sentence, is the most rewarding and fulfilling journey you can go through while paying your debt to society. It helps make you feel some sort of accomplishment, so you can be the best version of yourself when the time comes to re-enter your community. Kewanee helps find and focus on what you need as an individual as far as education, groups, trades, and mental health. So why can't everyone in corrections receive the same? If you engage everyone with the same education, educational programs and peer led groups in each institution, corrections will have a brighter outlook and a lot less Gang-Gang; I'm just saying everyone deserves a chance at a better education because sitting in the cell all day looking at the one-eyed monster is not education enough. Can you image if everyone in corrections received a course in Adult Living, Basic Economics, Implicit Bias Awareness, Interpersonal Skills, and/or Financial Literacy just to name a few? These people would stand a better chance in the society they return to.

Thank you for your time.

Javan Deloney

The Truth about the Truth - Re-imaging Corrections

Michael Wally Michaels

It has been over a year, since the initial Two Roads Truth-in-Sentencing, issues were published. In that time, smatterings of bills aimed at prison reform remain, essentially stagnant, mired in the muck of the legislative swamp. There are some amazing proposals on the table, true enough. Earned Good Time Relief; Elder Parole; including mandatory minimum sentences; equitable sentencing structures; and putting Judicial Discretion back into the courtroom where it belongs.

These are all amazing ideas, but they are on a fast track to nowhere if they continue to lie upon the legislative table, collecting dust. Some of these bills are more neglected than Marjorie Taylor- Greene's match.com dating profile. The sad reality is that with this being an election year, we cannot honestly expect much on the floor of the legislature. The majority of the summer will be spent on some, "see what I can do" moments that some legislators use to get re-elected. About the only thing seeing less action than the floor of the legislature this year will be Donald Trump's bedroom.

Typically, an Illinois State Senator or Representative is elected for a two-year term; The Legislator will actually spend about nine months of the following year in Springfield. The other three months will be just spent in their home districts working at their district office. Election year politics are an entirely different animal. January and the most of February are generally spent in session; by late February, though the focus is about defending one's territory in the March primary a few weeks later. Then they will take an Easter break heading into the summer session. After a brief Labor Day respite, the Legislature will head into the fall session until mid-October. Then it's off to the campaign trail, working on being re-elected in the general Election the first Tuesday of November. After the election chaos subsides, about five weeks of the session remain before adjourning for the winter break. All told, the average Illinois legislator will spend about sixteen months of a two-year term actually "legislating". Now if only they could somehow translate "legislate" into getting some bills passed ". Maybe then, we would have something, a little more promising than a "few good ideas".

While we sit around waiting for the State legislature to pass a bill or two, a lot of us work diligently to seek some type of relief through the judicial system. Once you have exhausted your legal remedies, and your Federal Habeas Corpus, where do you turn? Like many, I have turned to the filing of a petition for Executive Clemency with the Illinois Prisoner Review Board. The July 2022 PRB Hearing was postponed due to PRB staffing issues, so my PRB Hearing took place in October 2022. For some reason, I had some perception that the clemency process was more expeditious in nature. Having never filed a petition before, I figured this would only take 6 months or so.



Whoops, I had it figured wrong, a year and a half later, and I am still waiting, on a decision. What amazes me, however, is the story of a guy that I have known for quite some time; he had his PRB Hearing in October 2021, and he is still hanging around 30 months later, waiting for a decision. That makes me wonder, how many more people are in the same boat? Now I am not a rocket scientist by any means, but this does make me wonder, if you are stuck waiting four or five years for a clemency decision, what is the point of a one-year waiting period if you are denied? When my PRB hearing, was held, I was 55 years of age, I am currently 58 years of age, and will I be 60+ when I finally get a decision?

As I mentioned earlier, this is an election year; the cool part to this is that we are sitting upon what could potentially be one of the greatest untapped segments of voters in Illinois. Imagine this, this families and friends of the incarcerated men and women of Illinois, along with those of us that had been incarcerated in the past. The State of Illinois recently spent a lot of time and resources, making sure that people could vote after their release from custody. Well, why not let them know we have been listening? Spread the word, people! Encourage your families and friends to get involved, in the electoral process, get registered to vote.

Help others in the communities to be registered. If they need to, get to know your candidates, and, what they represent. Fact check their claims and do not just accept any lip service from people that tell you what they think you want to hear. Remember this, when you do go to vote, you are voting for the candidate, not the party they represent. There are people who will vote for a person just because of their political party...assuming that the candidate espouses the same values; by the same token, some will refuse to vote for a particular party's candidate for precisely the same reason. That is truly why it is so important to learn about the person that you intending to vote for.

The State of Illinois deserves a change in the way that it conducts its system of criminal justice, the first order of business is to get involved in the electoral process. Encourage your families and friends to get involved in their neighborhoods, and communities. If people remain complacent, they will remain stagnant. On the other hand, no voice is louder than the one that is heard at the ballot box in November. Let us make a difference!

Michael Wally Walls

RE-imaging Corrections

Gossip

Mr. T. Youngblood

On the old TV show *Bewitched* there was a character named Mrs. Cravitz. Mrs. Cravitz sat by her blinds, watching outside for anything that did not look normal, and would yell for her husband, Abner, every time she had something to report. If I were to pick a character that dominates the media now, it would be Mrs. Cravitz; we seemingly cannot get enough gossip.

The more famous, or infamous, the person, the more gossip. We have TV shows that are dedicated to celebrity gossip; we have websites dedicated to gossip. We have collectively taken the attitude that if you have nothing nice to say about anybody, come sit next to me.

The type of gossip I am talking about is what is called calumny and detraction. A person who commits detraction is one who, without objectively valid reasons, discloses another's faults and failings to persons who did not know them. A person who commits calumny is one who, by remarks contrary to the truth, harms the reputation of others and gives occasions for false judgments concerning them. As individuals-in-custody, we refer to this gossip as "playing Pontiac". Gossip (playing Pontiac) is an act in which we seek to destroy the reputation of another person for whatever reason or for no reason at all. Many times, gossip is a passive-aggressive form of vengeance; sometimes gossip is done for pure blood sport.

This is especially true in politics; gossip is done as a way for distracting people from the problems the gossiper has. Sometimes it is done to position oneself as better in the eyes of others, to get some worldly prize. Whatever reason it is done, it is dangerous.

Both calumny and detraction rely on a third leg for a dismal and demonic trifecta; rash judgment. The person who commits rash judgments is a person who, even tacitly, assumes as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of a neighbor. To engage in gossip is to act as if we expect the absolute worst in motivations and actions from the person being gossiped about. We are to seek to help those who need help. It is difficult to help someone through destroying another's good name.

This becomes an assassination of character with lies when, either through unwarranted speculation or outright maleficence, the gossip is not true. One then violates the eighth Commandment: "thou shall not bear false witness".

We see this in the prison system everywhere with great regularity. Many times, in social media and in the blogosphere, we see stories that are little more than exercises in rash judgment, detraction, and calumny. Even some correctional officers say that gossip is all too often an occupational hazard among prison staff. One, who I will not name to protect the guilty and so that this essay can be published, said, "I know I can justify it from time to time. I can sound like a not-to-be named nineties TV character who said, "I don't gossip. Maybe sometimes I find out things or hear something and pass that information on ... You know... kind of like a public service." We can make all kinds, of excuses for our gossip. It is wrong even if you could have been right, you are wrong. In addition, when you are right, you are wrong because you could have been wrong. If you want to know, when it is considered gossip?

My first question is, "Have you talked to that person about this?" That would be the first step. Second, I would ask, "Are you seeking to help that person?" If it is the latter, and you are not trying to help that person, then do not be surprised that you have incurred danger. In short, the measure you use against others will be the same measure that will be used on you. If we spent the time we waste on gossip praying for the good of the person we gossip about, we would find ourselves in a much more peaceful place.

Now , Please excuse me as I contemplate all possible meanings of "Physician Heal Thyself" One meaning is: Gossiper heal Thyself.

Thank you for your Time!

Timothy Youngblood # B-02004



Re-Imaging Corrections

By Todd Madoline

Over the past twelve years I have developed a personal relationship with my creator. I have also earned an associates degree and nearly completed my Bachelors through the Northwestern Prison Education Program. Due to the forced closure of Statesville Correction Center, I was transferred to downstate Lawrence Correctional Center. I was seemingly stripped of everything important to me, my entire community – especially being able to see my elderly parents each week. Amidst having most of my property taken from me, I have felt isolated, alone, and cut off from my support system, all while grappling with my father's brain cancer diagnosis in July. Things couldn't seem to get any worse; then my mother passed away on November 3rd. More than anything else I have done with my time, nothing compares to the connection I established with my mother.

Time was never lost when it came to our relationship, knowing how much she loved me and how excited she was to spend time with me. I witnessed her growth as she witnessed mine; she spoke at Parole Illinois events and to Bible studies on how to pray correctly. As I have grown through adversity so did she, each day. I will always carry with me how in one of our last conversations she told me how I had become a therapist through my use of my vocabulary. I had begun making it a point to ask her how she was doing or perhaps her point of view on different topics, allowing her a safe space to express herself. In my opinion the worst fears that individuals in custody may face is the potential death of their mothers.

Up until recently I believed that once I lost my parents, I would become unhinged and turn into an extremely problematic individual for whichever state institution I was a resident in. Strangely enough, I became the exact opposite – instead, there was an unexplainable sense of peace and calm – a strength in knowing just how my mother would want me to carry on .

Following her example, I am to operate in love and avoid conflict, and as she always told me, it is important to view the glass as being half full never empty. Getting to intimately know my mother has been the most productive thing I have ever done while paying my debt to society. So, I have reimagined corrections as a place to re-evaluate the relationships in your life. She has made me the man I am today, from the things I have accomplished to the things I may accomplish in the future. Everything hinges on letting her influence determine my thoughts and actions. .

Thank you for your time..
Todd Madoline

RE-Imaging Corrections

*The Analogy
by Taji K. Marshall*

For the past ten plus months, I have been constantly told that “where I am is better than where I left”. If I am being honest, this never sat well with me. Anytime people try to justify a known, ongoing wrong they generally point to a previous time or place and say; “It’s better now”. My question for those people is this: is simply being better the goal?

Over the course of my life, I have heard countless politicians tell “Black” people about all of the incremental change made on our behalf. Everything from criminal justice reform, housing, education, employment, etc. Hearing about all the incremental change always made me think of an aunt of mine and her situation. My aunt was addicted to drugs and being pimped. Using the logic of incremental change and “it’s better than where you left”, having my aunt on the corner less, not punching her in the face, and allowing her to spend time with her daughter would be a good outcome.

The problem with telling someone that “it is better than where they left”, anytime they point out something that needs addressing or improvement is you never acknowledge the need for correction, nor are you taking their concerns seriously. The same could be said for incremental change. Aside from making, some feel better about the harm done to someone else, what is solved with incremental change? We, as a society, don’t ask the abusive husband to not punch his wife in the face; we tell him it is wrong to be violent with her at all. We don’t teach our children it’s okay to steal a little bit; we teach them that stealing is wrong.

If our goal is to be good, then let us be good, not better than. “Better than” is a copout for those not interested in changing something that needs changing. When I’m released from prison, I could say that prison now is better than when I came in, but is it changed? Do I leave prison and forget about all the things I know need addressing because they’ve made incremental changes? No, I don’t. I leave prison and do what I tell my nieces and nephews: I don’t seek to make a wrong better, I seek to make it right.



RE-Imaging Corrections

Tyler Gulli

If I could re-image corrections rehabilitation would start on the first day with no restrictions. Based solely on your ability to earn good time and not on the distance until your release date.

The Majority of the men and women in custody will inevitably be released, so why wait until they are 2 years from going home to allow them to get needed education or programming. Imagine the man or woman who spends 20 years behind a door, only learning what it takes to survive life caged in here, then expecting two years of programming to reverse years of abnormal learned behavior in time for their release. In my opinion, why release a damaged person who in most cases will resort back to all they have ever known if put into a dire situation only trying to survive.

I believe to do more than just survive after release, you have to be equipped with real, honest knowledge of what led you into the direction you took to get here. Classes and groups like Cognitive Awareness, Criminal & Addictive thinking also The Trauma unit here at Kewanee would be a major start in learning the reasons behind the actions that lead one astray.

Follow those with real life skills courses such as Financial Literacy, and Adult living offered in other facilities would help a lot. I personally believe most men and women prior to being in custody had zero knowledge of independent living. So, to give these needed skills assisting one with the knowledge to gain employment, conduct proper interviews, also how to budget the monies earned would help the person as well as future generations of the same family. I'd like to thank the Maintenance Dept. at Graham C.C for giving me the opportunity to work because I learned the true value of hard work, all while learning different trades .



I was mentored by good men giving me the confidence needed to seek good career upon my release . I believe that corrections as we know it now has failed, for so long you send a person back out with no solid skill set you're setting them on a path of failure. I believe a lot of what happens here at Kewanee LSRC should be a blueprint to successful re-entry, unfortunately not everyone gets a Kewanee experience. So, if I could re-image corrections, I would bring the experience to the stage and give more brothers and sisters a true opportunity for growth and success with better reentry tools.

Thank you for your time. Tyler Gulli



RE-imaging Corrections

By Keith L Roberson

Re-imaging corrections ; I image would start with the forces behind the purpose of corrections. I imagine corrections would mean righting a wrong; not righting a wrong does not always mean punishment is required. Locking a person down in a box stripping everything them of everything that makes them uniquely

However there are criminals that need /deserve such correction! A lot of mishaps exist cause one is trying to correct something they deem wrong ;it is their own idiosyncrasies instigated by circumstances and in my reimaged corrections I would imagine it would be more comprehensive in people who once had the same way of thinking. If not the same set of circumstances which require them to change their ideology and become more "corrected" rather than the paper pushing bureaucrats who PhD's their way into this equation, who's empathy is no different from the computerize A.I

Imagine that. Thank you fro your time.

The Re-imaging What does it take by Taji Marshall

What does it take to reimagine something? Depending on the nature of the thing being reimaged, it could take quite a lot, but most things only take some courage and honesty. Be honest about what it is that needs to be reimaged and courageous enough to do what's needed to see it reimaged. Sadly, courage and honesty are in short supply, as they relate to criminal justice reform. So many find the status quo to be a safe harbor in the storm they will cling to no matter what comes.

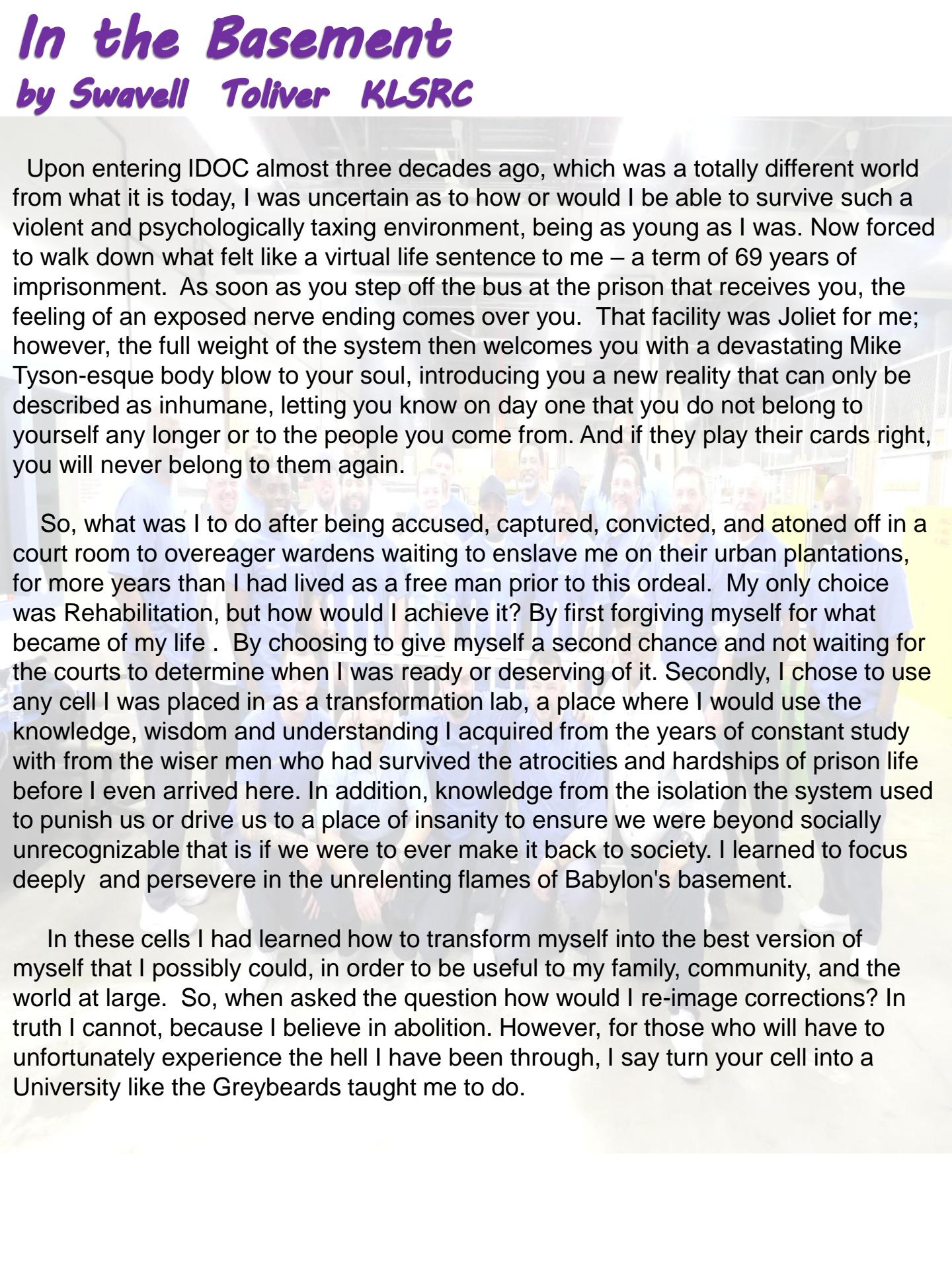
How many citizens fully understand what the state perpetrates in their name, as it relates to the criminal justice system? If speaking with my loved ones is any indication, not many. Is it common knowledge that studies are compiled to prove or disprove a thing, but are rarely followed due to a lack of courage? How many people comprehend the amount of money spent to house an individual for one year, to pay for all of their medical care, and any unexpected eventualities? I was listening to the newly re-elected Speaker of the House, Mike Johnson, and he spoke of making America great again by getting back to fully funding our top priorities, but he never mentioned education. Education is often called the great equalizer, but funding it is rarely spoken about seriously. As a nation, we spend more to prosecute and incarcerate a person than we do to educate a child.

The citizenry of this great nation need to gain the courage to look our government representatives in the eye and demand the truth. Stop looking to be coddled and fed answers that make us feel a desired way. Have the courage to hear the truth, no matter how unpleasant or contrary to your previous beliefs it is. Not only is the current system financially unsustainable, but it is also depriving our nation of a wealth of talent. How many of our children have been lost to the system, only to realize a talent that would provide a service to someone else? In my twenty-five years of incarceration, I have encountered a cornucopia of truly talented people, brothers that could solve mathematical equations, and others that could paint portraits freehanded. There are plumbers, carpenters and every other kind of tradesman currently incarcerated. Is that not a profound waste of the talents provided to our great nation?

If we are going to reimagine the current criminal justice system, we need to be honest about where to start, and in my opinion that is with the educational system. We then need to have the courage to look at those who would cling to the status quo and tell them it is over. We are no longer going to allow you to use fear as a weapon that causes us to do that which is not in our best interest. We will use our God given imaginations to see something better and make it so.

In the Basement

by Swavell Toliver KLSRC



Upon entering IDOC almost three decades ago, which was a totally different world from what it is today, I was uncertain as to how or would I be able to survive such a violent and psychologically taxing environment, being as young as I was. Now forced to walk down what felt like a virtual life sentence to me – a term of 69 years of imprisonment. As soon as you step off the bus at the prison that receives you, the feeling of an exposed nerve ending comes over you. That facility was Joliet for me; however, the full weight of the system then welcomes you with a devastating Mike Tyson-esque body blow to your soul, introducing you a new reality that can only be described as inhumane, letting you know on day one that you do not belong to yourself any longer or to the people you come from. And if they play their cards right, you will never belong to them again.

So, what was I to do after being accused, captured, convicted, and atoned off in a court room to overeager wardens waiting to enslave me on their urban plantations, for more years than I had lived as a free man prior to this ordeal. My only choice was Rehabilitation, but how would I achieve it? By first forgiving myself for what became of my life . By choosing to give myself a second chance and not waiting for the courts to determine when I was ready or deserving of it. Secondly, I chose to use any cell I was placed in as a transformation lab, a place where I would use the knowledge, wisdom and understanding I acquired from the years of constant study with from the wiser men who had survived the atrocities and hardships of prison life before I even arrived here. In addition, knowledge from the isolation the system used to punish us or drive us to a place of insanity to ensure we were beyond socially unrecognizable that is if we were to ever make it back to society. I learned to focus deeply and persevere in the unrelenting flames of Babylon's basement.

In these cells I had learned how to transform myself into the best version of myself that I possibly could, in order to be useful to my family, community, and the world at large. So, when asked the question how would I re-image corrections? In truth I cannot, because I believe in abolition. However, for those who will have to unfortunately experience the hell I have been through, I say turn your cell into a University like the Greybeards taught me to do.

Meet the spirits of the legendary scholars, authors, and artists I met while studying, meditating in the dark until I found myself. Allow God, or your higher self and your ancestors, to guide you to freedom. For me, a re-imagined corrections is the system doing everything that it can to help us change these cells from tombs to transformation labs, for as long as we are forced to be in them. Thank you for your Time.

By Swavell Toliver KLSRC



Adjust to the times

Maurice Jones

I finally made it to East Moline C.C and it is many adjustments I had to make after enduring 13 years (locked behind) doors. Here you are out all day and the adjustment I had to make was sleeping with the cell door unlocked. Yes, I said it, "unlocked". For most of us individuals in custody who have served sentences in Maximum and High Medium Facilities, security is a very high priority, and in that moment, it became evident how institutionalized my thinking had become about things of that nature. Like every other correctional facility, it has its pros-and cons. So now that I am at a Minimum Facility the rules are a bit tight. However, a prison is a prison, and I never heard of a good prison—"So one must adjust to the Times".

Upon arriving at East Moline, I was accepted into the Augustana College Program and had to leave many of my brothers behind, ummah (community) and my C.A.V.E family at Danville C.C. I was already accustomed to the discipline it took to execute my educational goals; however, the APEP institution is really challenging the students through their curriculum, to adopt the mindset of growth in everything they do. I and the other students carry a heavy load on the schoolwork, and we are enduring all that comes with serving time in order to pay our debt to society. For example: dealing with security oppression while maintaining our relationships with our loved ones; trying to navigate our frustrations without the damage that comes with it sometimes. How do you know what form of stress you can handle if you are not put in stressful situations or obstacles aren't placed before you? We have to stay "well adjusted" because there is a bigger play being made; the world will place more difficult challenges before us that we must overcome, so we must be prepared.

In preparation for re-entry, everyone's not so fortunate as to serve a short sentence. Some of us do not have support systems in place. Many men cannot escape the legacy they left behind – having to face people they had wronged, apologies are not being accepted from them, and feelings remain hurt. All of our realities are vastly different; however, sacrifices and choices must be made. In this game of life, when you're dealt a bad hand, the only thing you can do is play it the best way you can.



One of the key motivations that keeps me focused on my goals is my son. There have been plenty of times my son has helped me refrain from responding irrationally. We all cope with things differently, and all we can do is adjust with the times, making the best moves we can and keep it moving. Honestly, I could never make this message solely about me and disregard those behind me. There are 28k people like me enduring the same struggle . The truth of the matter is: the prison environment is not conducive to our growth. Our lives are packed into property boxes, and we are subjected to living in a bathroom with a stranger. The rules are made by people who do not understand prison life; they have no idea about cell etiquette, and they are not subjected to the rules that are enforced.

So given those facts, the only thing you can do is be "Resilient" or fold, and when you fold in prison, you're subjecting yourself to a totally different type of struggle. From me to the prison population, "If you are not accomplishing anything while serving your time, you're in the way; if you're focused on executing your goals, be prepared to adjust with the times, as they often change. Thank you for your time

Maurice Jones

Well wishes!

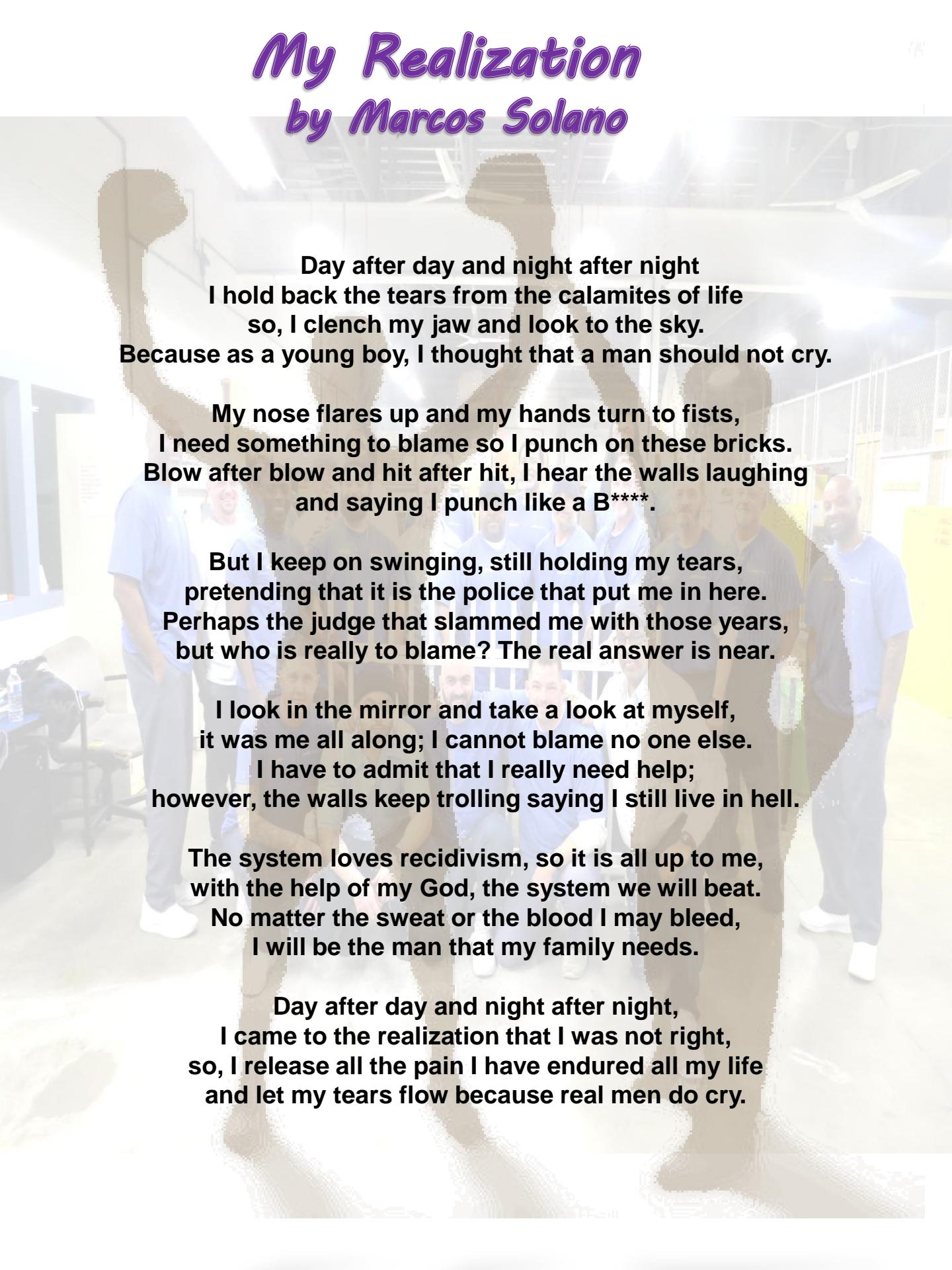
**The editors and staff of
TWO ROADS, Horizons, and
Rotary would like to send
our well wishes to our
beloved brother and senior
editor at large, Mr. Haley.
You are missed, and the
work you put in was not in
vain. Thank you for all, the
knowledge you freely
passed on, and may God
bless you, your family and all
your future endeavors.
Sincerely yours,**



TWO ROADS Senior Editors.

My Realization

by Marcos Solano



Day after day and night after night
I hold back the tears from the calamites of life
so, I clench my jaw and look to the sky.

Because as a young boy, I thought that a man should not cry.

My nose flares up and my hands turn to fists,
I need something to blame so I punch on these bricks.
Blow after blow and hit after hit, I hear the walls laughing
and saying I punch like a B****.

But I keep on swinging, still holding my tears,
pretending that it is the police that put me in here.
Perhaps the judge that slammed me with those years,
but who is really to blame? The real answer is near.

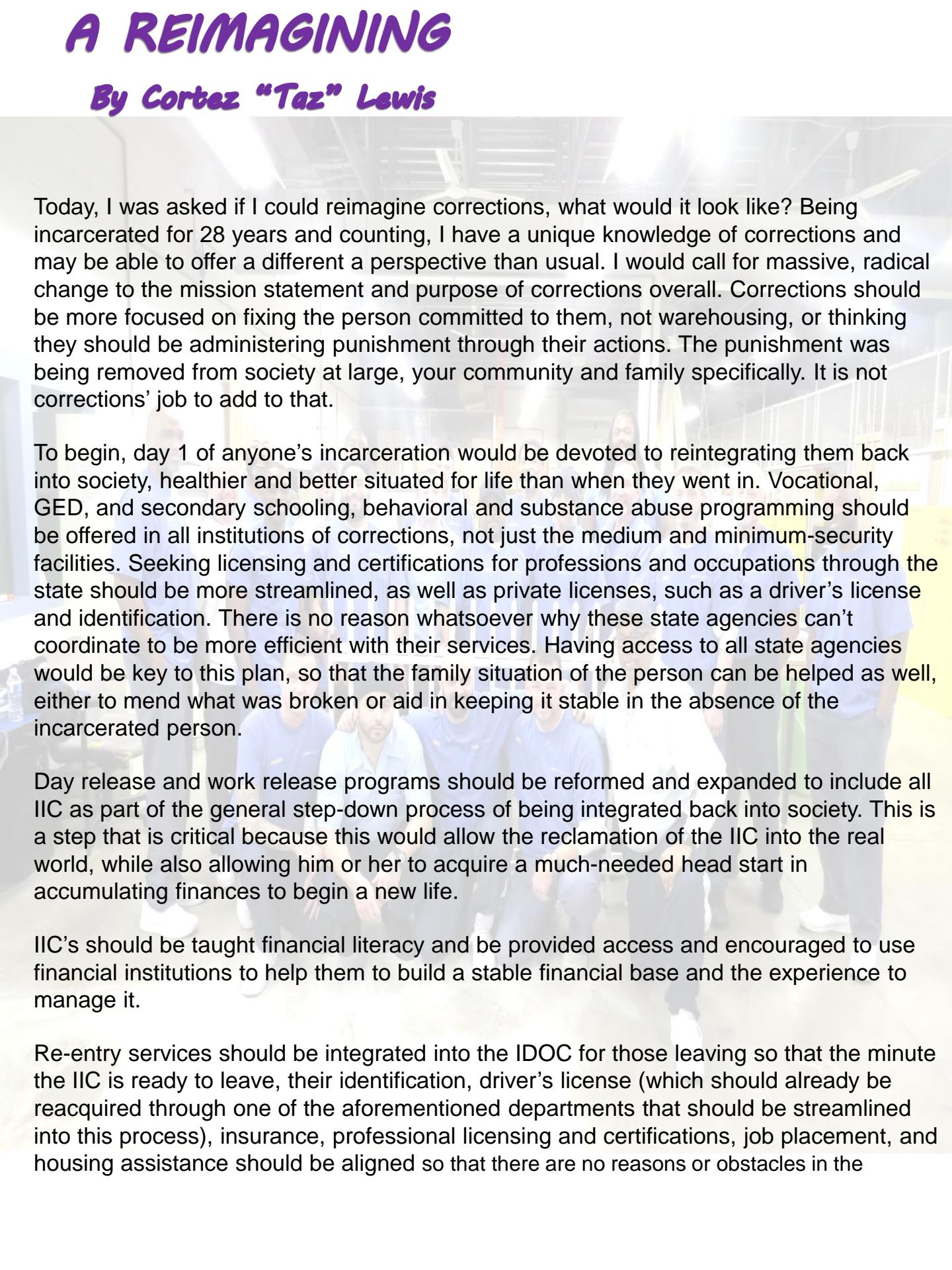
I look in the mirror and take a look at myself,
it was me all along; I cannot blame no one else.
I have to admit that I really need help;
however, the walls keep trolling saying I still live in hell.

The system loves recidivism, so it is all up to me,
with the help of my God, the system we will beat.
No matter the sweat or the blood I may bleed,
I will be the man that my family needs.

Day after day and night after night,
I came to the realization that I was not right,
so, I release all the pain I have endured all my life
and let my tears flow because real men do cry.

A REIMAGINING

By Cortez "Taz" Lewis



Today, I was asked if I could reimagine corrections, what would it look like? Being incarcerated for 28 years and counting, I have a unique knowledge of corrections and may be able to offer a different perspective than usual. I would call for massive, radical change to the mission statement and purpose of corrections overall. Corrections should be more focused on fixing the person committed to them, not warehousing, or thinking they should be administering punishment through their actions. The punishment was being removed from society at large, your community and family specifically. It is not corrections' job to add to that.

To begin, day 1 of anyone's incarceration would be devoted to reintegrating them back into society, healthier and better situated for life than when they went in. Vocational, GED, and secondary schooling, behavioral and substance abuse programming should be offered in all institutions of corrections, not just the medium and minimum-security facilities. Seeking licensing and certifications for professions and occupations through the state should be more streamlined, as well as private licenses, such as a driver's license and identification. There is no reason whatsoever why these state agencies can't coordinate to be more efficient with their services. Having access to all state agencies would be key to this plan, so that the family situation of the person can be helped as well, either to mend what was broken or aid in keeping it stable in the absence of the incarcerated person.

Day release and work release programs should be reformed and expanded to include all IIC as part of the general step-down process of being integrated back into society. This is a step that is critical because this would allow the reclamation of the IIC into the real world, while also allowing him or her to acquire a much-needed head start in accumulating finances to begin a new life.

IIC's should be taught financial literacy and be provided access and encouraged to use financial institutions to help them to build a stable financial base and the experience to manage it.

Re-entry services should be integrated into the IDOC for those leaving so that the minute the IIC is ready to leave, their identification, driver's license (which should already be reacquired through one of the aforementioned departments that should be streamlined into this process), insurance, professional licensing and certifications, job placement, and housing assistance should be aligned so that there are no reasons or obstacles in the

person's way for them not to succeed. Most of the time, a person reoffends because one of these things is missing.

Reading this, some might feel that this may be "too much" to do for a bunch of criminals, but I would counter that way of thinking by reminding them that this is supposed to be the purpose of corrections. According to our state's constitution, DOC's purpose is to restore the offending citizen to "useful citizenship." not punish. Plus, with the amount of money the state is allocating to corrections, which is one of the biggest budgets of all departments, the success/failure ratio is abysmal. If any other company had such a rate, they would go out of business. Knowing this, don't we owe it, not only to the IIC's and their families to do better, but to the people and taxpayers of Illinois as well?

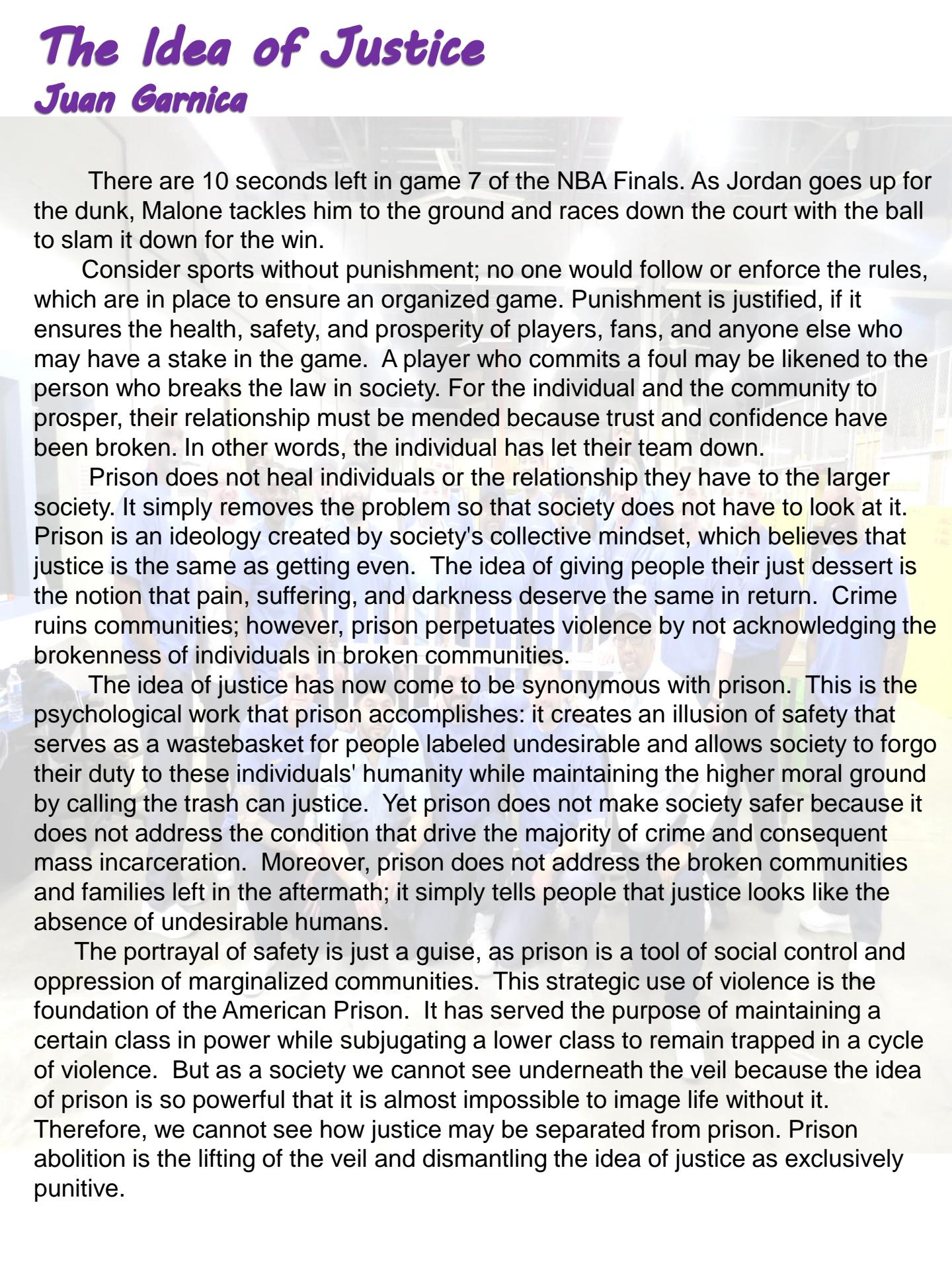
WE CAN DO BETTER!

Thank you for your time
By: Cortez (Taz) Lewis



The Idea of Justice

Juan Garnica



There are 10 seconds left in game 7 of the NBA Finals. As Jordan goes up for the dunk, Malone tackles him to the ground and races down the court with the ball to slam it down for the win.

Consider sports without punishment; no one would follow or enforce the rules, which are in place to ensure an organized game. Punishment is justified, if it ensures the health, safety, and prosperity of players, fans, and anyone else who may have a stake in the game. A player who commits a foul may be likened to the person who breaks the law in society. For the individual and the community to prosper, their relationship must be mended because trust and confidence have been broken. In other words, the individual has let their team down.

Prison does not heal individuals or the relationship they have to the larger society. It simply removes the problem so that society does not have to look at it. Prison is an ideology created by society's collective mindset, which believes that justice is the same as getting even. The idea of giving people their just dessert is the notion that pain, suffering, and darkness deserve the same in return. Crime ruins communities; however, prison perpetuates violence by not acknowledging the brokenness of individuals in broken communities.

The idea of justice has now come to be synonymous with prison. This is the psychological work that prison accomplishes: it creates an illusion of safety that serves as a wastebasket for people labeled undesirable and allows society to forgo their duty to these individuals' humanity while maintaining the higher moral ground by calling the trash can justice. Yet prison does not make society safer because it does not address the condition that drive the majority of crime and consequent mass incarceration. Moreover, prison does not address the broken communities and families left in the aftermath; it simply tells people that justice looks like the absence of undesirable humans.

The portrayal of safety is just a guise, as prison is a tool of social control and oppression of marginalized communities. This strategic use of violence is the foundation of the American Prison. It has served the purpose of maintaining a certain class in power while subjugating a lower class to remain trapped in a cycle of violence. But as a society we cannot see underneath the veil because the idea of prison is so powerful that it is almost impossible to image life without it. Therefore, we cannot see how justice may be separated from prison. Prison abolition is the lifting of the veil and dismantling the idea of justice as exclusively punitive.

Abolitionists maintain that a new idea, a new foundation, is necessary to create a new society because building on the current one is not enough to change or transform our communities and the individuals impacted by this system. The details of what punishment looks like are secondary, and to address the deeper underlying issues in our society, we must be able to acknowledge that punishment in and of itself is not the endgame for what we need to accomplish. Any idea that would change our society needs to be built on the bedrock of our inherent humanity and our relationship to each other . In order to imagine a society where the current realities of prison do not exist, we first need to challenge our idea of justice and realize that prison is not synonymous with any of the ideals of justice we ought to have in this re-imagined society.

Thank you for your Time

Juan Garnica

" I want the finer things in my life, so I hustle, hustle... -50 Cent

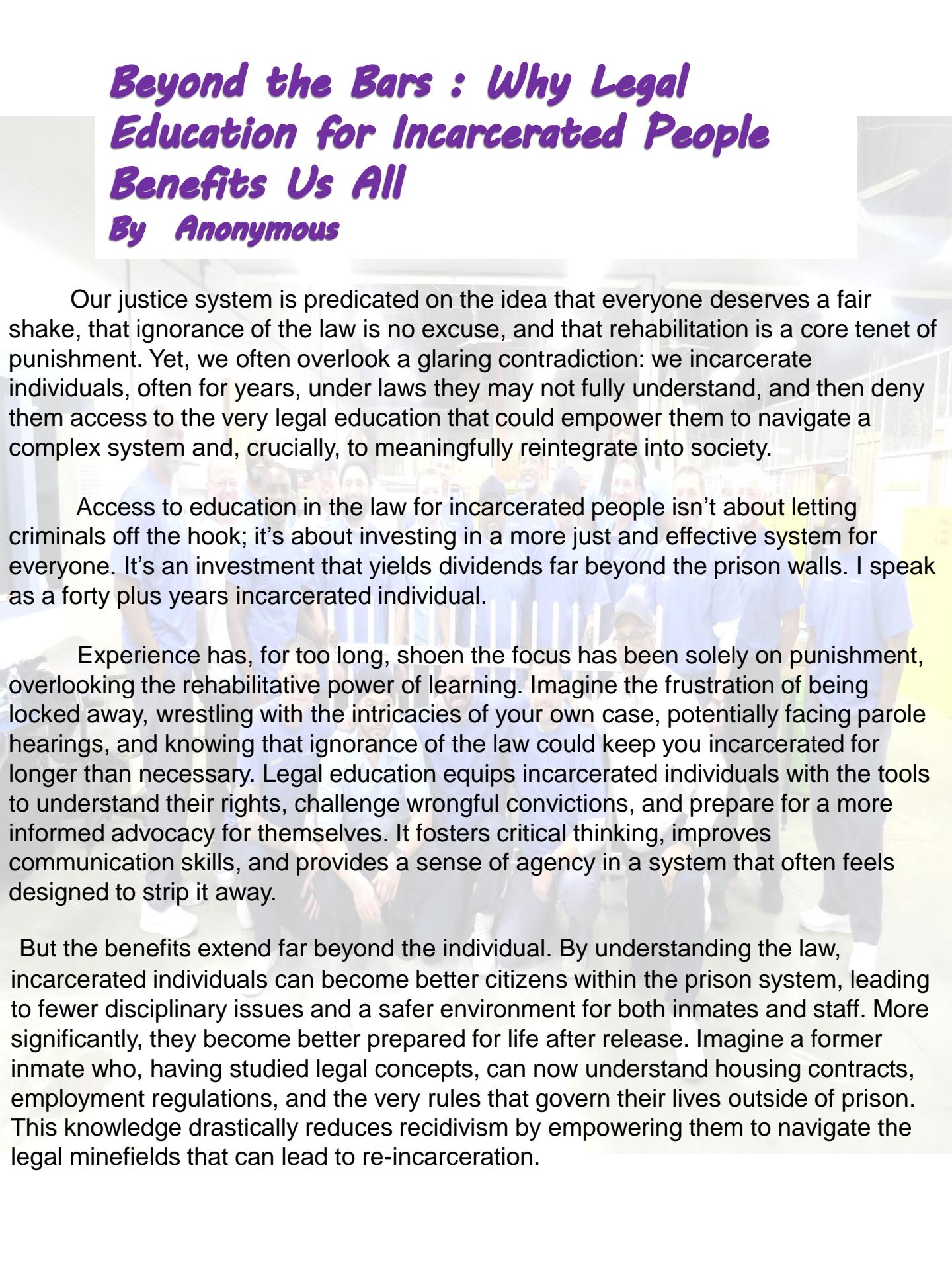
I have been a hustler my whole life. Hustle is a characteristic that drives you to put in the work relentlessly. Coming from the gutter ,the bottom, the trenches, you grind, get grimy, gritty, and you develop the hustler's mentality. Nothing can stop a hustler from handling their business. That hunger you see in a kid posted on the block trying to get it by any means necessary; starving and consumed with the desire to thrive, that's hustle. The hustler's mentality is what gives that kid courage to dream and proclaim that they will make it out. This mindset is what I invest my time in. Prison has not been able to contain the hustler's spirit in me.

Go getters do not waste, or even spend, time; they invest it. The majority of prisoners are desperate to find ways to kill time because their mindset does not contain this idea: **time is the prisoner's greatest resource**. The strongest chain in prison is the mind; the idea that the state of your captivity dictates the value of your time. But time cannot be lost, you cannot eat the meal you missed yesterday any more than you can eat tomorrow's meal. You can only eat, or not eat, right now. Every hustler knows that "time is money" and everybody eats. Prison does not change any of that; it is merely what surrounds you, but hustle is in the heart.

" It's all I'm tryna do, hustle and motivate" - Nipsey Hussle

Beyond the Bars : Why Legal Education for Incarcerated People Benefits Us All

By Anonymous



Our justice system is predicated on the idea that everyone deserves a fair shake, that ignorance of the law is no excuse, and that rehabilitation is a core tenet of punishment. Yet, we often overlook a glaring contradiction: we incarcerate individuals, often for years, under laws they may not fully understand, and then deny them access to the very legal education that could empower them to navigate a complex system and, crucially, to meaningfully reintegrate into society.

Access to education in the law for incarcerated people isn't about letting criminals off the hook; it's about investing in a more just and effective system for everyone. It's an investment that yields dividends far beyond the prison walls. I speak as a forty plus years incarcerated individual.

Experience has, for too long, shown the focus has been solely on punishment, overlooking the rehabilitative power of learning. Imagine the frustration of being locked away, wrestling with the intricacies of your own case, potentially facing parole hearings, and knowing that ignorance of the law could keep you incarcerated for longer than necessary. Legal education equips incarcerated individuals with the tools to understand their rights, challenge wrongful convictions, and prepare for a more informed advocacy for themselves. It fosters critical thinking, improves communication skills, and provides a sense of agency in a system that often feels designed to strip it away.

But the benefits extend far beyond the individual. By understanding the law, incarcerated individuals can become better citizens within the prison system, leading to fewer disciplinary issues and a safer environment for both inmates and staff. More significantly, they become better prepared for life after release. Imagine a former inmate who, having studied legal concepts, can now understand housing contracts, employment regulations, and the very rules that govern their lives outside of prison. This knowledge drastically reduces recidivism by empowering them to navigate the legal minefields that can lead to re-incarceration.

Furthermore, legal education promotes civic engagement. When people understand the law, they are more likely to participate constructively in their communities. They can advocate for positive change, understand their local government, and contribute to a society where justice is truly accessible to all, regardless of background. This isn't about creating a nation of jailhouse lawyers. It's about fostering basic legal literacy. We expect citizens to abide by the laws of the land; shouldn't we at least equip them with the tools to understand them?

Providing access to legal education within prisons can take many forms. It could include law school clinics partnering with correctional facilities, establishing legal resource libraries, or offering courses taught by volunteer legal professionals. These programs, while requiring an initial investment, are ultimately cost-effective, reducing recidivism rates and the financial burden on taxpayers associated with repeated incarcerations.

We often talk about redemption and second chances. Providing legal education to incarcerated individuals is not about offering a free pass but about offering a chance to truly understand the system they're a part of, to become better equipped for their future, and to ultimately contribute positively to society. It's a vital step toward creating a more just, efficient, and ultimately, more humane system of justice for us all. Denying this opportunity is not just a disservice to those behind bars, it's a disservice to our entire community. It's time to look beyond punishment and invest in the power of knowledge – for the benefit of everyone.

*Submitted by
Anonymous*

The logo for Two Roads, featuring the letters 'TJR' in a stylized, blocky font with a drop shadow.

Coming Soon A BAD DECISION OR A MISTAKE

Submissions needed for issue:

Was it a Mistake or a Bad Decision.

We would like to hear from those individuals in custody who had the opportunity to experience something better than the norm, and made a mistake or a bad decision, that set them on a course to return to custody. Tell us your story; please tell it your way no judgments or criticism ·there are lessons to be learned if your story is shared.

“Each One Teach One”

Without staff support:

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

**Outsiders, Staff and
Individuals-In-Custody (WITH
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