

# TWO ROADS

STORIES AND SERVICE



# OUR NEW WORLD

*Honest Talk about Coronavirus and Being our Best*

**pg.6**

## **I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HERE**

Dylan Metzel reflects on his 28 year path through the IDOC and the promise, once lost, he plans to fulfill.

**pg.8**

## **WHY DO YOU DO THE THINGS YOU DO?**

Charles Chew encourages us to reach out, keep our minds active, understand and love each other.

**pg.9**

## **RULING PRINCIPLE**

Trayvon Johnson explores the clarity and peace critical thought can offer during tough times

**pg.11**

## **A CLEAN START**

Andre Ruddock challenges us to create a "Culture of Cleanliness" and find the good in this complicated time.

Cover Art by Nik Kuster



**We Are Stateville**

## PUBLISHER'S LETTER

Our drive to be good men and women, ready and strong for what may come is challenged now by an unseen enemy... Coronavirus (Covid-19). As of the moment of this writing (April 6, 2020) 1.3 million people globally are infected with the disease. 347,384 of these people are Americans. 11,256 are Illinoisans. Scary times, sure, but we are better than Coronavirus.

Our Two Roads staff strive to be Servant Leaders. Now, in this time of challenge, we feel compelled to give you the same honest exploration of the issues of our time and place more than ever.

For this "Corona" edition, we'll bring you stories of strength, some reminders about what matters and an exploration of what happens next.

I've played and coached rugby for years. Rugby is a sport focused on the idea we are all one. Brothers. Sisters. Family. If one of us is tackled to ground and all seems lost a teammate will rise from the crowd to protect us. They'll yell, "with you!" and fling their body over ours to protect us. When one of us is down in life, our rugby family rises up and has our back no matter what. We have a saying

for that service too and it's the same.

"With You."

Incarcerated Citizens. Staff. Two Roads is With You.

**Jim Estes**



## EDITORIAL

### Different Times

I think we can all agree we are living in a different time now. On the Outside, our world is dealing with a crisis no one alive has seen. Our country is at a near standstill.

The Free World is being forced to deal with some of the things many of us have endured during our years of incarceration. Many of the free choices people have made that gave their lives meaning and pleasure have been paused. No taking the kids to Chuck E. Cheese for the afternoon, no walking to the neighborhood bar with friends or working out at the YMCA.

But these are small things. Free people are unable to attend funerals of the people they love. We know this hurt.

I know many of you, like me, ignored much of the Covid-19 talk until it began to affect us personally. Not because we don't care. Because what happens out there, happens out there. We can't be a part of the free world. So, to survive emotionally, we detach. The more we maintain the separation between In Here and Out There, the easier we can do our time. Let everything pass out there, so our time can pass too. But this feels like a different time...I've been locked up for Y2K, the Twin Towers falling, Hurricane Katrina, a Recession and Ferguson. All of these events are significant. They forced themselves on my prison psyche; they shifted my thoughts and mind-state from intensive focus on my own pain to join the wider world's pain and suffering.

continued...

This crisis feels different because I feel like my thoughts matter. Have you noticed the IDOC memos issued during our Covid-19 crisis? They have a different texture than historic memos. The difference lies in our IDOC administration's embrace of a Restorative Justice approach. We are seen as stakeholders, people to be partnered with in order to reach a solution to a problem, rather than throw-away criminals.

Knowing the Department is



embracing a culture based around Restorative Justice principles is encouraging. I'm inching closer to my release (one more calendar to go!) and, even though I'll be able to put this phase of life behind me, I'll also be leaving many good men I've come to know as brothers. There are so many good men and women (shout out to Logan and Decatur!) who I don't know, that travel my same road. If what I've seen thus far continues to grow, if our administration continues to embrace a more reasonable system of corrections. I'll rest easy.

So as we all go through the Coronavirus crisis I ask everyone to take solace in the fact we are all going through it, and for once, we're going through it together. Because of this, we are in a different time.

**Ricky Hamilton**

## "I'm Not Supposed to be Here"

None of us were born to come to prison. Yet here we are. We made a series of bad choices that led to our current destination. Some of us made one, big, bad choice. A very, very few of us are innocent. Yet here we are. No matter the road behind us we're now in the same battle.

We each have our own story. As I put pencil to paper, I face the same anxiety, stress and fear as everyone else. After 28 years in prison I just want to make my outdate in August. I'm terrified I won't get the chance to redeem myself. I've spent so many years of planning and preparing. But I know ... I'm not supposed to be here. I never expected to live this long. I never expected to make it out of prison. I never thought someone like me could come to a place like Kewanee where staff would spend two years investing in me so I would never come back to prison.

All that matter is the here and now. I've been in prison since I was 17 years old. I spent the previous two

years locked up as a juvenile. 30 years in prison. I am 45 years old. I was built for prison. People use that expression a lot. The sad fact is many of us were built for prison. We're survivors. We survived poverty, abuse, broken homes, violence, addiction, a broken criminal justice system and an overcrowded and overwhelmed prison system. We come from some of the worst neighborhoods in Chicago. Or the projects in Peoria. Or Danville's worst trailer park. We were broken as children.

But we are here. And we've got work to do. We were built for prison once, sure, but now we're building ourselves into something better so we can go back to the world. I believe in Divine providence. I'm here for a reason. So are you. I believe this.

continued...

And I'll be damned if I survive everything only to be taken down by some microscopic virus. I have plans for my life. So do you.

I've been in prison so long my only real friends are in prison too. I know people in every joint in the state. Someday soon I'll be sharing my road back to freedom with you in our Two Roads E-Zine. I was blessed to come to Kewanee and I want to pay my blessing forward. I want to share all the programs and organizations we learn about here so you all will have a chance to succeed too. I want you to understand my mistakes and learn from my adversity.

This Covid-19 fight is personal. Stateville was my home for eight years and I have many friends who are still there. Know this, you're in my thoughts and prayers. Y'all my people and y'all my family. Be safe because I want you to read this when I'm

writing from the streets. I'm gonna make it for y'all that put a bug in my ear and helped change my life before I could finish throwing it away. So wash your hands, keep your distance as best you can. Cover your mouth and play your part. Everyone of us around the state needs to play our part. We'll survive this together because we're not supposed to be here.

### **Dylan Metzel**



## Ruling Principle

"Pain is either a pain to our body or our soul. The soul knows this pain as anger, sadness, anxiety. But our soul has the power to maintain its own serenity and not think of pain as powerful. Our judgement lies within us and no pain can enter unless we allow it."

-Marcus Aurelius

We have control over our thoughts. At first glance this seems obvious, but it's not just our thoughts we control. We also control our perceptions of our thoughts.

Marcus Aurelius once said, "our worries come only from the opinion that is within." When we understand this we experience relief. At this point feelings of anger, sadness, frustration no longer hold force in our "ruling principle". We realize they were false values and we let them go.

In one of my Kewanee Critical Thinking Groups we discussed the theory of Fair World Fallacies. Fair World Fallacy means good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. A Stoic Philosopher would say good and bad things happen equally to both good and bad people. The reality is... things happen. We can see them more clearly and handle them better if we don't attach values like "I was owed something better" or "This or that 'should' have happened."

In the latter years of my incarceration I've become better at circumnavigating the pitfalls of imprisonment because I have removed all values and feelings linked to the experience. Instead, I think rationally. I'm here now, so what can I do to better myself and my circumstances?

continued...



I earned three degrees.  
I associate with people whose  
ethos, logos and pathos I  
respect. I wrote an essay and  
consequently, earned the  
opportunity to come to  
Kewanee. By controlling my  
ruling principle, I've controlled  
my experience.

If we are to control our  
thoughts we must eliminate our  
perceptions. They serve only in  
distorting the truth, thus

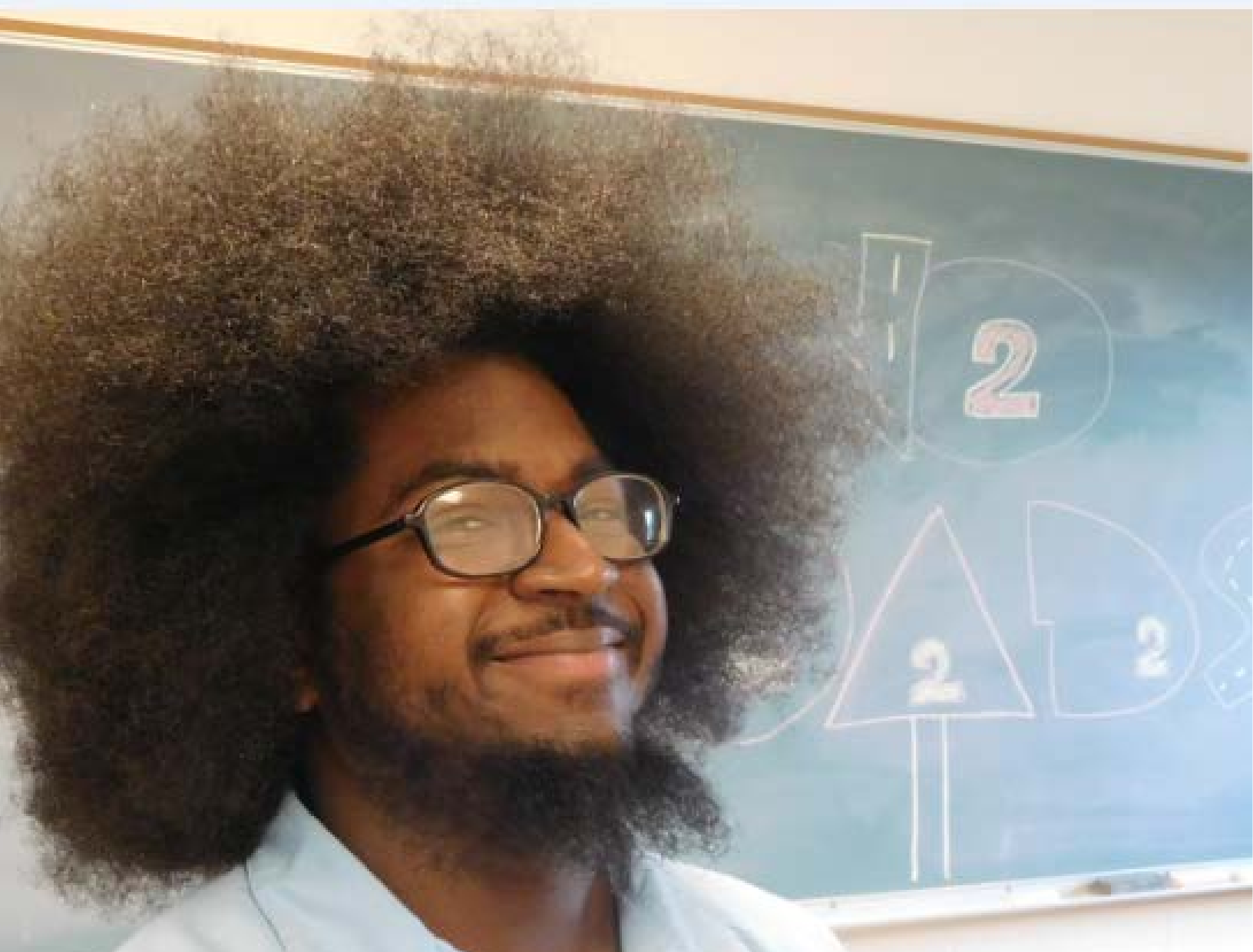
causing harm. Experiences are  
neither good nor bad. Good or  
bad is the value we attach to a  
situation. Control the mind,  
control the situation.

### **Travor Johnson**

*"Take away thy opinion and there  
is taken away the complaint, 'I  
have been harmed.' Take away  
the complaint, 'I have been  
harmed' and the harm is taken  
away."*

-Marcus Aurelius, Meditations





The past few weeks we've been on lockdown due to the Covid-19 crisis. I ask that you use the time in your cell to connect with your people. Send them letters. My goal is to stimulate my brain and I want to encourage and support you to do the same. Map out your long term plans for happier ideas and times. We all have vulnerable times in our lives and trust was needed to make things work. The greatest feeling is knowing you can trust someone. I've talked to many different people in my time who come from different traditions and professions. I always ask the same question. "Why do you do the things you do in your life?"

I know all saints have pasts and all sinners have futures. None of us is this one thing. We are complex. And we will change. So support each other's growth. We all want to do the right thing. Let these thoughts infuse your mentality and build your inner strength. I wish you nothing but understanding and love in your life.

**Charles Chew**

## **A Clean Start**

The Coronavirus pandemic has given us all some down-time. I've been using the time to binge watch the news so as to get my mind around the gravity of the situation. With what we're being told, I have to admit I am very uneasy.

I use the word "uneasy" rather than "afraid" because this is not the time to be gripped by fear.

Instead, I'm experiencing an increased awareness of our changing time.

Coronavirus is changing human society at every level, in obvious and not so obvious ways. What grips my attention is the fact that the rushing changes don't only bring death and despair, they also bring life and boundless opportunities to those able to see the occasion and adapt.

With this mindset, I wonder what changes will surface in the IDOC. Of the many possibilities, one of my hopes is that the pandemic guides the IDOC toward a policy

of overall cleanliness akin to a medical facility.

I've been shuffled around the state for over 25 years and I've experienced the disturbing reality of both staff and inmates having low expectations regarding cleanliness. The shower areas, inmate restrooms, sheets, blankets and mattresses in some of my historic facilities were simply disgusting.

Can you imagine a reality in which a sincere investment is made in creating and maintaining a cleanliness culture in all IDOC facilities?

All of our lives are endangered by an invisible monster that doesn't recognize human labels. If we can unite to defeat Covid-19 maybe we can maintain the momentum to do away with all bacterial and viral infections. Maybe we can create a cleanliness culture that ranks second in the IDOC only to security.

**Andre Ruddock**



"Coronavirus is changing human society at every level, in obvious and not so obvious ways. What grips my attention is the fact that the rushing changes don't only bring death and despair, they also bring life and boundless opportunities to those able to see the occasion and adapt. "

## Be Civilized

Years ago, anthropologist Margaret Mead was asked by a student what she considered to be the first sign of civilization in a culture. The student expected Mead to talk about fishhooks or clay pots or grinding stones. But no. Mead said the first sign of civilization in an ancient culture was a femur (thighbone) that had been broken and then healed. Mead explained that in the animal kingdom, if you break your leg, you die. You cannot run from danger, get to the river for a drink

or hunt for food. You are meat for prowling beasts. No animal survives a broken leg long enough for the bone to heal. A broken femur that has healed is evidence someone has taken time to stay with the one who fell, has bound up the wound, has carried the person to safety and has tended the person through recovery. Helping someone else through difficulty is where civilization starts, Mead said. We are at our best when we serve others.

Be civilized.



## Time to Reflect

Brothers and sisters currently imprisoned, I know a lot of people are telling you cliches like, "keep your head up" and "we're going through the same thing in the world." Please try not to take offense. As hard as they might want to, no one, not even our closest friends and family can wholeheartedly understand the mental and emotional anguish and strain we feel unless they've been on a lockdown while being locked up.

Knowing this, I suggest every single one of you reflect on how to use this time to shape your future.

If you're blessed enough to have some sort of staff or officer support, great. If not, take the initiative and read, write and workout in your cell to combat this broken moment in our system. The only real way we can affect change is to

do it ourselves. I sincerely hope this lockdown has magnified your status and provoked you to fix it. In solidarity,

**Jacob "Jake" McCalester**



We are  
bed-ridden, bored out of our minds, book-reading  
life forms.

Greetings  
from a world within a world.  
I'm trying to cope but am presently driven bonkers  
because of the quarantine.

At first I felt punished.

I was pissed and confused.

With nothing else to do I turned to my tv.

To my surprise, Coronavirus information was on every channel. I learned  
more about the virus and now I understand.

I will try to be healthy.

The challenge though, is...

that the sanity I try so hard to maintain is being tested.

I read, stretch, workout and see all of humanity unifying to fight the virus.

Coronavirus doesn't care if you're on the left or right, inmate or CO. We  
are together in this.

That matters.

I want to thank the staff  
at all of the prisons  
across Illinois for doing  
their best to keep us safe.

Love,  
Armand Isaac



## **Build**

How are the incarcerated men and women of the State of Illinois handling the Coronavirus Pandemic? If asked we would offer many responses, but most of us would say we are stressed. We are stressed with concern for our family and friends. There is a theme that can be traced between the increased risk of our African-American population to succumb to the virus due to underlying medical conditions and the increased risk of our population to recidivate and return to prison. This theme traces back to its root cause, poverty.

These are big problems, but we face them as individual people, too. We who are incarcerated must ask ourselves, how do we reduce stress, how do we use our time and what plans are we making so we overcome poverty and don't recidivate?

For me service to others has been the tool in my toolbox to manage stress and build a successful future. Kewanee has allowed us to create inmate-led study groups. One we entitle "TREGO" (Trade-Ready Employable Opportunity). TREGO pursues training in building trades correspondence courses. Recently we completed Certianteed Roofing Certification and for those who wish to pursue this license, check into the "Certificate for Relief from Disabilities" from the County Court of your incarceration.

There's a saying that stays with me, "If you build a man a house, he will acquire a mortgage for his house. But if you teach him to build a house, he will acquire the skill of enterprise and build many houses".

### **Walter Brown**

TREGO Facilitator

\*For the free study course  
with Certianteed, write:

Certianteed

272 Broadhead Rd., Suite 100

Bethlehem, PA 18017





# **Coping with the Lockdown**

Before I begin let me explain why I feel qualified to speak on this subject. I have spent the last 28 years sitting in some of the most restricted prisons in Illinois. I've spent time in all of our maximum security prisons. Before I learned to maneuver under the stress of restricted movement I found myself on the losing side of battles that resulted in me wasting six years of my life in segregation. I hope some of the lessons I learned will keep you from making the same mistakes I did. We're all in this together so good luck and stay safe.

## **1.) Create a Schedule and Routines**

It's been my experience that sticking to a routine and having structure in your day will help keep things "normal". Structure your sleep. Too much or too little sleep may be an indication you're succumbing to depression. Resist this. The purpose of keeping a "normal" schedule is to counteract that natural reaction to being confined to such a small space. A schedule also helps you prioritize the most important things in your life so you can ensure they continue to support your well-being. Include structured time to work out, meditate, play games with your cellie, read a book, draw, write letters. These choices are power. This is your power in a time and place where you need to have some authority over your life.

## **2.) Communication**

You share communal space with one or more cellmates. Your time and space needs are no more, or less, important than theirs. We all have needs and your time will go so much more smoothly if you're able to assertively communicate your needs with each other. Keep your cellie in the loop and get their input. They may want to join in some of your endeavors. I've found my ability to communicate has saved me from so many problems over the years. You are living in very close proximity with another human being who is going through their own stress, anxiety and pain. It's not fair to take your problems out on them.

continued...

# **Coping with the Lockdown**

## **3.) Hygiene**

In this dangerous climate hygiene is even more important than usual to keep us safe. Covid-19 is easily spread and can survive on some surfaces for multiple days. You aren't alone in this pandemic so get your trifling behind at that sink and wash up daily. Change your clothes and wash the dirty ones even if you have to do it by hand. Wash your hands repeatedly through the day. Look, no one can make another grown person clean up after themselves if they don't want to. Try to communicate your concerns in an assertive way that doesn't make your cellmate feel defensive.

On a side note, it's been my experience that when I look in the mirror and see a presentable, neat, well-groomed person staring back at me I feel better about myself. Its not about impressing others or caring what other cons think. It's hard to feel like a boss if I look like a scrub. That's all I'm saying.

## **4.) Work-out, stretch, do Yoga**

Do something! We all know prison limits our movement, especially during lockdown, but you have a vested interest in your own health. I want to make up for all the time I lost in prison so my health is important to me. Exercise is not only great for you long-term, but it also releases endorphins, which make you feel amazing after a good workout.

## **5.) Write**

This is a scary time for everyone. If you are blessed enough to have someone in your corner you should reach out to them and let them now you're ok. Let them now how much they mean to you. For those who've lost their support system consider writing something else. Writing is cathartic, it allows you to express things and process them emotionally. Write a song, verse or poem. Keep a journal or write a story. You can even write letters you know you'll never send to get

continued...

## **Coping with the Lockdown**

closure. That helps you let go of any anger, guilt or grief you may feel regarding your family, partner or even your victim. Writing for Two Roads has helped me immensely.

### **6.) Pray, do Religious Study or Meditate**

Prayer and meditation help me focus on the good things in life. Sometimes it's easy to get caught up in negativity, but we can be grateful for the fact we have so many more positive things in our life.

### **7.) Read a Book or listen to something positive**

If you have a tablet there are a ton of positive self-help books. If you're interested in learning a new language or other new skills check out T.I.M.E. audio or Kieran Ball 3 minute Spanish. T.I.M.E. audio can teach us everything from flipping houses to religious studies. There all kinds of great lectures, speeches and books on every topic imaginable on the streaming service. If you don't have one there are books everywhere in prison waiting for you to discover them. Make the effort. You're worth it.

### **8.) Know Yourself**

If you feel overwhelmed by the stress, anxiety or depression associated with being locked down you need to talk to someone. Anyone can feel overwhelmed. Sometimes talking to a cellmate or neighbor is enough but don't be afraid to turn to a mental health professional. There's no shame in needing help sometimes. Drop a request slip. Let them help you.

**Dylan Metzel**

## Kewanee LSRC Hunting for Hearts

Kewanee LSRC is hurting from Coronavirus. We have 3 staff and 0 incarcerated citizens positive with Covid-19. Our infected staff are experiencing varying degrees of distress from their infections. We're rallying to support them by creating our very own Hunting for Hearts campaign. AWO Carothers and Educator Jessica Nichols launched the campaign, Carpenter Chris Moroski crafted the hearts and staff from all walks at Kewanee have used their artistic skills to make some meaningful hearts. Psychologist Nik Kuster lent his colossal talent to create this "American Traditional Tattoo" styled sign.

Kewanee is with you!

