

Cover Art by Jamal Bakr, Karen McCarron, and Alann Vega

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Supreme Peace! Welcome to a new edition of *Feather Bricks* where myself, cohort brother Tim, and Cicero Sosa - who has recently become an alum to North Park - get together to create this Aug/Sept issue. We wanted to highlight education and its importance to whomever it impacts.

We also decided to bring light to a person and a story behind how this educational space here at Stateville came about. We hope that this issue of *Feather Bricks* inspires and strengthens the importance of information. Education is a life's journey, which means that it does not require a brick and mortar space to learn - life is our educational space; take advantage. -Peter "Justice" Lawrence

Hey Justice and Sosa, It's an honor to be co-editing this issue of *Feather Bricks* with you guys. When I came up with the idea of getting as many submissions as possible, I was skeptical that people would want to write about education. I imagined we would have 2 or 3 essays (because you can always count on Scott and Thomas 😊) and a very depressing issue. Thankfully, we received a bunch of submissions, and we won't go down as the worst co-editors ever.

Now, to those of you who submitted their education story, "Thank You!" We received so many that we weren't able to include them all. They were all great, and I think the fact that we got so many is a testament to how powerful education truly is.

Lastly, although this issue is about education, I wanted it to be fun too. So if you're into riddles and puzzles, check out the ones I've included. Let me know if you like them and I'll try to put them in here regularly. Enjoy! -Tim

Shout out to Tim and Justice: thanks for working with me! A few months ago I walked into E-House and was surprised to see couches, chairs, tables, and a white board. This made me reflect back to how E-house used to be, which suffered from a range of bad choices that fed the chaos daily. Later that morning school was let out, and we all filed on the walk waiting for the two other cell houses of students to join us. As all the students came together, I was amazed to see close to 80 men on their way to the educational building--something I would've never imagined 10 years prior. In that moment I became conscious of the power of education in my peers that I hadn't experienced before. I witnessed excitement from new students and listened to fruitful conversations that were inspiring. Someone once told me education's root word is "educare" which means "to draw out" and "educere," "to lead forth." I know students here at Stateville who aspire to be psychologists, educators, and writers, to name a few. This is proof that the seeds of knowledge create possibilities and nudge us forward toward a higher sense of purpose. With that said, I thought it would be cool to ask incarcerated men and women to write on the power of education in their lives.

With all the positivity that is going on, we still have some issues. So before I go I want to give everyone something to think about. It is no secret that some old mentalities have been carried into different educational spaces, and if we're not careful we'll continue to build in a way that highlights the greatest, not only amongst ourselves, but to society that deems it ok to strip us of our humanity and throw us away. We're a part of institutions that are helping us walk into new identities where old mentalities don't fit. It's sort of similar to Paul who appealed to the Colossians to stop being slaves to their own human nature with its practices with a hope of conforming to the image of God, and in that identity there is no separation (Colossians 3:5-12). Being educated is what we're striving for, which should make us better as individuals, and more righteous as a collective. Let's not allow our knowledge to be poisoned by arrogance. In closing, the spaces that have been created are ours; let's honor them. -Sosa



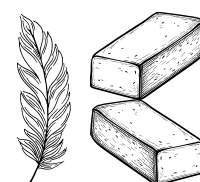
Peter "Justice" Lawrence



Tim Giles



Sherron "Sosa" Dillon



WRITE ON!



A VISION FOR THE FUTURE: by **EFA LAURA COSTABILE**

The future of education
is not shaped
by opportunity alone.

Opportunities to participate
in the academic process need to be
available. Each individual participating
in the academic process needs to be an active
participant because You are the future of not
only your education path, but the future of each
and every academic colleague walking beside you.

In the bigger picture,
as you actively participate in
your pursuit of knowledge

through achieving goals, meeting benchmarks,
and facing challenges, you are influencing
everyone you interact with outside of the
classroom day in and day out. Traditional
learning in the classroom carries over into
everyone's day-to-day life because, as we all
know, everyone is a lifelong learner.
You need to realize how your active
participation in the academic process
impacts those around
you as you focus on your own future
and goals. You may be the one
person that someone needs
to shine a light on
their path,
whether or
not they
are
a
traditional
learner in
the
classroom.

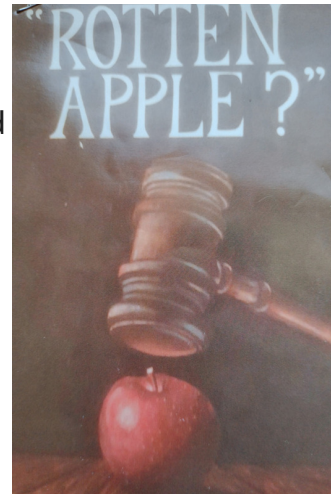
The Power of Education

We Are Not Rotten Apples

Rotten Apple...This term has been used quite often throughout history to describe a person that is irredeemable, unrehabilitatable, or just plain evil. Mostly, this term has been used to describe children who get into trouble and had the book thrown at them by the justice system.

The question is....is a child truly rotten? How can one tell this? Because of their actions? Aren't a child's actions a reflection of what they see around them? So, is it the child who is rotten or the world in which they live?

I was once thought to be one of these so-called "Rotten Apples," even though there was clearly something wrong in the world I was raised in. At 17, I was convicted and sentenced to 60 years. Essentially, I was thrown away because I was deemed, "Rotten."



Once I entered prison, I was determined to prove the system wrong, that I wasn't rotten. My only way to do this was to keep my nose clean and to educate myself. This education began with my quest to earn my GED. The education I have received from that one small step reaches far beyond just the act of earning my GED. The real education came from fellowshiping with other brothers who were like-minded. They, too, were determined to make positive change in their lives, and from that is where the real change began.

After earning my GED, the education continued. I enrolled into Barber College, and my life changed forever. The education I was exposed to in Barber College literally SAVED MY LIFE. It was there I found my purpose. I found how important a barber is to his community and how positive and meaningful being a barber is.

During my time in Barber College, I was assigned to work as the barber in HCU here at Stateville, and it was then I truly learned how meaningful being a barber can be. You see, many of the men in HCU are terminal, or at least they were then. I'll never forget my first day. I walked in with my box and walked down the hall, and one by one the men came to their windows asking me if I was the barber. They were all in rough shape. It was so gloomy. So one by one, the entire day I was able to cut 13 guys. And after each cut, I could see their spirits lifted and physical change in their attitude. Just that simple act of service, sitting them in my chair, asking them what they wanted...it made them feel human again. I was able to brighten their otherwise dark day, even if it was only for 30 or so minutes. This was my education, my "AH HA!" moment. This is where I found my purpose, that I was NOT a Rotten Apple. I threw my entire existence into being a barber after that, and it changed my life.

Today I am no longer serving 60 years, solely because of this education. I was blessed enough to be resentenced in 2022, and it was my education and becoming a barber that was the deciding reason I will walk out of prison in just a short time from now. And when that happens, my path, my purpose, is clear.

So who is the Rotten Apple? The only way to tell is to offer REAL SUBSTANTIVE education. The ones who are just lost, grasping for a lifeline to change, they will grab it and pull themselves up. It's proven that educating people works. Whether it's through college degrees or by learning a trade, nearly all who truly honestly participate in education change positively.

The powers that be know this. They have the info, the stats that back up that education works. However, each year, zero dollars are budgeted within IDOC for post-secondary education. Why? Because we are seen as lost causes...Rotten Apples.

It is up to us to prove them wrong. WE ARE NOT ROTTEN APPLES.



The Power of Education



By Peter "Justice" Lawrence

I once heard a young guy say, "How could you judge my choices without first knowing my options?" This was a powerful statement because it spoke on a short vision predicated on limited exposure and information. Let's envision this young man's options and his lived experience for a second. He's a young black male living on the westside of Chicago (the most segregated city in America), no father, and mother on drugs. Let's take a closer look: he gets up to leave out for school every morning with an empty stomach and navigate his way to school. Can you see him walking past drug spots? How many prostitutes did he encounter on his way to school? Are guys hanging out pressuring him to join allegiance to whatever organization they represent?

This young kid walks inside a dilapidated building called school with antiquated books, a space that is poorly funded. He's reading stories in his history books of his ancestors as slaves-nothing more. His teachers are underfunded without a clue to his lived experience, nor the essence of his behavioral issues through trauma. So, ask yourself, could this kid see beyond his circumstances? Yes! This story mirrors some of our lived experience in one way or the other and may have played a role in a poor choice. But that poor choice or humble beginning doesn't define us; education is always a path to be chosen to expand your options. I'm a living example of choosing education despite making poor choices. I encourage you to look beyond your past and current circumstance and educate yourself. I decided to turn incarceration into a center of higher learning by earning my GED, becoming a registered barber, I am two years away from receiving my master's degree, and I read books like how we eat these cheap burritos.



By Peter Lawrence, Jr

Education is one of the most important things to have in life. A devoted individual does not always need a degree to be educated. On the other hand, having a college degree or some kind of trade will open a significant amount of doors for individuals who wish to excel in a certain career path. For example, individuals who would like to pursue a specific career such as accounting, biology, coding, would need basic education in these fields to get basic knowledge needed for these fields. Simply having an education like a degree can result in people automatically trusting in that individual's word in a specific field just because they spent years studying in that specific field.

In other words, having a substantial amount of background knowledge can also aid in putting a person in a different situation because of the experience the individual may have. Would you feel comfortable having a person expressing that he's a doctor observe you for any underlying biomedical conditions? How about would you like an individual with no educational background to express to you how imperative it is for you to make a 10% down payment on a house when you only need 3%? It's important to be a master in your specific field of study because these individuals have the paperwork and the knowledge proving they know what they are speaking about. Education is important because you would want to know the ins and outs of a certain field, not just the basic information.

In conclusion, having an education is very much imperative in this present period because of the opportunity it brings. Education coupled with hard work brings infinite opportunities. Always be educated in everything you wish to pursue in life.

-Roosevelt University Graduate 2022





The Power of Education

By Tim Giles

I believe the greatest power that education has is its ability to transform. For those of us at Stateville, all we have to do is look around to see these transformations taking place. Just a few years ago, Stateville was a maximum security prison full of individuals the courts deemed incorrigible, but now it's a multi-level facility full of students. School is no longer the first thing to get cancelled. In fact, there are days when school is the only privilege that is allowed. Individuals in custody and the administration are putting an emphasis on education.

Having the college programs here have given everyone something to strive for. Those in the programs are working towards their degrees, and those in ABE and GED are trying to attain the level needed in order to move on to the next step in their educational journey. When we go to the dining hall before school there are guys huddled around the tables working furiously to get their homework done. Even the conversations have changed; now it's not uncommon to hear people discussing the resources for their research papers and when those papers are due.

Probably my favorite change that education has brought to Stateville is the implementation of peer tutors. It started about five years ago with a "Tutoring Writing" class in which students in the North Park program were trained to assist others with their writing. Their assistance wasn't limited to other North Park students; the writing tutors were (and still are) available to everyone, regardless of the program they're in and the type of writing they are doing. Since then, the peer tutoring has grown exponentially. Now, in addition to the writing tutors, there are classes on grammar and punctuation, essay writing, fiction writing, financial awareness, and ABE and GED math, among others. It's amazing seeing incarcerated individuals teach other incarcerated individuals. This place is no longer every man for himself; now, it's no man left behind. And that's because of the power education has to change us and transform us into the best versions of ourselves.



By Katrina Giles

Growing up, I always loved to learn. Despite my circumstances, I've kept a passion for school/education. I used to get pretty discouraged because every time I applied for an educational program at Logan, I was told, "Due to your time, you're on the waiting list." But 2023 must be the year of opportunities because I put in for 2 different educational programs here, and I got into both! One was a pilot course for P+NAP, which I've already completed, and the other is Defy Ventures. The growth I've seen in myself means just as much to me as the material I'm learning. I wake up with a purpose, I work on myself in the areas I'm not strong in, and I venture out of my comfort zone more often. It's amazing what the power of education can do. I would love to see everyone get the opportunity to get an education. When I was young, I went to school for my parents. Now, I go for myself. Yes, at the end of the day, I want my family to be proud of me, but I want to be proud of me as well.

- Logan Correctional Center





Meet your Stateville Chaplains

Under the divine leadership of newly installed Senior Chaplain Dr. Damien Davis and Junior Chaplain Megan Terry, there have been some groundbreaking programs implemented at Stateville Correctional Center.

First, there is the Pastoral Peer Mentorship Program. This program is formatted to help individuals in custody spiritually, mentally, and emotionally, to allow a safe space for individuals to come and converse with the Chaplains and one or two of their peers, to receive spiritual guidance, and is ultimately a safe space to vent, reflect, find solace and just be able to “breathe” and talk about issues that affect them. So far, this program is conducted by two North Park Alumni: William T. Jones and Edward Brown.

Under the tutelage of these Chaplains, many individuals in custody have been afforded the opportunity to grow. These Chaplains have opened the Chapel to many programs such as P-NAP Prison Neighborhood Art Project, DePaul Think Tanks, Healing Beyond Harm, Pastoral Mentorship Zoom Class, and a gathering for all Faiths to come together and commune with one another.

The newest up and coming project of Chaplain Terry is to develop an Inter-Faith Community Group, where in the future those who wish to can come together and learn, beside the Chaplains and their peers, lessons from all faiths.

Chaplain Terry opened the chapel to two North Park Graduates, Elton Williams and Steven Ramirez, in order to complete a mural project and to surprise the 2023 graduating class of North Park School of Restorative Arts. Chaplain Terry has no issue opening the Chapel to both religious and non-religious programs so that Individuals can be PRODUCTIVE and not Destructive.

Chaplains Dr. Davis, Terry, and former Chaplain Ivan Miller visit the Infirmary at Stateville to pray for and over those in hospice care, with hospice attendant William T. Jones, especially with those under hospice care that may not have family members.

The Chaplains are in the business of developing programs such as the “Stateville House of Prayer-Pastoral Mentorship” Zoom class, taught by Apostle Jonathan Hall Sr. and Pastor Johnathan Hall Jr. (AKA Pastor JNote). This is a Christian-based Mentorship Program that is open to those of all faiths.

Chaplain Dr. Davis held classes during Black History Month, and both Chaplains hold weekly Chaplain groups with those in restrictive housing. Chaplain Terry even sends those in restrictive housing puzzles such as Sudoku, crosswords or word searches, in hope to keep their minds productive.

In closing, The Lord put together a great team to administer His word in Stateville Correctional Center.

P.S. Chaplain Terry would also would like to add a shout out to the North Park SRA Graduating Class of 2023: “To the NPTS Class of 2023, I want to say a job well done, you have MASTERED a program that will not only change your life but the lives of all those around you here at Stateville CC and in the world outside these walls. I regretfully was not able to attend the graduation due to a family emergency, but I was there with you in Spirit and so grateful to have been apart of your surprise mural. Keep on being productive and great Men of Valor!”

P.P.S. Feather Bricks Editors' Note: We <3 our Chaplains!



A BLAST FROM THE PAST: INTERVIEW

WITH FORMER CHAPLAIN

BISHOP ADAMSON



FB Editor: I remember being in your Apostolic class in 2006 and you said that you believed Stateville could be an educational space. What would that have looked like to you back then?

Bishop Adamson: I started out as a Chaplain in 1983 at the Kane County Jail. In 2003 I had been in the Chief Chaplain's Office for 8 years over the State with IDOC. Politics changed and Blago became governor. Over the next five months as I was being stepped down, I could feel it coming. I was told I was still the Chief Chaplain, but I was moved from office to office until I was placed at Stateville and removed from the Chief Chaplains' Office. Once at Stateville I was then finally told that I was needed there since the Senior Chaplain was struggling with health issues and within a short time of me being there, he died. At that time the other Chaplain was out on leave. That left me alone for the next nine months trying to figure out what was happening at Stateville. There were only 13 religious programs and 100 religious volunteers. I was kind of stunned when I realized there was no real, effective evidenced based programming other than the very few religions represented. I began to ask God; "what am I supposed to do here?" The second thing I asked God was "why did you bring me to the Chief Chaplains office, and not bring me through?" A year later I heard Him say in my spirit; "How do you know I didn't bring you through and brought you to Stateville?" I then understood that bringing hope and having a future for the men trapped in this prison was the mission. I increased programming but the staff at the time was upset with me for doing it. I had my tricks and just kept adding programs under the radar that I convinced some volunteers to create. After a few years I felt like God was telling me to focus on education. What it looked like in my head was a vision of men discussing various topics like science, physics, philosophy, religion, etc., in the chow halls, yards and the cell houses. I got a call from a retired nun from New York who was looking to volunteer, and I asked her what she could do. She said she had taught a few classes at Sing Sing, and that triggered me to start. She taught a few classes and then moved so I asked volunteer Lori Wilbert if she would take it on. She said yes and so began my vision of the Long Term Offender Program. The goal was to create programs that would enable men to leave and be prepared for society. In the beginning I insisted that the students write a 10-page thesis at the conclusion of the class. I wasn't sure if anyone would carry through but low and behold, they did. That sent me on a mission to reach out to colleges and universities to see if any professors would be interested in volunteering by teaching exactly what they taught at their institution.

Feather Bricks Editor: For those that don't know, can you talk about the first educators you collaborated with and how that conversation went? Was there a lot of pushback from the administration in trying to bring more educational opportunities to Stateville?

Bishop Adamson: DePaul University was the first university to catch the vision. They had a unique program that brought students from the university to the prison and combined them with men from inside to be taught together in a classroom. I remember trying to explain it to the administration and was stopped and asked, Chaplain, you mean you want to bring 18-20 something girls into this prison and put them in a class with our men? It took me about 6-8 months of tenacious persistence to finally get the go ahead; ("but if anything happens" ...) Security was on high alert and thought I was insane. The first class went smoothly with no issues, and it was go time for me from there. I thought to myself this is kind of crazy, but that led me to a system that eventually had 27 colleges and universities coming in with around 3500 volunteers at the time. Once I got over the first phase many jumped on board and the program became what it is today; a complete success because of the men at Stateville having the vision to help me by participating. Without their help, I would have just been another prison Chaplain with big ideas but no follow through.

Feather Bricks Editor: Were there volunteers that were hesitant? Maybe they doubted that incarcerated individuals could do college-level work?

Bishop Adamson: The success of the education program at Stateville is because of every man who carried through and received the ultimate victory of certificates, credits, and degrees from well-known and respected universities and colleges. Some of the volunteers were hesitant to believe, but as soon as they got their feet wet in a class, they realized that they were dealing with a highly

intellectual group of men that were starving for purpose. The pushback from the staff started to decrease once they realized the change in the atmosphere was positive. I'll never forget hearing in a cell house during some rounds, one man shouting from the upper galleries to another, "hey I've got a paper due; can you help me with the abstract?" I laughed all the way home thinking, this is amazing. These guys are true students on a mission to achieve their goals. I knew deep down that this was possible because nothing is impossible with God. I was one of those late bloomers that later in life got a Th.B., Th.M. and Ph.D. So, I knew it could be done and if a dreg of society like me could do it, so could they. The system was against enabling and was a warehouse for bodies for many years. The success of all of this was only because of God and Him alone.

Feather Bricks Editor: I'm sure you've heard about the changes of Stateville (becoming a multi-level facility and the day room in E-house). How does that measure up to the vision you had? Even though you're not here anymore, how does it make you feel knowing you had a hand in changing the environment at Stateville and the lives of the men incarcerated here?

Bishop Adamson: How do I feel about what's happening now? I believe Doctoral candidates are next and then what will those discussions sound like in the chow halls, yards, cell houses and day rooms (What?!!!! day rooms) Thank God for His abounding grace!

Feather Bricks Editor: How do graduation pictures/videos/experiences make you feel?

Bishop Adamson: To be able to see three graduations (Associates, Bachelors, and Masters) before I retired was a gift. Thank you, men of Stateville; I love you and will pray for you always. This is the long-haired old man biker saying don't ever give up on your dreams. Cubs fans didn't; and neither should you! I'm humbled to have been a part of the transformation.
Rt. Rev. Dr. George A. Adamson, Th.B., Th.M., Ph.D., 278702H



P+NAP: Prison and Neighborhood Arts and Education Project

By Sarah Ross

All Origin Stories are different depending on the narrator — with that said, this is just my origin story for PNAP! In 2006, I started teaching classes through a local community college at Danville prison. At that time, I knew little about teaching inside and reached out to anyone I could talk to about my experiences, conflicts and challenges. I found Bill Ryan through something he'd published online and he immediately asked me to teach at Stateville. Between 2006 and 2011, Bill would call me periodically asking if I could teach at Stateville and I always said no because I was lived so far away. During that time someone incarcerated at Stateville even wrote to me asking me to offer any educational experiences — the need was palpable. When I got a call from Bill again in 2011, soon after I'd moved to Chicago, I took him up on his offer. He put me in touch with Jim Chapman, who was teaching a class at Stateville and I went in with Jim and met students. At Danville I'd taught an art history survey class, which was credit bearing, with an assigned text. I'd also started a reading group at the request of students at Danville and supported artists there to critique and show their work. So at Stateville I wanted to try and build something more experimental. I started with the ideas of creating a project that hinged more around co-learning, co-creating, and developing work whereby folks inside could 'teach' folks outside about critical issues through art and writing. I started teaching one art class and got a chance to learn from some great artists and understand some of how Stateville worked. I also knew I didn't want to do the work alone, which led me to reach out to some poets to teach in the fall of 2012.

By the middle of that first semester, I thought it would be important to try two things: a) build a collaboration among local universities and colleges to support teaching artists/poets and c) create a humanities track that could feed the content of art and poetry classes. I reached out to Erica Meiners, as we'd met when I was back in Urbana Champaign, and I knew she was interested in radical education models and was a scholar. She expressed interest in teaching, and my dear friends Jill & Audrey Petty came on board as well. In the spring of 2013, we started our first humanities-based courses. We'd also started a guest lecture series at the prison and brought in a small library of books with the help of Fred Sasaki at the Poetry Foundation and the library at School of the Art Institute of Chicago. That all happened by early 2014.. and the rest is history!

NEIU: University Without Walls

EDUCATION NOW! by Joseph Ward

For me, education definitely has the power to change people and their future goals. Today, I never would have believed Stateville had so many programs that men were graduating from. These past seven years I surprise myself; I have to ask myself after I graduate from NEIU's – U.W.W. program, "Ward-EL what's next for you, graduate school? Or write book number 3?"

Perhaps my classmates probably have asked themselves the same question(s) with a different answer or a release through clemency. Either way, at Stateville, this is happening!

Let no one deceive you... change has occurred in all of us on this journey! Sure, we stumble, we fall down, but we have not swayed off this path! Yes, we are from different cities, we have different ethnicities... yet, when it comes to completing our education, we are focused, whether it is ABE, GED, or college.

Along the way, have there been sacrifices? Do we share any of the responsibilities? Yes, to both questions. Several of us, especially yours truly, never considered finishing school in the free world... I thought I was cool, so I skipped class; I thought class was for nerds, you know, squares. Well today, it is hip to be square!

Once I was finally accepted into a program, I knew I had the responsibility to be committed to that program. Others in the program have that same responsibility. If someone stumbles, we help him back to his feet. Should he be goin' through something, we're there for him to see it through. Only when one ceases to the agreed commitment and says, "That's it! I quit!" Then, I stop trying to bring him back into our program.

"THE POWER OF EDUCATION" By Robert Curry, NEIU (UWW)



Education is the second greatest authority. There's no greater power than the spiritually divine. Education is also a contrary authority. As the prompt quotes, "Education has the power to change people and places." I agree; however, these changes inspired by/through education are not always for the better of the whole of society or the individual self.

My personal journey has allowed me to perceive education as a historical power, one that has changed, sustained, and even destroyed cultures. Ever since I could remember, the elders of my tribe have stressed the seriousness of education and how powerful knowledge is. As a child I really couldn't grasp this concept, mainly because of my immaturity and ignorance to how the world was constructed, and its vastness. I didn't understand the historical significance of education to people of color in America, especially those of African descent. I was not privy to the fact that ancient world (Kush/Kemet) was infiltrated for its treasure, power source, (knowledge), and conquered once it was shared and obtained. This conquest continued through slavery for centuries and has transitioned through the oppressive structures of poverty. A legacy was stolen from an entire people by the denial of education.

Today, I'm in the custody of I.D.O.C., serving a De Facto life sentence, attending a non-traditional degree program through Northeastern Illinois University's University Without Walls program. I'm on course to receive a Bachelor's degree in communal architecture in 2024. Scholarship has become the vital power of my humanity. It removes all self serving causes and has given me the capacity to challenge the capitalist's standard of American education. In doing so, I take on the assignment of accountability to cultivate a people and culture from my experience and education acquired.

Education is a power, one that charges me to uplift, care for, and keep humanity in community, as we are according to the Spirit.



What Does A College Education Mean to Me? By Tylon Hudson, Student, NEIU/UWW

A college education from a university is costly, and economically improbable for many. Intuitively, the incarcerated are without the wherewithal to achieve the same, whether financially or logistically. However, Stateville's shift from a carceral environment to an, in part, academic epicenter is an excellent opportunity for those who aspire to wear a different hat, open the sinus(es) of their thinking, and be resilient for positive change.

Personally, I am with some college experience, but no degree. I've had many employment experiences where the same was preferred, but instead of seeking my desire to attain a degree, I got complacent with salaries/wages. The aged adage that "it is never too late" is a truism. I was elated to learn that Northeastern Illinois University/UWW was offering a degree program, and more elated that I was accepted into the program free of tuition.

Attending Northeastern Illinois University/UWW is the most valuable privilege that could have occurred at Stateville. The professors/teachers are assertive in their desire for me/us to learn and complete the curriculum, and we are held to the same standard as the students on campus; we are with a purpose other than serving a sentence, provided a taste of normalcy via the academic communal space, and offered an academic setting free of the social restrictions and adversities of the prison industrial complex.

I am enormously thankful for all involved with the creation of this program. It is a catalyst for reconstruction of the mind for which society and all involved will benefit.



Correspondence Courses, Anyone?

with Karen McCarron

Below is a list of educational correspondence programs shared by SRA Logan student Karen McCarron. Check with your EFA at your facility if you have questions about this list and would also like more information on correspondence program FAQs for individuals in custody.

Accredited Educational Correspondence Programs

Adams State University

Address: Correspondence Education Program, 208 Edgemont Blvd., Suite 3000 Alamosa, CO 81101

Degrees: Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of Science with a Business Emphasis, Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Master of Arts in Business Administration

Blackstone Career Institute

Address: 1011 Brookside Road, Suite 300 P.O. Box 3717, Allentown, PA, 18106-0717

Degrees: Paralegal Certificate

California Coast University

Address: 925 N. Spurgeon Street Santa Ana, CA 92701

Degrees: Printed course materials can be mailed to the student upon request

Colorado State University at Pueblo

Address: 2200 Bonforte Blvd Pueblo, CO 81001-4901

Degrees: Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Bachelor of Science in Criminology, Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies, Bachelor of Science in Sociology

Northeast Wisconsin Technical College

Address: 2740 West Mason St Green Bay, WI 54303

Degrees: None. Courses may be applied toward the completion of a program after incarceration.

Ohio University Correctional Education Program

Address: Haning Hall 102, 1 Ohio University, Athens OH 45701

Degrees: Associate in Applied Business (Business Management Technology Major), Associate in Arts (Arts and Humanities), Associate in Arts (Social Sciences), Associate in Science, Associate in Individualized Studies, Bachelor of Specialized Studies, Bachelor of Technical and Applied Studies

Upper Iowa University

Address: P.O. Box 1857 Fayette, IA 52142-1857

Degrees: Associate in General Business, Bachelor in Business Administration, Associate in Liberal Arts, Associate in Psychology, Bachelor in Psychology, Associate in Criminal Justice, Bachelor in Criminal Justice, Bachelor in Social Science

Definition of Correspondence Course:

Means a text-based distance learning program provided by an outside entity designed to increase knowledge or gain credit in areas including, but not limited to, independent study, accredited college courses, language courses and Career and Technical Education courses. For the purposes of this directive, correspondence courses shall not include non-academic subject areas including Bible study and self-improvement.

Not all correspondence courses will provide Earned Program Sentence Credit. If the Institution is not accredited or the certificate is not recognized, EPSC will not be awarded for the program. If IDOC provides the program, EPSC will be earned only through the IDOC approved program and not a correspondence course.

North Park School of Restorative Arts



Ph.D., Please! By Marshall Stewart

"...reaching forth unto those things which are ahead..."

(Phil:1 3:136)

Even SRA students, presumably exemplars of Christian understanding, thanks to Professor Will Andrews' exegetical classes, are often on alert when a Scripture used is not exegetically correct, but is theologically sound. In this verse, Paul's sentiments echo across time, finding similar expression in our SRA lives today.

In reflection of the Philippian text, and pulling down my own cerebral Post-It notes, which include earning two degrees at Stateville in six years: BA-Organization Communication and Research Development for Non-Profits (2019); MA-Restorative Justice Ministries (2023), poly-*piensas* ("thoughts") generate a prophetic 'what's next,' coupled with the objective to unify our SRA body through faith in Christ. As a follower of my inner Holy Spirit, His GPS is flawless and yields no blue dots on a screen, or needs any recalculating. To not chase down any damp squids, delineating the prophetic needs of our SRA cannot be based on where we are, but rather should be based on who Jesus is (He is...for us!), and why He has chosen us and equipped us to be His impossible examples of glory. Say: "He chose me!" --Now, say it louder, I dare you.

As your true SRA steward (by praxis), I own virtually nothing, but augment everything with Spiritual accountability to be "found faithful" (cf. Luke 12:42-48; 16:1-13). What am I talking about? Glad you're thinking that. God has given me a clear objective to launch a cohort of PhD students which include Natives (me) and non-Natives. As I marshal those in my social network, the circling of wagons has already created a buzz beyond these 40' walls, and has created ruts in the ground for others to easily follow in their own wagon.

The smoke signal that called these PhD wagons occurred during our last semester as role loss and system loss materialized. For me, the First Nations Educational Doctoral Program (FNED) and PhD application requirements were a daily part of regular communication with my Ojibwe and Oneida (Tecumseh) family. As paragons of the NPTS-SRA, you know what I am about to say--we must speak it, believe for it, hope for it, and have faith for it as it sits grounded in Jesus Christ.

We all know, thinking of degree reach extension projects can be exhausting, and doubt can creep in. Our S.W.O.T. analysis has taught us that tacit threats can crowd our mind and work as vitriolic obstacles that appear silently:

- * What will you PhD prospects look like?
- *How will you fund the application process and associated tuition if accepted?
- *Can you pass the candidacy exam?
- *What will your 40-page writing sample be geared towards?
- * How will you take the mandatory 5-9 on-campus courses?
- *Who will be your PI (an on-campus faculty member/principal research advisor)?
- *In your carceral setting, how will you envision the research for human subject protocols?

What's next is the reframing of the this title: "PhD, please!" to "PhD and Me!" Through the Holy Spirit that resides within us, we ignite the MACM and RJM practices which fuel our fires to become the flames that lead us to what is next (Flame 2023).

O'Lord Jesus,

Tell us the story of our heart, of our community, beyond me-to that which is next, to that which is before me. Yes, Lord-I believe there is a "before me" call, a "before me" blessing, a "before me" walk with you and for others. Amen.

-God's unworthy servant, Marshall Stewart

North Park School of Restorative Arts

How Education Has Affected My Life by Elton Williams

"By earnest self-examination, strive to realize, and not merely hold as a theory, that evil is a passing phase, a self-created shadow; that all your pains, sorrows, and misfortunes have come to you by a process of undeviating and absolutely perfect law; have come to you because you deserve and acquire them, and that by first enduring, and then understanding them, you may be made stronger, wiser, nobler. When you have finally entered into this realization, you will be in a position to mold your own circumstances, to transmute all evil into good and to weave, with a master hand, the fabric of your destiny." --James Allen

The education I have achieved has, through the familiarization of myself with the thoughts and ideas of others, widened the scope of my vision and, unexpectedly, brought me into a more profound relationship with the complex nature of who and what I am. It has taught me to light a candle instead of wasting time cursing the darkness; that my todays are not my yesterdays, and that my tomorrows won't be my todays; and that intellectually, as it is spiritually, I am reborn daily.

Progression (forward motion) concerning the inevitability of pain, sorrow, and misfortune, is as certain as anything else which comes our way as a result of that "undeviating and absolutely perfect law" written of by James Allen. But we get to choose how we respond to the passing evil. Our task then becomes coming to understand the "why" of the "what," which leads us to the next stage of adaptation and this is a lesson that the education I have received has helped me to better apprehend.



By Tyreese L. Crawford

Having an education is not only essential to my growth towards what I want to become in life, but also having an education is truly powerful in many ways. Why? Because nothing is worse than to be sitting in a room full of people having a discussion and not having a clue about what anyone is talking about. Having an education welcomes you in spaces of people who come from different ethnicities, races, and cultures. People who have different agendas and belief systems can all come together with the understanding to embrace one another's individuality. Having an education allows you to help others to grow and to become ambitious in the things that they have a desire for. Education protects you and gains you a great amount of respect. As for myself, I was able to obtain my GED, I'm currently achieving a Master of Arts degree in Restorative Justice Ministries at North Park University, and I'm owning my own business: a clothing line.



Transformation

When it comes to the power of education, Math and Science are needed to get you by in this life, but when you can take the worst inside someone and use it for good, it will build a better community changing the world like it should.

If you listen close you can hear a heart shatter, when one comes to the realization that his life truly does not matter.

Until one can truly die to one's self and put on the new "complete Restoration," their purpose in life will be one's only destination.

This is the reason why transformation to me is the most powerful education.
Sincerely, Anonymous

North Park School of Restorative Arts

“Ravings of a Madman” By Marcial “Olos” Guerrero

(Written as a play, originally for the class "Embodied Storytelling")



What world is this I am thrust into? The heart of freedom?! Freedom from the walls that bound my decaying body. But freedom not from the confinement of the spirit, for it is with hate and anger I was released. The clutched hand had to be pried open before the jewel of my soul could shine forth into this world married with the stains of billions of crushed dreams. In the wake of the stomped foot the smear of morals is left. For it is in an immoral world I find myself. I must now fight for a kind word, or the lovely glance of a beautiful woman, as age has robbed me of my youth, and the wrinkles of time are etched upon my person. The grey in my beard does not speak of wisdom but of a life lived with the weight of countless sorrows placed upon me by an unforgiving world, a world which would see me vanish as darkness vanishes with the sudden presence of light.

With fear do I traverse the new surroundings of this ancient world, for it has been transformed into something to be feared, to be loathed. But I must fight! To prevent the blood of my veins being spilled onto this unholy ground, I must struggle with the denizens of animosity, those who would see me caged and confined-body and soul-into the pits of purgatory, and lashed as they laugh at my despair. For who am I to be granted freedom, he who deigned to be once convicted? Unworthy. Undeserving!

Worthy I say! Deserving! Knockity, knockity, knock! Let me out! Look at these rabbits hop around, hoppity, hoppity, hop. Won't be hopping too far without your foot. Good luck they say. Hah, not for the rabbit! Lost his darn footing... foot, foots? Is it a foot or is it a paw? Never did know too much. But I do know is this, the world is too big to be so darn small. It will crush ya into dust if ya ain't careful. All this evil lurking around. Hey, you! You evil?! You look it. Can't trust a one of ya! Turn my back for one second and you'd betray me. See! You're thinking about it right now, aint' ya? Yeah, your kind will do me in with no regard for the pain it'll cause. But I'll put foot to bottom to stomp the evil right out of... well where ya going? That's right git! Give me the stink eye as if I got pink eye. Hah, rhymed there. Stink eye, pink eye. Eh, don't much care for it all, what with the 'economy falling in the crapper. Inflation they say. Can't get a job because of my record. Who'll hire me? Hey you! Need an ex-convict to help around the house? Nah, you look too uppity anyway. Probably got the notion I'm a insane, or worse, sane! Hah, in this world I'm the only darn sane man. Doesn't that make me king? You and you! Do my bidding. Get me a coke, and a straw so I can look fancy as I sip. No!? Well, who needs you anyway!? Darn hippies!

Once again, I am rejected. My sorrow is manifest for everyone to see but no one, pays head to the tears streaming down my cheeks. To them my pain is as insignificant as a fly falling from the shock of the blue light it was inevitably drawn into. They care not for the man I am and even less for he who once I was. But alas it's all good cause I know I am a better man than any of these high society types. All of them can kiss my brown bottom, tan lines and all! Only wish they were speedo lines so's I can make it a fancy kissing! I am who I am and that is...wait, who am I? Where am I? I cannot be lost and forced to navigate this maze a second time. Last time I had to be rescued, but I don't know who did the rescuing. A hand reached out to me and pulled me from the muck. His face, his face, but who's face, was it? Those sorrowful brown eyes were so full of fear and concern for my safety. The accumulation of sweat above his brows as he strained to pull me to him. His bushy beard was quivering as he fought back sobs, for he feared I was too far gone to be saved, yet he held on. Such concern for one he knew not. But I must know him, for I feel a kindred spirit, as if he and I were one. Wait, he was... me! I saved myself from the tempest of hate. I pulled back from the edge of destruction and emerged victorious. So here I am free from the... I'm not free. I am still stuck in this cage. And so, the story repeats until one day I am left to wander without the repetition of my sorrow. I must keep hope alive, for even the footless rabbit has hope of escape until its last breath issues.

North Park School of Restorative Arts

Just How Transformed Are We Talking? By Jamal Bakr

On this side of my transformative academic journey – in the initial phase of my academic career – I am starting to think more about the byproducts of studying, learning, and training in a mono-cultural setting. Have we really gotten the most out of academic theory and methodology, no matter how diverse it is?? Reality is, we are living and practicing within the limitations of culturally and institutionally oppressive boundaries! The question of getting the most out of our education is important because OUR hope is shared – to be free – and my hope is to continue mentoring, teaching, and leading in a way that helps students/people discover or amplify their true voice and identity. The question then becomes, how prepared and inclusive are we?? Are we ready to teach a room full of diverse students??

Most times, in this context, we think of diversity in terms of race or ethnicity. Yet, the spectrum of diversity involves culture, language, spirituality, sexuality, gender, and all their intersections. Now consider that 80% of people in this system are English speaking U.S. citizens, most adhere to the tenets of one of the Abrahamic faiths, most hail from impoverished communities of color, and only few are brave enough to express their non-heteronormative identities. So again I ask, how prepared and inclusive are we? If we are not willing to 1) grapple with the realities of this monocultural carceral context and how it limits our understanding of diversity, 2) challenge our own biases and 3) call to task our complete empathy and humanity, then who cares what level of education we have? We can potentially do harm to the identities and voices of the diverse students we wish to help or at least coexist with.

A transformative education has opened my eyes, and now I can see that much I did not. I hope it has done or is doing the same for you, and may our world – this one and the one beyond our circumstances – be a transformed place because of it.



By Robert John

Education definitely has the power to change people. It changed me. It changed how I see myself, how I see the world, and how I see the future.

I believe that most of us are capable of much more than we might even believe ourselves, but only because we've never had the opportunity or vision to aspire to things beyond the here and now. Our life circumstances and subsequent choices put us in a box, physically and mentally. Once we had the opportunity to pursue education, and made the decision to really invest ourselves in it, the results quite often validate what God already knows about us: that we are capable of so much more.

Affirmations have the power to change beliefs. I remember when I got my first A. I started thinking that if I can get an A in a Master's degree program, maybe I'm smarter than what I gave myself credit for. The next A affirmed that suspicion, and as the A's piled up, those affirmations turned into belief. Eventually I began to see myself as an intelligent student, not a street-smart convict. These positive affirmations motivated me to try even harder, to see how much more I was capable of accomplishing.

When you develop the habit of setting goals, applying yourself, and seeing them become reality, negative influences, attitudes, and behaviors soon fade away. Positive self-image, aspirations, and behavior take their place and before you know it you're a completely different person. I can't tell you how many times over the last five years I've heard people say: "Man, you've changed." To that I say: "Good! Maybe you should try it!"

Often times it's difficult for people to accept that you've changed, but what matters is that you accept it. Embrace it. Let the education change you. You'll be better for it.



North Park School of Restorative Arts

Transforming Lives by North Park University Alumnus Jamie Thomasson

When it comes to education we were told Math and Science would be the most beneficial in our pathway to success.

Although there is some truth to this, I feel if we don't put God first would success in life really be worth all the durational stress?

The power of education is useless if it is not also used in transforming lives. If you don't understand what I mean by this just ask all the highly educated successful people that have tried in their lives to commit suicide.

Why would a highly educated successful person want to die, I believe they felt empty inside, due to their education success not truly transforming their life.

You see I must thank God for placing North Park University in my life and even though I was still living a lie each day contemplating suicide I can give full credit to North Park University for transforming my life.

To this very day I still don't know why North Park University stuck by my side, I was living a lie and full of disgrace, but by the grace of God they gave me not only a undeserved education but also a Will to change.

This is why the Power of education to me is a transformed life filled with grace, no longer ashamed to fight the good fight of faith.



Education: A Passport to Possibilities by Antonio "TK" Kendrick

Education is the greatest gift that you could ever give yourself because it's the cornerstone of personal evolution. It's something that no one can take from you. and no matter where you go that intellectual capital goes with you. Historically, prison is a place that was created to strip its inhabitants of their humanity – a place where our hopes and dreams die. However, through education, we are able to cultivate our imaginations. We are able to find a way to liberate our beings – a way that was previously inaccessible because we didn't possess the tools needed to reimagine and dream new dreams. Education is powerful because it shapes us mentally, financially, and socially.

The first way that education shapes us is mentally. Education expands our knowledge and opens up new neurological pathways that sharpens our perspective of the world around us. Education increases our confidence, thereby, empowering our agencies and allowing us to be more informed in our decision making. Education also increases our chances of success because it puts the world on notice that we have the ability to think critically and solve problems.

The second way that education shapes us is financially. Generally speaking, the more education we have, the more vocational options we have available to us. More vocational options increase both our immediate and lifetime earning potential. If we can maximize our earning potential, our quality of life will be much better (i.e., buying better homes, eating better foods, going on family vacations, building wealth, etc.).

The third way that education shapes us is socially. Socially, education opens up our world As a licensed barber, I am a part of a world-wide brotherhood of barbers. As a scholar, I am a graduate (alumnus) of four different schools – three of which are institutions of higher learning, which means that I am forever connected to every person who graduated from all of those schools. In addition, my education gets me into privileged spaces that I may not have had access to otherwise.

Shaping me mentally, financially, and socially is a testament to the power of education. It doesn't matter whether you go to trade school or college. Either one you choose, you win because you will possess the tools you will need to succeed and prosper. Don't you want the power to reimagine something greater for yourself and dream dreams that you never thought were possible? Sure you do! Education is a passport to a more stable existence, and like a passport it's not just going to come to you. You've got to go get it! Frederick Douglass once famously quipped that once he learned how to read he was no longer fit to be a slave. That, my brothers and sisters, is the power of education.

North Park School of Restorative Arts

Sufficed to...say Whaaat?!? by Scott Moore

Whenever I look back at my high school transcripts, three words come to mind: less-than-stellar. My GPA was 2.068, and I graduated in the bottom 22% of my class. Heck, I only "earned" 3 A's in four years - and two of those were in gym! Sufficed to say, I wasn't a believer in the process of education.

To be fair, there are better ways to quantify intellect other than grade point averages and class ranks. That said, I had no desire to apply anything I learned in a classroom back then to my actual life. And, therein lies the catch...

The power of education allows a student to reach back to our former selves in a way that propels us forward and breaks the patterns of dysfunction what have shaped our lives. This knowledge leads us down a new path towards meaning as we navigate how to best benefit from what we've learned. However, we must choose to activate this power and apply said knowledge. Otherwise, the benefits of education become limited, especially in prison.

Carceral classrooms provide a newfound level of understanding that creates concrete change throughout all areas of life. The liberative pedagogical practices found within help us bridge the gap between self-awareness and self-actualization. When utilized properly, this power allows us to take control of our lived experiences in a tangible way that promotes both individual and communal healing in real time.

Looking back, I'm not proud of my less-than-stellar high school record. However, I do take solace in the fact that I've been intentional about applying what I've learned in a prison classroom to my life in the here and now. My body may be temporarily restrained, but my holistic growth is no longer held captive behind these walls. Sufficed to say, I'm now a big believer in the power of education.

By Antonio "Slim" Balderas, VOTPAI (Voice Of The Poor And Incarcerated)

Once upon a time in a far off galaxy located on the Southern Illinois border, I was a person in custody at a work camp in Cave-In-Rock Illinois. The host facility to the work camp was Vienna Correctional Center. The work camp provided free manual labor to the surrounding park services, around Cave-In-Rock. Relatedly, the work camp facilities taught GED classes five days a week along with food service, technology and short order cooking and baking. The students were more than eager to learn, and they showed up every day with their pocket pen holders fastened to their shirt pockets.

I consider myself to be a fair student at best, although I was an above average test taker. Once I began taking a test, I remembered from the instructor of the camp to never leave a question unanswered. One bright sunny morning, after preparing to take the GED test weeks in advance, we loaded up the vans along with the guards and instructors and proceeded to the host facility Vienna, where we would take the GED test. In total, it was about twenty students taking the exam that day.

Correspondingly, after two weeks of waiting went by, we gathered in the work camp school facility located in a separate mobile unit, along side the living and sleeping area of the camp. The white male school instructor entered the room in a hurried fashion and his actions caused everyone to quiet down. The teacher began his speech by relating how he had good news and bad news: the bad news was that only one of us in the room that day had passed the test out-right; the good news was that anyone within a five percent range of passing would be allowed to test over in order to pass.

I immediately started laughing out loud over the unsuspected results from the test scores. I just knew I had failed right along with about twenty more hopeful students with their pencil and pen pocket protectors. The teacher politely came from behind me and tapped me on the shoulder and said, What are you laughing so loud for? You're the one that passed."

I was the smartest person in the room that day, simply because I believed in obtaining an education, no matter where I got it from, and also because I was a good test taker and an excellent rifter. Right on! NP Alumnus and (Self-Proclaimed) Poet Laureate

Antonio Slim Balderas



North Park School of Restorative Arts

Education is a Power Dynamic by NACHO

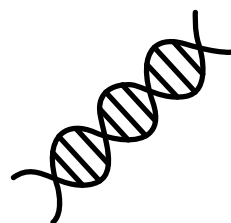
Education, from my own experience, does indeed have the capacity, ability, and overall potential to enact change and reshape intellectual, emotional, and spiritual landscapes and thus prevailing narratives that have encumbered and stifled growth. The educational arena has the power, or rather is a dynamic face at its core, able to tear-down and breakthrough the narrowness of our thinking, plucking us out of the boxes that have kept us from seeing things and people from a broader place. It has the capacity to expand our bandwidth, enabling us to be open and receptive to new and dynamic perspectives and ideas. It can disrupt norms and stereotypes, influence behavior, and even capture erroneous thought patterns, displace them, and infuse one's conceptual framework with those full of hope and life. It can be, if we allow it, a light shining in the darkness of our ignorance, illuminating and enlightening us.

The learning space that so many of us have stepped into and that engages us on a daily basis shouldn't just be about gaining knowledge, or useless information, and then regurgitating it back. These educational spaces shouldn't produce parrots or carbon copies of the educator. Yes, these spaces should inform us, but also challenge us to think beyond the narrow and life-restricting margins that have closed us off to a world of endless possibilities. True education should stretch us and activate, but also liberate our imagination. In its purest form, it should present us with a tangible substance, a mass of clay with which one can wrestle and give form or shape to without necessarily changing its essence. Then, after this process has reached its completion, acceptance, rejection, or incorporation into one's belief system should be made. We must always keep in mind that education and the learning process are very powerful tools that many, unfortunately, wield in a dictatorial fashion. Their objectives under this guise or mantle is not to create free and imaginative thinkers, but rather to indoctrinate and confine young and impressionable minds of their choosing!

Teachers, whether professional or lay, shouldn't be closed off or one-sided to the varying possibilities and perspectives that might arise in such pedagogical settings. Remember that educators within their sacred matrix, also and most commonly known as a classroom, are to provide a substance that students can engage and at the same time it can engage them in very intimate and dynamic ways.

Education should be a two-way street; it should be a give and take affair, in which "miners" extract precious jewels through the excavating process. This, however, doesn't just apply to the student or disciple. It also, more than anything, applies to the educator, who is and should be a life-long learner and student. That is, unless that educator hangs erroneously feels like they "have arrived" and hangs their hat on their title of Professor, Teacher, etc. I know one thing: educators that have been the most influential, impactful, and innovative with their fields have always been the most open, creative, and adaptive individuals.

Lastly, education, if anything, should help to discipline the mind to think beyond the boundaries and boxes that cookie-cutter ideologies want to put individuals into. Education should also, and most importantly, pull us out of our own self-centeredness, making room for the differences within others. Formal and self-motivated education, for example, has caused me to re-imagine and re-invent my person, narrative, and thus my journey. It has definitely challenged me, but also raised me to wrestle with complex issues inside and outside of me. It has broadened my narrow perspective, and caused me to be understanding and empathetic towards the "variety" that exists in the world. Education has equipped me with the necessary tools to traverse the multi-faceted and dimensional realities that are and will continue to be the fabric of our world's DNA!





Wisdom Blvd. *By Mishunda Davis-Brown*



I've decided to share some personal stories on the Blvd in hopes that you have an inspiring story of wisdom you'd like to share also.

I recall my son who I birthed in prison coming to mom and me camp. So, on this special day, he was no more than 5 years old. I asked him the simple question, "Son, who is God?" I just wanted to see how much his little mind had been retaining, and to my surprise he stated, "He will destroy you!" Now, he was correct, but I had to tell him that God doesn't want to destroy anyone and loves everyone, but yes, he will destroy wicked people. I pondered on his response and the tone in which he used, and I realized that I have a wise kid (now, as an adult "a wise guy") LOL! I say this because the Bible says in Proverbs 1:7, "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom..." So for my Son to have feared God so young he was wise and that wisdom should keep him in line for the rest of his life, and so far it has. He's such a good kid that brings me honor. Well, thanks for visiting the Blvd and whenever you feel the need, take a trip down Wisdom Blvd. with me.

North Park School of Restorative Arts



The Power of Education by Tameka "Phoenixx" Newson

The power of education is a subject that doesn't get enough light. Once upon a time when I was younger, I remember my G.G(Great-Grandmother) telling me that in her day the saying was "if you want to hide knowledge from a person of color, just put it in a book." That simple but powerful statement held something that I was desperate to discover. I became very determined to read and learn everything I could gain access to. That also fueled my need to write and to help educate those around me. Then the trauma in my life began to take over and win. I couldn't hide the pain anymore. I put everything else to the side. As a kid my mind couldn't understand why I was being teased, ridiculed, raped, molested, trafficked, neglected, and beaten. I believed that if I got good grades (All A's), made the honor roll, obtained perfect attendance, never got suspended, or stayed home (regardless of if I wanted to or not), everything would be okay and the pain would end. Maybe my people would finally see me and truly love me. That only served to cause more trauma in my life. I just couldn't seem to become invisible enough. Even though I would go to the corners of the rooms and make myself as small as possible and I wouldn't speak for days at a time, still trauma and hurt often sought me out.

By the time I was 18 years-old I was in the streets and dealing with men that claimed to love and protect me, but only violated and treated me much like the people I caught myself escaping from. I made it worse by staying in a fog of drugs and alcohol. I was stuck and I had no idea how to get out of it. In March of 2005 I prayed and asked God "I'm tired, you gon' have to get me out of this. I can't do this on my own. Help me?!" Not even 24hrs later I found myself in a police station. That definitely wasn't what I meant, but it was definitely what I needed. There was no other avenue for me. I tried therapy, but he didn't believe me and tried to have me committed. I had nobody else could help me, so God saved me from me and the path I was on.

Here I sit 18 ½ years later and I find myself 1 ½ years away from obtaining my master's degree I've learned that being educated isn't a curse — it is a gift from God. Through the power of education not only have I been able to change myself, but my son has become the first High School graduate in my lineage. June 7th 2023, my son walked across the stage. Through education and my desire to break every generational curse that has come across my family, he is the first. He is definitely not the last! There are 7 more nieces + nephews who'll follow. My niece is 15 and her dream is to go to Spellman college.

The power and freedom that I've found through education has given me my voice back. page 20

Northwestern Prison Education Project

Since its launch in 2018, the Northwestern Prison Education Program (NPEP) has been committed to providing high-quality educational opportunities to incarcerated students throughout the state. NPEP's talented, dedicated, and curious students make clear the transformative power of education in their work on the inside and in their home communities, as well as by serving as role models at the national level.

For Cohort 3 student Brandon Perkins, education broke a vicious cycle. "NPEP is the hammer that will break the generational chain of incarceration that has plagued my family."



Education created community for Cohort 1 student Lynn Green. "On this tumultuous journey — searching for knowledge, striving for excellence — we found ourselves."

Cohort 3 student Shawn Thigpen found renewed meaning. "NPEP is focused on the future of all of the students rather than their past."

NPEP has proudly nurtured a community that empowers students like Brandon, Lynn, and Shawn to experience the transformative power of education.

Their stories -- and countless others from our students at Stateville and Logan -- are a beacon of hope for our current and future students. Through education, a future once thought impossible is now attainable.



What Education Means to Me, By Wm. 'Shafiq' Peebles

It's been said that education is power, and I wholeheartedly concur. However, I ask, power to do what? In my view, it is the empowering of each attainee to then disseminate that knowledge to others, thus replicating his/her/their-self and exponentially adding to the collective's ability to effect change! The one who is 'educated' has the weighty imperative to resurrect from the death of Ignorance, Apathy, and helplessness, the mentally and spiritually dead, where ever, and whomever they may be.

So, in conclusion, education is the empowerment of one to fulfill the God-given obligation of love; love being "the conscious decision to spiritually, and mentally cultivate self, and others" (bell hooks). "Love is not an emotion, it is a verb" (Farrakhan).

By Robert Boyd

The power of education
Is what changes lives, saves lives,
It creates opportunities,
It teaches us not to hide,
It opens new worlds,
And offers different perspectives,
Now alternate realities are the objective.
Strong becomes our spirit.
Competent becomes our mind.
Our future,
Once lost to slavery, Jim Crow, and mass incarceration
Is no longer hard to find.
Discoveries daily,
Enlightened thoughts
The transformation of man
Is what knowledge bought.



To realize one's growth
To have experienced the worst
To only push forward
Is how man breaks his own curse.

Knowledge is power
Working out is how the weak become strong
Shifting the tides of the ocean doesn't fall to us,
But for the world to become a better place
Education must start at home.

The trial and tribulation that is incarceration has been one steady learning experience. While I would rather had not gone through it, there is no doubt that I have been absorbing the forever present and universal lessons that reveal themselves on a daily basis.

Rarely do we speak of learning in terms of it being an essential human quality, but it is. If we define it as a relatively permanent change to behavior or knowledge that results from experience, then surely people undergo significant and subtle changes alike. The human condition can be fundamentally interpreted by the shifts and transformations that take place from infancy to our twilight years. Hence, life becomes one long teaching session.

As I reflect on this process of acquiring knowledge and skill, I cannot undervalue what it has meant to me, and how it has been one of the more sustaining forces in my life while incarcerated. It is unfortunate that we have allowed aristocratic forces to dictate to us that an education only has currency when it comes in an appearance and arrangement. Being enrolled in an accredited and conventional institution of higher learning is nice, but my intellectual and moral foundation was set before I was accepted into a formal educational establishment.

My testimony about education, and its worth, looks to convict the thought that education has to take place in a typical classroom. Reading books and texts for my own personal edification, in cramped cells, with poor lighting, and in a chaotic dayroom has been just as worthy of being called an “education” as being admitted to a mainstream academic institution. And to the brothers not registered in formal classes, you could still have a quality education. Keep reading, studying, living and gaining understanding, as yours may just look different.

By Lynn Green

The power of education is an awesome power! Some may say that it's "the" most awesome power of awesome powers. Let's ponder on that for a minute.

Where would humanity be without education? As one of the most vulnerable mammals on planet Earth? Vulnerable to Earth's elements, diseases, predators, and other human beings. Would we have survived as long as we have without the ability to evolve and acquire an intelligence incomprehensible to any other being on the planet?

That is a philosophical question for another time maybe, but a question that we're only able to pose "because" of our ability to learn and understand. It is our intelligence that makes us special, but it is our ability to educate and be educated that makes us unique. It is humanity's most powerful ability, and as such, our most weaponized and most dangerous.

We have the uncanny ability to learn, but our education determines where we learn, how we learn, and what we learn. When we learn and why we learn determines who we are and who we can become as people. For instance, racial hatred or drug dealing can be taught just as effortlessly as reading or mathematics.

Now, that's powerful.



By Kobie Singleton

When it comes to education, I have not been one to take much interest in higher learning. In the past, I took my academic education for granted. I didn't realize the richness of education, and how it expands a person's ability to understand complex ideas and various cultures. How it inspires creativity and cultivates thinking. Since my incarceration, my appreciation through my experience has changed in regard to education, and the impact that education has had on my life has been tremendous. The developments that have occurred due to my education have given me a better understanding of the value of education, “PRICELESS”! When I first started I knew very little about a lot. From my first college classes with Lakeland to my current classes with Northwestern, I know more now than I would have ever imagined I would. The challenges presented and the knowledge gained have created in me a fresh way of thinking, removed ignorant biases, excelled my confidence in learning, and cultivated skills that have allowed me to interact in a more meaningful way when speaking, writing, and in various social activities. Education has enabled me to write my first writing material for a magazine (*Feather Bricks*). Education has become one of my best friends and is preparing me for all that awaits me in the future. Now I truly am becoming my best self.

Northwestern Prison Education Project



Learning my ABC'S by Demetrice "DC" Crite

In September 2018, I walked into a classroom hoping that I would be learning all of the intricate things that went along with attending college. Ironically, what I learned was something that all of my previous educators wanted to teach me- my ABCs. Hindsight tells me I couldn't have done it in a better setting.

The classroom in prison is an amazing space. The moment one enters it, they step into a beautiful pluralistic oasis of diverse students who are willing to learn with, from, and about one another. It interrupts social differences and provides students with opportunities to practice and understand differing perspectives in a classroom setting. It is in this way that education has exposed me to the "hidden curriculum" of what I have labeled "my ABCs": Affirming identity, Building community, and Cultivating leadership. This concept is simple.

"A"-affirming identity- is the idea that led me to see myself reflected in the environment around me, especially in the curriculum. Identity affirmation has helped me to combat misinformation about my culture and gain understanding as well about other cultures.

"B"-building community- present me the opportunity to see the importance of creating a larger shared educational community. While doing so, I have been able to "tap into my personal thoughts" and share a vision of creating a better society.

"C"-cultivating leadership- most importantly, has taught me that, though leadership may be developed by critically thinking, speaking and writing effectively, more than anything, it is cultivated to its core when we can interact effectively with others in a pluralist context.

In closing, higher education has proven to be a vessel for the transformation of individual minds and prison cultures. I came into this experience 5 years ago not knowing what was ahead of me. As I look back on my journey, I realize that I'll be receiving a degree in me. Who knew it was as simple as ABC?

The Power of Education By LeShun Smith, a Top Performing Student in NPEP

I have always had a love-hate relationship with school. On one hand, I love learning new things; I like that feeling of confidence that wells inside me when I absorb new information. Then it imbues my central nervous system, like when T'Chala drinks the Vibranium to become the Black Panther. This gives me the mental efficacy to change things like: my destructive thinking habits and my behavior. Because, as the old adages go, "When you know better, you do better" or "Education is not what you know it's what you do." And with NPEP as my companion, education is what I'm doing.

On the other hand, schools have always seemed so confining. It always felt like the lessons I really needed to learn couldn't be taught in a classroom. This is why I dropped out of high school. Boy did I learn some lessons! So much so, that as soon as I got the opportunity, I swan-dived into school. It didn't matter that this school literally confines me. I now know the treasures of knowledge are not bound in books inside schools but inside people. This lets me know that the pseudo-confinement that I dropped out of was probably more so about my school responding to people who reflected their environment than them perpetuating the school-to-prison pipeline. At least, I hope so. You see, even back then, I was able to deduce the latent dysfunctions of the school system. I just couldn't articulate it. I guess you could say the power of education is best demonstrated in my newfound abilities to project the knowledge I have within.



ABE and GED AUTHORS

By Rodney Love

Peace Means: Properly, educated, arises, consciousness, eternal. This means you'll never be enslaved to any government or it's affairs.

Since here the Blacks have been denied the decent standards of what an education truly means. To exist without knowledge is a way to continue the enslavement of a nation.

How many people can defend themselves against this system? This system is designed to keep you from accomplishing your dreams. It continues to evolve so that you're always on the defense. You're held to an inferior position on a multitude of levels. You're made backwards to what's normal such universal truths as that are known to man.

Without the right education we then become savages in thought, conduct, words, and actions. We have lost what was normal because we never were shown what the light was in the first place.

So we must be guided back to the right path!



By Alfonso "Abdul Jabbar" Swanigan

In the Name of Allah

This is a story that I could never get tired of telling, a time where education was an awakening to my life.

It was 2012, and I was a first-time student with PNAP. The class I signed up for was poetry. We shared original work of ours, but this course was more so focused on weekly readings with our own twist on the assignment for the week.

Many may be familiar with Antwon "Diddy" Boyce who was my classmate at the time. And those who know Diddy, know this brother has a talented gift with writing.

I will never forget one particular class morning, where after reading our assignment from the previous week, the teacher asked, "Whole is Alfonso Swanigan?"

Not only did I get their attention on one written piece, it was two they found amazing and wanted me to share at the graduation ceremony.

This encounter that may seem so small, so minute, has opened my eyes to the possibilities that lie within me. And it had led to me making so many more educational accomplishments since then and I look forward to more to come.

By Moses Stamps

I come to you lovely men and women hoping to inspire some of you. I dropped out of school in the fifth grade and that led me to settling for less in life; no place of business would hire me because I did not even know how to fill out a job application. As a result I went to the streets for a living and ended up in prison. In 2014 I was sent to "AD" (Administration Detention). During that time I got real with myself and chose to get educated. I'm making progress and I'm currently in the G.E.D class. If Fredrick Douglass and I can get educated so can you; the only way to really stay out of these chains is to get an education. If you are committed to becoming something great, get an education! I'm just one of the kids from the Cabrini Green Projects who is trying to educate the world and inspire people about education. We can get out of chains and help our youth through education!

As ever, Moses Stamps



ABE and GED AUTHORS

By Jonathan Hernandez

When I was a child, I didn't value education even when my mom tried to tell me to go to school. I didn't know what the power of education would mean to my future. All I wanted was to hang out on the streets with my friends. I got locked up at a young age. I came into an environment where education was the last thing you wanted to think of. I continued to fuel my sense of importance by surrounding myself with the same type of friends who encouraged me to be cocky. One day a friend told me that the only way for me to get out of prison was through education. I started going to school but the problem was that I didn't change my ways and wanted to be with my friends. Also, I didn't want people knowing that I didn't know how to write or read. While being in mandatory class I learned that I was great at math. So I would talk to the guys that knew how to write and read and asked them to teach me and I would teach them math. While teaching math I learned that I had the passion for it. So I kept on learning then I got my G.E.D and now I can say that education helped me because now I'm in barber college. I hope and pray that I continue with my education, and I could say to my mom that I wish that I would've listened to her when I was in the real world with her.

By Milton Wardlaw, ABE

Honestly, I can say, education has given me even more confidence! The confidence I need to want to succeed in life. I feel more confident in each and everything I do now. Even my family can see the growth in me. I'm breathing different, seeing things different, and of course thinking different. The whole world is changing, and I know that I must change too for the best, especially if I don't want to be left behind. I'm no longer close-minded. I try my best to keep an open mind about everything. I feel as if I am a better human being, friend, father, and man. My education has given me foundation. I'm motivated to do so much more now, within and beyond these prison walls. And just having conversations about higher education with my oldest daughter, who's now in her second year of college. When she graduated from Morgan Park High School with a 4.27 GPA it truly inspired me to take that step. And now that I have mentors, tutors, and teachers who pull out the best in me and who want to see me do better for myself, I've set goals for the first time in my life. I can honestly say it's been a long time coming and the struggle has been real. For me and my classmates, we've formed a brotherhood together because we struggle together in these classrooms, study halls, and every morning before school. Each one-teach one and a higher education gives me a much greater chance of going home. I'm coming home a better man than I was before my incarceration. -Milton Wardlaw ABE



By Lincoln Johns "Spread the Word"

Growing up in Roseland, best known as "The Wild Hundreds," education seemed unimportant to me because the life I lived I only needed "Street Smarts," I thought. I had friends who graduated and did nothing afterwards because they didn't understand how powerful even just a high school diploma was.

Even the "Rinky Dinkiest" job wants to know that you at least have adult basic education. Even a G.E.D is okay. Knowledge opens doors that cannot be closed. Knowledge is also what I like to call the gift that keeps giving or something nobody can ever take from you.

Knowledge becomes wisdom and understanding which are the keys to making life easier. So get into school and milk the cow. I'm pursuing my G.E.D as we speak because we must lead by example.

Spread the Word.

ABE and GED AUTHORS

Randy Lake

There was a time when I did not believe that I could be successful in education because of a learning disability that I have. I felt like I could not learn the same as some people. I was put in ABE, and I passed on to pre-GED. At that time I felt that I could do this (get a GED). I have been working with people in my class that motivated me to do better and because of that I started to believe in myself.

Now I have got my sights on going to college. I have seen all of the other students graduating. I want my turn to walk across the stage. This is my greatest challenge.

James Hale, A.K.A Lucky “The Power of Education”

To me education represents growth! It opens door's that we never thought possible and gives us opportunities we didn't know existed. Also, it changes lives by showing families other possibilities.

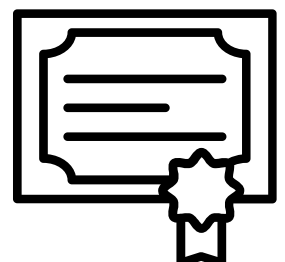
For me education has created a new person. I am no longer the aggressive, angry, and self-centered person I used to be. Now I know, with my education, I can be the son, father, and brother I was created to be.

Education will enable me to provide for my family the right way and not the street way. I can also motivate others to pursue an education as well. The power of education is something I have never experienced in the past, but I am glad I have now. I now have a new outlook on life, and I know the sky is the limit because of the Power of Education!

By Marlon Coleman

I believe that education is a tool to be used in the work of everyday life. To build and to carve out a right path for oneself in this ever-changing world. What does education do? It builds up the mind with a relativeness of stages. One being a precursor to the next. Each stage giving you a higher degree of knowing while reminding you of that which was previously learned. When properly delivered education builds confidence and self-esteem. Thus, creating an outlook of positivity. Education is not just for building the mind it is also for the process of thinking and knowing when, where, and how to problem solve. It is for learning, attaining knowledge, and securing your future dream job.

Message: Parents, before your child is to be born, put yourselves into a positive state of mind. So, to raise your child to be strong in the confidence of who they are, teach them not just in the ethics of school but give them what they need to succeed in life through sometimes hard but good and honest work. Know that school starts at home. Fathers, please take pride, guns, and drugs out of the equation when teaching your sons life's ethics. Give them truth with no chafe. Help them with life and school but also show them how to use their minds and hands in a more positive and structured way.





with
DeCedrick Walker

Here's A Thought



I dropped out of high school when I was 16 years old, went from roaming and fighting in school hallways to being on the streets in a matter of hours. The general belief among loved ones was that I was done with school, which culturally meant that I had hit my ceiling. The impact from being done with school at that age didn't hit me as it should have then because I thought, as most kids did and do, that I would have time enough to get an education; I thought I would be able to bounce back. Boy was I wrong!

It took all of 22 years, a few near-death experiences, an eight year prison sentence, and a closely followed natural life sentence before I was able to be in school with an appropriate intention to actually learn, to take seriously what I had in my immaturity and drunk phase previously sneezed at. Only thing was that, what I thought I remembered about school, particularly what I remembered about Math, was so far off from the standard that it was a struggle to comprehend the simplest of Math problems.

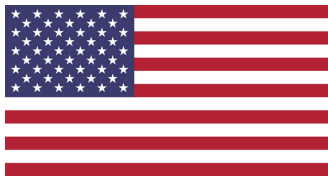
One day, and incarcerated tutor, Anthony "Talib" Bell, suggested that I re-learn math from the ground up after I continued to struggle. Re-learn as in how to add, subtract, multiply and divide all over again. I was livid - not sure if he could tell - that he insulted me by suggesting I stoop so low. Besides, I already knew how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide. However, I wanted my GED; in desperation, I did as he suggested and I learned what my issue was: I did not know how to subtract fractions!

Once that problem was fixed, pun intended, I was able to learn at a pace that allowed me to move on to take the Pre-GED test. I failed the Math portion of the Pre-GED test 3 times, while I was able to pass the other portions seemingly easy. The third time I failed, I was off by one point but because each time I had taken the test prior my score improved, I was allowed to move on to take the GED Math portion of the test. I passed on my first try and, in so doing, earned my GED.

Our instructor allowed me to continue to attend class up until he awarded us, me, our GED certificate. On the day he gave it to me, I asked could I see my final Math score. On the pre-test, my three scores were 140, 146, and 149, so I wanted to see if I had done any better. He showed me the page where my score was and, come to find out, I scored 158 on the actual GED test! Seeing that the page had all my test scores, I browsed and noticed that on the GED Reasoning portion, the portion I scored highest in, it had the words "College Ready" next to a score of 166.

I was shocked! At no time in my life until that point had I imagined college as a place I was qualified to attend. The power of education in my context is that one GED test score awakened my imagination to the possibility of attending college.

151		Likely to Pass
146		Likely to Pass
160	★	Pass
166	★	GED® College Ready
159		Likely to Pass

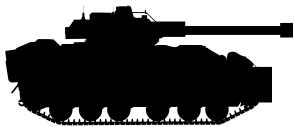


Combat Corner The Veteran Voices of Stateville



Greetings, everyone. Today, I would like for you to join me in a day of celebration. In the last issue of Feather Bricks in the Veteran Voices of Stateville section, we had utilized the space in order to remember all of those who had passed away, and, just like we have all heard before, "There will come joy in the morning." In this column of Veteran Voices of Stateville, we will see just that. We are going to express our joy by celebrating one of our fellow Veterans here at Stateville for not only his acceptance into the Northwestern program but also in his return here to Stateville and our Veterans program. So, on behalf of everyone here at Stateville, I would like to congratulate Pierre Cole (Aka C.B) on this recent accomplishment and welcome him back. We missed you, buddy. This is just one of the many effects education has on a beloved community like ours and is why I felt it was most appropriate for this issue on education. We would also like to congratulate fellow veteran Michael Jorgensen for his Northwestern acceptance as well. Take care and God bless,

--United States Naval Veteran and North Park alumnus
Jamie L Thomasson



BOOK REVIEW

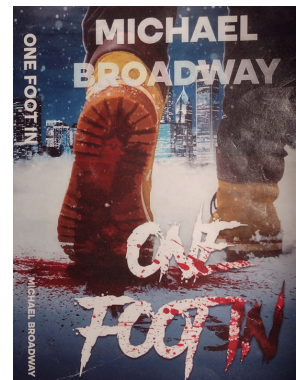
By Jason Muñoz

One Foot In by Michael Broadway

Forthcoming: September 2023

One Foot In is, in many ways, the untold story of our inner-city youth. Where you see bad choices, we see rites of passage. Frank, a young man trying to find his way in this world, quickly finds himself in situation after situation that force him to make choices that will have dire consequences on the rest of his life. This book cleverly describes the circumstances that lead to criminality, blurring the line between right and wrong in favor of experiences. The oft-quoted axiom of not judging without first walking a mile in someone else's shoes proves itself again. Read *One Foot In* and be transported into the characters' world of close friends, fast money, and the pain that comes with.

Author Michael Broadway is a recent graduate in Social Sciences from Northwestern Prison Education Program. He also has an associate's degree from Oakton Community College in General Studies, where he was recognized by the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program and maintained a 4.0 GPA. Michael Broadway plans to pursue his master's degree in psychology. He is also working on Part 2, *All In*, of a three-part series





What can I say about my ex-cellie, Timothy Ray Giles, that hasn't already been said by countless other ex's of his throughout the years? Well, for starters, despite the frequent mispronunciation of his last name as "Gills" and/or "Jē-lés" by every CO whose ever passed out mail, Tim is neither fish nor French. Actually, Mr. "Jīls" hails from the landlocked town of Moweaqua, Illinois. To get there, just drive south from Stateville until you pass 90 cornfields and then quickly look to your left. If you pass another cornfield (or blink), you've gone too far.

In his personal life, Tim is a devoted father, son, and brother who would do anything for his family. Beyond that, Timboski is a dedicated friend who never hesitates to help anyone out at a moment's notice. Unless it's after 6pm, in which case he's fast asleep.

As a professional, Timbo-Slice is a mechanical wiz who's pretty handy with a lawnmower. He also possesses two green thumbs in the garden (and, contrary to popular belief, all ten of his toes) and is the greatest racoon-wrangler this side of the Mississippi.

Prior to his incarceration, Tiny-Tim was an amateur parachutist, an adept pool-shark, and an avid motorcyclist. Unfortunately, a bit too avid, as of 'Eviel Timmeval' was in two major crashes that left his body broken and scarred. Speaking of which, though you would never guess it given his current physique, Tim spent over a decade in the US Marine Corps.

Sir, yes sir, Tim-hut! proudly served his country all around the world, including the isle of Japan for three years. This is undoubtedly where Sergeant Obvious found the inspiration for his most distinguishing feature these days: the Samurai-esque man (mom?)-bun atop his head. Cultural appropriation? Probably. But that's topknot-Tim for ya'!

What else? Oh, Tim absolutely loves π . Yep. Archtimedes is a firm believer in the power of math. He spends hours of his free time contemplating the enchanting order of the universe as structured by numbers. On the theological side, St.Tim-Ø-Tee equates the undeniable Truth of mathematics to something so beautiful and divine that few others can fathom the depths of his spiritual insight. Some call Timbo-Fett a nerd because of this propensity for problem solving (though, not the cool kind of nerd who enjoys comic books and professional wrestling), but I prefer to think of him as God's little idiot savant whenever it comes to arithmetic.

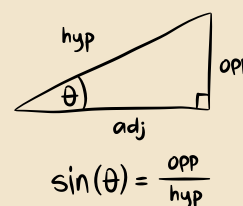
Tim has the personality and patience to teach all levels of math and truly desires to see others learn and grown in knowledge. In fact. Professor Pythago-Ray can always be found helping students from every educational program offered in Stateville. Literally. Though not in an official capacity (anymore) because, apparently, you have to graduate from a program that doesn't teach math...in...order...to...teach...math? Which reminds me...

M-O-O-N spells Tim just loves spending time at school. In fact, by the time Timbo earns his Masters from NPTS, he will have been in college for almost 7 years before earning a degree of any kind. His dedication to the classroom reminds me of the movie, "Tommy Boy," when Chris Farley comments on how lots of people go to college for almost a decade before graduating. To which David Spade replies, "Yeah, they're called doctors." Timmy Boy isn't a doctor, by the way. However, he is a huge fan of David Spade. Just ask him about it sometime.

In closing, if there's one thing you should know about Timothy Ray Giles, it's that he's genuine. The real-deal-doh. Sure, he may seem stand-off-ish and/or socially awkward at times; however, once you get to know him, you'll quickly find out that he's really quite adorable. So flippin' adorkable that, when he gets to know you, you'll always have a loving and loyal brother who will never leave your side. Like, never-ever...ever, ever, ever...

P.S. ...Ever ever, ever $\geq \infty$

$$X = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$



Featured Artist: Kyle Starks



Kyle R. Starks is on a journey to receive his bachelor's degree from Lewis University. His major is Professional Studies, and he will also be receiving a minor in Business. Kyle has aspirations to start an outreach center for the youth centered around art that can help change the narratives of children that are growing up in violent environments. As a self-proclaimed artist, he would like to show kids how art speaks and can make all the difference when it comes to mental health and finding individuality.

Sudoku & Puzzles

	5		9	3		4		
		7			8			1
9			5				3	
4		2			3	7		
		8		2		6		4
	7		6		5		8	
2				1			6	
	1			9	2	3		
		3	4					9

Directions

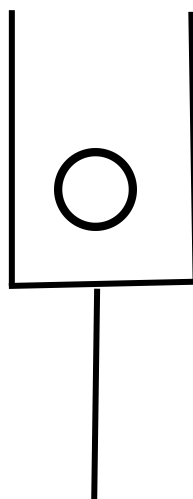
Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down, and each small 9-box square contains all the numbers from one to nine.



This one uses letters instead of numbers. Each row, column, and 9-box square will contain all the letters-- R, B, E, A, U, X, I, L, C. If done correctly, there will be a 9 letter word spelled out in one of the rows.

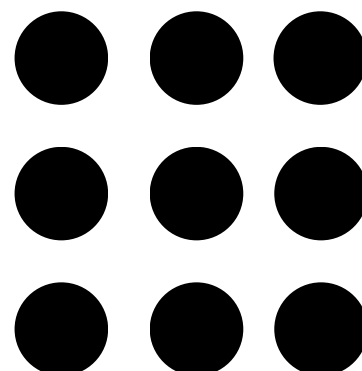


X			L					
						X		
	R	B		U				E
		A		R				X
	E				L	U		
C			I	X	A			
E						B	U	
	U		R			C		
	B							A



To complete this puzzle, move 2 of the straight lines so that you remake the goalpost shape with the circle on the outside. the goalpost does not have to be oriented in the same direction.

For this one (below), you must go through all nine dots using only 4 straight lines. However, once you start the first line, your pen cannot leave the paper and there's no backtracking. Hint: Think outside the box.



Riddles

- 1) If the white house is white and the blue house is blue, then what color is the green house?
- 2) A cowboy rode into town on Friday; he stayed three days then rode out on Friday. How is that possible?

Dad Joke

Why couldn't the music teacher open her classroom door?
-Her keys were on the piano.

General Trivia

- 1) How many books are in C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia series?
- 2) Which Greek god stared at his own reflection until he died?
- 3) Which element on the periodic table has the Latin name Stannum (Sn)?
- 4) The word "coulrophobia" means the irrational fear of what?
- 5) What is the term when two water streams join to form a larger stream?



Bible Trivia

- 1) Is the book of Esther in the Old Testament, New Testament, or neither?
- 2) From 1 Kings, who hid 100 prophets in a cave when Jezebel was trying to kill them: Achan, Rachel, Obadiah, or Joseph?
- 3) Which city did Cain settle in after killing Abel and being marked by God: Jericho, Corinth, Nazareth, or Nod?
- 4) What did Judas do with the silver he received for betraying Jesus: gave it to the poor, threw it in the temple, bought a house, or bought a mule?
- 5) In 1 Peter 5, what animal is Satan compared to: Lion, Rat, Wolf, or Serpent?

Fun Facts on Illinois Higher Education in Prison Programs (Compliments of ILCHEP):

Higher Ed Programs throughout the state include:

- Knox College at Hill Correctional Center
- Millikin University: Shakespeare Corrected at Decatur Correctional Center
- Prison + Neighborhood Arts/Education Project at Stateville and Logan Correctional Centers
- Adler University at Big Muddy Correctional Center
- Augustana College at East Moline Correctional Center
- Lewis University at Sheridan Correctional Center
- Danville Area Community College at Danville Correctional Center
- DePaul University, North Park University, Northeastern Illinois University "University Without Walls," Northwestern University at Stateville Correctional Center
- Eastern Illinois University and Danville Area Community College at Danville Correctional Center
- Kaskaskia College at Centralia Correctional Center
- Lake Land Community College
- North Park University: School of Restorative Arts at Logan Correctional Center
- Northwestern University: Northwestern Prison Education Program at Logan Correctional Center
- University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign: Education Justice Project at Danville Correctional Center



Tips from Tasha



"My experience with education has given me confidence, and power to engage in conversations I wouldn't normally engage in. My tip for anyone related to education is to be fully engaged in the process. Don't worry about the rules or structure of the assignments so much that you lose your ability to be yourself and be into class with your entire person. Be fully engaged. Take it all in." -Tasha Kennedy

Editor's Note: Tasha is the 1st student in the North Park SRA program to use the acronym "LOL" in an exegesis paper, and receive an "A"!

Letter from ILCHEP

Dear Students,

Seven years ago, in 2016, Illinois educators, students, and community members met across the state to advocate for higher education in prison programs. That group of people organically, and out of need, established what is now the Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prison. During IL-CHEP's infancy stage, members would meet in houses, and oftentimes drive hours to late-night meetings to strategize on ways to break through to and collaborate with the Illinois Department of Correction administration and staff. The origins of IL-CHEP started because of people inside of prison, and to this day, students like you continue to be the driving force and motivator for members to continue pushing for state legislation that creates access to additional higher education in prison programs across all correctional facilities in Illinois.

We are proud to share that there are now IL-CHEP alumni who have reentered society and continue fighting so that people on the inside can have access to a book, a pen, or a notebook, where HEP is nonexistent. Alumni who were once in your shoes, perhaps your former classmates or cellmates continue to do the work so that other people can have access to the programs you have now. IL-CHEP alumni have continued their education on the outside, and are going back to school similar to you. Such as your peers and alumni, it is very important that you continue with your education, and that you continue with that drive and ambition to be better and do better for others inside of prison upon your release. Last year, our very own Angel Pantoja, Project Coordinator, and IL-CHEP alum, negotiated with the Illinois Department of Corrections access to communicate with you and any incarcerated person via the GTL system. Since then, we have received many emails stating additional college needs and resources, and would encourage you to continue writing to us. Your voice and your college needs continue to shape the work that we do on the ground. We look forward to reading your letters and reading your school success stories.

Sincerely,

Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prison

Stay Tuned...

Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prison (ILCHEP) has formed an Alumni Association designed to assist individuals in custody on a multitude of levels. Though still in its infancy, the Alumni Association has its sights on:

- *increasing the number of high school diploma and GED recipients among individuals in custody

- *looking for ways and means to expand higher education opportunities throughout IDOC

- *part of the expansion could include technological training and creating its own newsletter which would provide returning citizens with re-entry tips.

The Alumni Association also intends to advocate for more efficient housing on behalf of returning citizens. The Vice President of the Association, Carlie M, hopes the distinguished assortment of alumni will be up and running, firing on all pistons soon!



THE AMPLIFIER

with Alex Negrón



Professor Tommy Pfannkoch of Lewis University's English Dept. allowed me the opportunity to teach a fiction writing workshop. I took the time to show the students at Sheridan the importance of creating fictional characters to tell their stories.

Your characters have to be 1. Interesting, 2. Believable, 3. And your audience has to care what happens to them. Stories that are character-driven are the stories that get told the most in our communities. There are 6 basic methods of character development: 1. Dialogue, 2. Appearance, 3. Action, and 4. Thought are the direct methods that you use to flesh your characters out. The other two are 5. authorial interpretation and 6. interpretation by another character. These are considered to be indirect methods of developing your characters in a fictional story. Being able to understand methods and employing them in various combinations will create full, lively characters.

After the lecture, the class and I created a character named Hans Schuler who is a German/Chinese Adventurer/explorer who enjoys spelunking (you were right Ro). He also is looking for his emotional support monkey named Nieto in the jungle. This exercise helped me grow with the Lewis University Students because, as we created Hans, I had to urge to control how Hans should be developed. That's when I told myself that it is not my job to make the story end well. My job is to keep Hans' story going.

After we created Hans, the students took 15 minutes to use the 6 basic methods to develop the character. Damandros' is one great example of taking Hans and making him interesting, believable, and caring about what happens to him.

For all of you writing aficionados and great storytellers, let's keep the art of storytelling going. It's not our job to control it or make it end well, our job is to find others so the story can keep going!

Damandros Q. James is earning his B.S. at Lewis University in Professional Studies. He is the published author of Winter's Courage and seeks to continue to craft his writing.

"Man! If I don't find this damn monkey, I'ma' lose it!" Hans said out loud as his deep voice waved through the thick, muggy jungle.

As he walked deeper and climbed higher into the jungle, the air got more humid and made it harder for Hans to breathe. He had to take a break every 10 minutes to remove his yellow hat off of his bald head, to wipe the sweat from his face.

Hans made his way through the jungle by moving the limbs of smaller trees out of his way with his mind to create a path. This caused birds to fly away from their resting place, and the flapping of their wings startled Hans every time.

Hans came to a halt because he thought he heard his monkey. He looked up and around as far as he could towards the noise he heard and hoped to see some monkeys swinging or hanging from the surrounding trees. Then Hans bent down to listen intensively while he tightened up the laces to his big-ass Gucci boots; he believed he needed to get ready to run or climb his tiny 3'5" frame up one of these trees to get his monkey back.

Hans was sure that he heard his monkey while he tied his boots and yelled, "I hear you!" A burst of energy flowed through Hans' body and he ran through the muddy puddles to get closer to the sounds he heard. He used his telekinesis to move the branches and critters from his path to reach the pack of monkeys that made those noises.

THE AMPLIFIER

“Here I come, Nieto—”

Snap.

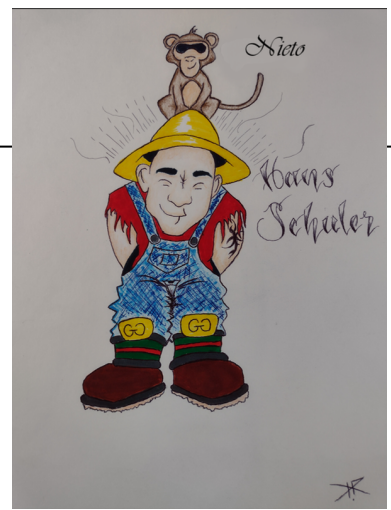
A branch snagged one of the straps of his overalls and caused Hans to fall on his back into a puddle.

“What the hell was that?!” Hans yelled while his entire body was drenched and covered with mud. He looked into the cloudy sky and remained shocked as to how he found himself on the ground while he stared at the tall trees. He took a couple of deep breaths as he got up to check to see if he was okay. The mud that clung to his overalls and boots made him heavier, but there was no pain.

Hans could hear that the monkeys were closer, and he felt the urge to hurry and get to them before they swung away. Just as he was about to run towards them, a monkey appeared over Hans’ head with muddy paws and his fur wet as he stared at him.

This caused Hans to stop breathing and while his body froze and he realized it was his pet monkey, Nieto.

“Aw, Nieto, there you are! Let’s go home, it’s getting late— we don’t have time to be monkeying around.”



Flying High with

LEWIS UNIVERSITY



Launching educational programs in prison is among my greatest joys! I began work as director of prison education at Lewis University in the fall of 2022. Lewis is one of over 1,000 Lasallian Christian Brothers educational institutions across the globe, and their educational ethos is unlike any I have experienced in over 20 years of teaching. Their Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission identifies those whom they seek to educate, including the “educationally excluded, orphans, victims of abuse, addicts, disabled youth, individuals with mental illness, migrant youth, juvenile offenders, child laborers, victims of child trafficking, ethnic minorities, disadvantaged girls, and impoverished children.” Obviously, it makes great sense for Lewis to be serving individuals in custody in Illinois!

Last January, Lewis accepted 16 students who will pursue their bachelor’s degree in professional studies with a minor in business. We are positioned to triple our student body in the 2023-24 academic year with the reinstatement of Pell grants. Since January, students have made great strides, and we are celebrating many things! All have completed their coursework with As and Bs. More importantly, they have incorporated their learning into multiple projects that connect with those on the outside.

A recent victory was the course offered by SRA alumnus Professor Tony Pizarro. In the words of another graduate, Mike Simmons, “Prof. Pizarro is an inspiration to me and the Lewis undergrads. I had no idea the depth of his knowledge and creative pedagogy. It is my honor to learn from him.” Mike Simmons, along with Alex Negrón and Devon Terrell, serve as instructors, writing tutors, and academic support for the Lewis program. Lewis is excited to welcome them, and others who have earned degrees at Stateville, into the community as teachers and tutors.

In the year that has followed my leaving the SRA, I bring the lessons I’ve learned. Foremost, education in prison is about centering the students. Decisions—from staffing to curricula to economic justice, promises, and advocacy—must center the students. They are society’s greatest assets, and they are the future of the free world if we allow education to do its work!

~Michelle Clifton, Director of Prison Education, Lewis University



"Without a support system, it's all for nothing."

A conversation on the topic of education with Sergeant Brown

Being a little behind on my sports lately (Go Cubs? Go Padres? Go Reggae Girlz?) I (Prof. Melissa) decided to chat with Sgt. Brown about education instead. We talked about what he has noticed from working the past four years regularly in the Education Building at Stateville, where he has experienced steady programming and an increase in opportunities for individuals in custody to get an education. I learned enough to write a book report called, "What I did on my summer vacation." Here are a few takeaways:

First off, Sgt. Brown explained how everybody is going to have different views on education as it relates to the school building setting. His view though, as a Sergeant, is "if North Park and Northwestern want to come in here and donate their time and resources, I don't have an issue with that." He even went on to note how he has witnessed a large growth in a large majority of individuals in this facility because of the educational opportunities they take advantage of, and he also pointed out how he saw being given the chance to be hands on in a classroom as a huge advantage over sitting in a cell and not using your brain. For example, Sarge mentioned, "I would imagine, being locked up, you kind of lose touch with a lot of things."

In terms of the growth Sarge has seen in the men who access educational programming in the school building, he confirmed that it wasn't just the college students he's seen growth in, but the regular ed (GED/ABE) students as well. "I've seen a lot of guys when they first got here...where they were at, and where they are now. For a lot of them it's a big difference." Overall, Sarge noted that "the reason they bring in these programs is to give these guys hope."

One concern Sarge raised in our chat related to what happens to that hope upon re-entry. Sarge explained to me how easy it might be for guys coming home who don't have a plan or support system for continuing to contribute to and learn from their educational community to fall back on old ways that could feel more comfortable in the short-term but won't lead to long-term success. He concluded, "Once you grow and establish your own identity, the last thing you want to do is get cut off from your educational community." He warned educators who enter this space to think about support not only on the inside, but also upon re-entry.

Listen Up!

Voting in prison (House Bill 29-subject to change)

If passed, the Voting in Prison Bill would restore voting rights to YOU-people incarcerated in Illinois prisons. Voting for elected officials is important because it's one way to hold them accountable for addressing your needs. Elected officials like mayors, state's attorneys, judges, and sheriffs are responsible for uplifting the needs of their constituents--the people who vote for them.

Examples of ways your vote could impact change:

- 1) You vote in judicial elections and get a biased judge kicked off the bench.
- 2) You vote for your child's school board, who determines school lunch quality.
- 3) You vote for supreme court justices who make decisions about the constitutionality of laws.
- 4) You vote for the Governor, who determines the state budget and how much money goes to IDOC. They also appoint the director of IDOC.

Voting is an important tool to create change. Send letters explaining why having the right to vote would be important to Chicago Votes

1006 S. Michigan Avenue, Ste. 606
Chicago, IL 60605



Poet William Butler Yeats once said, “Education is not the filling of the pail, but the lighting of the fire”, and as an educator I have let these words be my guide. Every day am heartened by my students’ participation and dedication, and I encourage them to never lose sight of their goal because education will only help you and never hinder you. You may think that my relationship with my students is one-sided as I am giving them an education and they are the passive recipients. However, I am rewarded daily watching their steady progress and eventual graduation from the program. In closing, I wish all students the tenacity and drive to continue on their educational journey and hope you remain a life-long learner.

Mrs. McGrath

Advanced-ABE and GED Educator



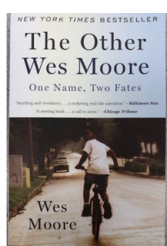
How Has Education Impacted your Life? By: Janis Elmore, Stateville Law Librarian

Education teaches the ability to study and write. Reading and writing are the first steps in Education. Like Nelson Mandela stated, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Let's see how it can change your world.

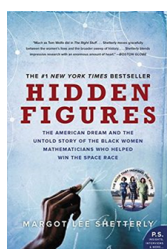
A personal benefit to getting an education is the opportunity to grow as a person. It allows you to experiment with what you are passionate about, which allows you a chance to immerse yourself in that topic which gives you the opportunity to find yourself. You will also be exposed to a diverse set of people and ideas which expands the mind.

These developmental skills learned in classes can allow you to grow, which helps you to develop a mindset that can be transferred into the workforce. People who are in school develop their problem-solving skills, time management, multi-tasking, endurance; you know, basically burning the candle at both ends. After graduation, students can carry these skills into the workforce.

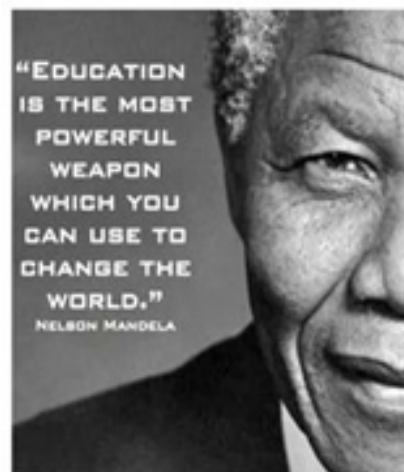
There are many advantages to having a good education, like career advancement and skill development. The town or community in which you live will have economic stability from the benefits of your education. Individuals with a higher education also tend to be healthier. Education helps you focus on every part of your life, like being a good citizen, being more aware of current political issues, and participating in civic involvement. It helps us adapt to change, think critically, solve problems, and be more open-minded and empathetic toward others. Education: it changes your perspective towards life.



The Other Wes More
by: Wes Moore



Hidden Figures
by: Margot Lee Shetterly



Summer Reading Bingo



Summer reading programs don't just make you a better reader; they also help improve your memory skills. As you read and engage with different writings, you practice recalling and connecting information, setting you up for success in school and beyond.

Ms. Elmore's 2023 Summer Reading Participants:



Charles Bickerstaff



Joseph Dole



Donnell Green



Jonathan Hernandez



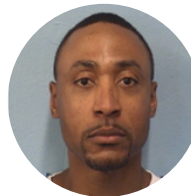
Lorell Johnson



Michael Johnson



Alonzo McCorkle



Nathaniel McCray



Todd Smith



Matthew Rosario



Alejandro Sotelo



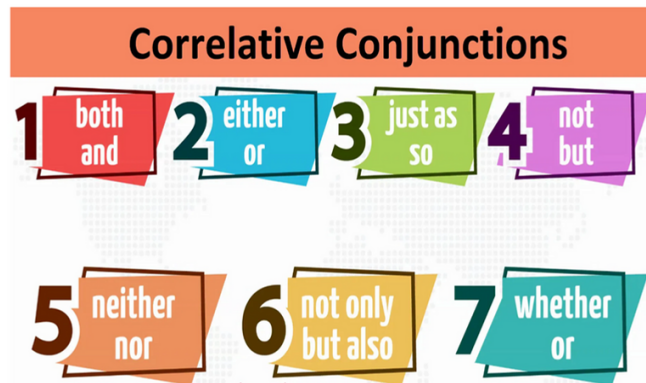
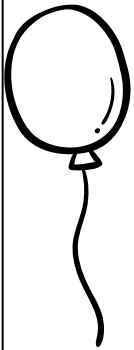
James Soto



Robert Washington

Shout Outs

Huge Congrats to Ms. Johnson's ABE students for completing an 8-week writing and reading comprehension workshop facilitated by Teaching Fellow Rayon Sampson! Special shout outs go to D THOMAS (morning) and THERON PRICE (afternoon) for being the first students in their class to accurately complete an extra-credit assignment on using correlative conjunctions. Why did they want the extra-credit? D THOMAS answered, "to gain as much credit as possible," and THERON PRICE responded, "to help motivate me." Another who participated in this assignment emphasized "it's not about extra-credit; it's about learning for me. With Rayon teaching, I know I can get things wrong and learn from that."



Applause all around goes to **Wendell Weaver** for successfully passing his GED test!

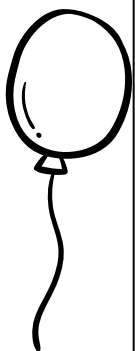
Shout out to Tall Mike, DC, Soto, Benny, and all of the Northwestern and North Park men for their day room work!

Much appreciation for all writers who submitted work to this issue of *Feather Bricks*! We received an all-time high number of submissions, and we read and enjoyed every single one of them. If you submitted a piece that was not published this time around, look for it in a future *Feather Bricks* edition. We hope to keep an "Importance of Education" column running as long as we have steady writing that belongs there.

Many thanks to EFA Costabile, Sgt. Brown, Educators Ms. Baez, Ms. Johnson, Ms. McGrath, all staff in the Stateville Education Building, and Public Information Officer Naomi Puzello; we couldn't make and distribute *Feather Bricks* without your support.

Writing Center Extra-Mile Awards go to Brandel Library Director Matt Ostercamp for working so hard on his first visit to Stateville organizing and cataloging books, and to Writing Advisor/Teaching Assistant **Kenneth "Ananyah" Key** for his visionary efforts in making Room 10 a sanctuary for all writers.

Editors' Note: Outside readers can find an electronic version of this issue (and past issues) of *Feather Bricks* on North Park University Writing Center's website: <https://www.northpark.edu/academics/undergraduate-programs/academic-assistance/writing-center/>



Answers

Easy Sudoku

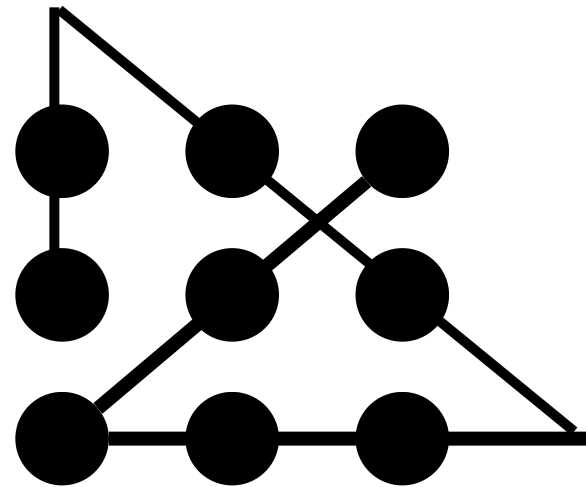
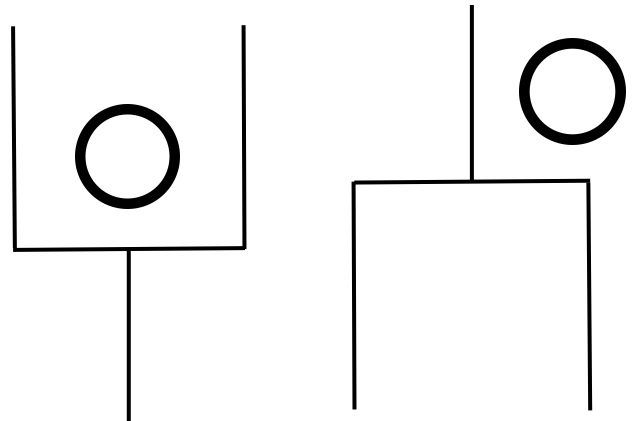
8	5	6	9	3	1	4	7	2
3	4	7	2	6	8	9	5	1
9	2	1	5	7	4	8	3	6
4	6	2	1	8	3	7	9	5
5	3	8	7	2	9	6	1	4
1	7	9	6	4	5	2	8	3
2	9	4	3	1	7	5	6	8
6	1	5	8	9	2	3	4	7
7	8	3	4	5	6	1	2	9

Sudoku Challenger

X	C	E	L	A	R	I	B	U
U	A	L	B	I	E	X	R	C
I	R	B	X	U	C	A	L	E
B	I	A	E	R	U	L	C	X
R	E	X	C	B	L	U	A	I
C	L	U	I	X	A	R	E	B
E	X	C	A	L	I	B	U	R
A	U	I	R	E	B	C	X	L
L	B	R	U	C	X	E	I	A

←
9 letter word

Puzzles



Riddles

- 1) The green house is made of glass, so it's clear.
- 2) The horse was named Friday.

General Trivia

- 1) 7
- 2) Narcissus
- 3) Tin
- 4) Clowns
- 5) Confluence

Bible Trivia

- 1) Old Testament
- 2) Obadiah
- 3) Nod
- 4) Threw it in the temple
- 5) Lion