

The magazine of the
Northwestern Prison
Education Program

NORTHWESTERN INSIDER

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In Loving Memory
Michael Broadway
1972-2024

To Our NPEP Community

The sudden and tragic loss of our beloved, cherished, irreplaceable Michael Broadway is devastating for all of us in the NPEP community. Michael was so much to us — friend, classmate, mentor, role model, community member, student, listener, teaching fellow, author, graduate, peacemaker. He was a loving, other-centered, brilliant bright light who was guided by his moral compass in all that he did.



In the months since Michael's death, I have been deeply moved, though not at all surprised, by the countless words that have been shared from every corner of the NPEP community about Michael's generosity of spirit, compassion, wisdom, and talent. I have heard story after story of how he never offered an unkind word about anyone, how he comforted people in their loneliest moments, how his hope was a lifeline, how his writing was an inspiration, how his smile lit up even the darkest spaces, and how his love radically expanded what seemed possible.

I have so many of my own memories with Michael, but one of my favorites comes from our recent graduation. Right before the commencement began, we were standing in the back of the theater and he threw his arm around me, gestured toward everything that was about to unfold, and asked: "Is this everything you imagined it would be?" Without hesitation I said, "Absolutely not." We both burst out laughing, but then I added, "This is so much more than I ever thought possible." This is such a classic Michael Broadway moment: On a day that was about him and his accomplishments, he was thinking about what the experiences meant for me.

Michael's academic talents were evident from his earliest days in NPEP. He was a close and careful reader, a charitable and constructive discussant, an astute and deep critic, and an insightful, nuanced thinker. But writing is where Michael really found his calling. The talent and experience he brought to his first book, *One Foot In*, made it a powerful and memorable experience for all of its readers. The NPEP community will always recall with tremendous pride and warmth the moment that acclaimed author Ta-Nehisi Coates held up his copy of Michael's book at NPEP's historic commencement.

As we move forward, there is no better way to honor and celebrate Michael than to channel our collective grief and love into the relentless pursuit of creating a world that is better than the one we inherited. And as we read the words in the coming pages, let's sit together for a moment, remembering how beautiful and loving and remarkable Michael Broadway was.

With warmest wishes,

Jennifer Lackey

Director, Northwestern Prison Education Program

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Publishers' Note

Many pieces in this issue were originally intended for a future issue of the *Northwestern Insider*, a project to which Michael was deeply committed.

For that issue, we had planned to include multiple pieces around Michael's debut novel, *One Foot In*, including an excerpt, an interview Michael had with Stateville student Dré Patterson, and a response to *One Foot In* from Logan student Erika Ray. You will find those pieces, along with an original poem by Michael, "These Cell Walls Speak," in the coming pages.

Michael also considered contributing something more personal in response to the second issue's theme: health and wellness. He was hesitant at first, knowing the emotional difficulty of sharing his personal health struggles while incarcerated. Yet, he persisted and wrote "Patient, Not Prisoner," now published here.

Tony Triplett's essay, "My Brother and I, United in Struggle," reflecting on the health and wellness struggles he shared with Michael during their time as cellmates, is also published here. Michael's death prompted several of his classmates and friends to write new poems and essays. This issue includes work by D.C. Crite, Lynn Green, and Yaphet Davis.

Finally, we've gathered heartfelt memories from Michael's classmates, friends, professors, and others who knew him well in NPEP, along with some background on this issue's cover from NPEP graduate and artist Anthony Ehlers.

We hope these reflections provide comfort and a deeper understanding of the profound impact Michael had on all of us.

Colin Hanner & Barbara Shwom
Publishers, Northwestern Insider

One Foot In

An excerpt, interview, and response

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SURVIVING ROSELAND: A TALE OF TWO LIVES

To celebrate the debut of Michael's first novel One Foot In, the Northwestern Insider is proud to publish an excerpt from Chapter 1.

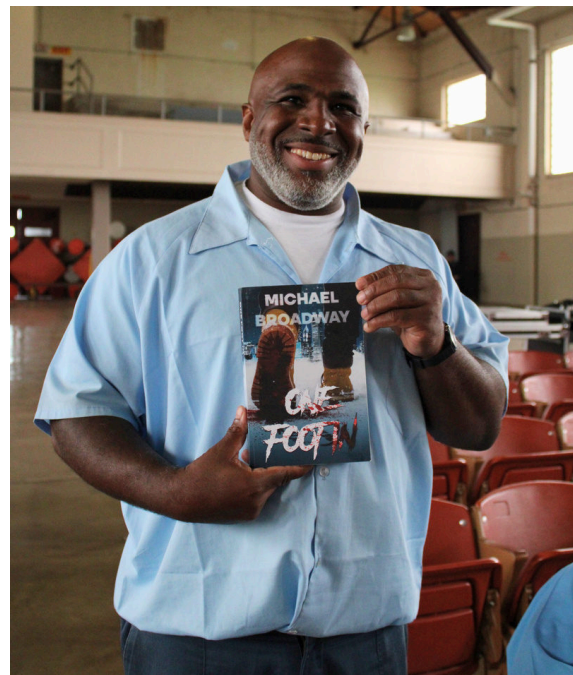
By Michael Broadway

I grew up in Roseland, a community on the far South Side of Chicago, infamously known as the Wild Hundreds. This section of the city got its name for its tendencies toward violence. This once-thriving middle-class white community made its living working in the steel mill factories located there on the far southeast side of the city and over in neighboring Indiana, which was a short commute on the Bishop Ford Expressway. By the late sixties, many of these factories began closing and moving their operations overseas. This caused Roseland's white residents to move away, making room for poor Black families who migrated from the South, escaping harsh Jim Crow laws. With the absence of job opportunities, it didn't take long for the Roseland community to deteriorate, and crime quickly rose.

It has been decades since those closings, and nothing has changed for the residents of Roseland or its surrounding neighbors. Roseland became a poor working-class community with a high crime and poverty rate, a progressive drug and alcohol epidemic, a pervasive gang culture, and a corrupt and deadly police presence; crime essentially became a way of life, and families learned to live with the violence.

An armed struggle ensued over the only limited resources still available — drug blocks. For me and Dupree, it was the same. We were determined to carve out our own little existence right there in Roseland.

Dupree and I grew up next door to one another, and we were raised more like brothers than anything, but we were polar opposites. Where I was well-liked, he was despised, but most of that could be attributed to Dupree being misunderstood.



Dupree experienced some shit growing up that no one, especially a kid, should have had to, so my crib became a safe haven for Dupree whenever his mother would flip out on him. At one point, it got so bad that she allowed her boyfriends to discipline Dupree, however they saw fit, and that was never pretty.

Over the years, there were a few good men who came along and treated Gloria well. That's Dupree's mother, but Gloria always found reasons to run these men away. If you weren't going upside of Gloria's head, then you wasn't man enough for her. Gloria equated love with abuse because the more abusive the men were, the longer they stayed around.

At night, I could hear Gloria yelling and throwing things around her own house whenever she was fighting with one of her boyfriends. Someone would always call the police to report the domestic dispute, but I would worry about Dupree. Around 10 years old, Dupree began coming over to my crib to escape the madness at his. I would sneak Dupree into the crib through my bedroom window, where we would play Madden until we fell asleep.



One Foot In is available for purchase on Amazon.

But Dupree needed someone to talk to. I was only 10 years old; what was I supposed to say? So, we played video games.

When Dupree turned 12, he had a serious growth spurt and stood about five feet ten inches with a lanky build. He had a dark complexion, exceedingly white teeth, bright eyes, and a mass of curly black hair. But that wasn't his only change.

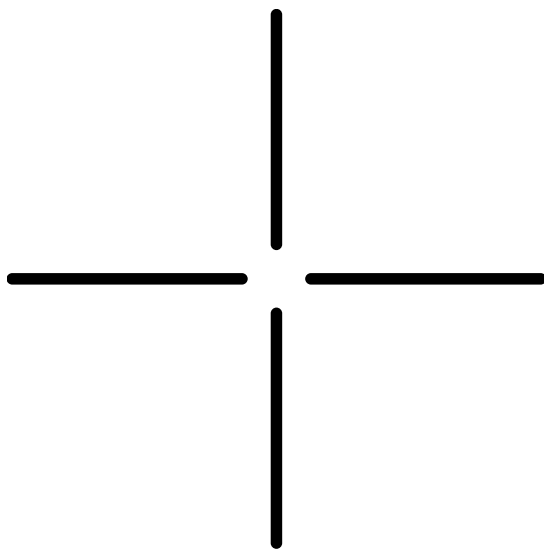
Dupree's whole disposition about life changed, and Gloria let him do whatever he wanted. Which meant Dupree ran the streets with some of the older guys from the neighborhood.

He even helped Gloria fight off her boyfriends, believing if he protected his mother, she would show him some love, but that never happened. Once they fought off her attacker, Gloria would turn on Dupree, accusing him of ruining all her relationships. We laugh about it now. Just the thought of Dupree ruining anything for Gloria was hilarious. She would never let such a trivial thing as raising a child get in the way of her living her life. But back then, it was hurtful, and Dupree suffered socially because of it.

At school, Dupree was always suspended for fighting other students and cursing out our teachers. This behavior was in direct correlation to his problems at home, but no one cared enough to find out.

Dupree was labeled a troubled kid who no one wanted any part of, but to the guys in the hood, he was a kindred spirit, someone with whom we all shared a bond. I guess it was our collective experiences growing up together that bound us, like the first time we were arrested for armed robbery. ▀

INSIDE THE WILD HUNDREDS



*An interview with Michael Broadway
on the inspiration behind One Foot In,
the sociological insights that shaped
it, and the importance of urban
realism.*

By Dré Patterson

“Drizzee!” B-Way hollered up to me ecstatically. “I’m a published author, bro!”

“Congratulations, big bro — you did that. I’m proud of you.”

It was seven o’clock in the morning at Stateville Correctional Center, and the soundtrack of chaos that played on repeat to start each day was disrupted by this announcement. Michael Broadway, serving a de facto natural life sentence, has defied the status quo of stagnation that is the prison environment and published his first full-length novel, *One Foot In*.

I sat down with him later that night in NPEP’s education commons to discuss his accomplishments.

Responses have been lightly edited for length and clarity.

André (Dré) Patterson: I guess I’ll start at the beginning. What inspired you to write this book?

Michael Broadway: Honestly, it started off as a challenge. I actually wrote this book back in 2002 when I was stranded down in Menard Correctional Center. This guy hollered in the gallery: “Who got some urban novels I can check out?” I was like, “You still read that shit?”

“Y’all always criticizing ’em — write something better,” he responded. And I thought to myself, “Bet.”

Dré: That’s funny that you had that attitude toward urban novels back then because now you find yourself defending this book against that label.

Michael: My main critique of the urban novel genre was how inauthentic and redundant they all were. I really lived that life — for real, for real — and I didn't see my story in these books. I didn't see my nuance in these stories; honestly, there was no vulnerability. You know what I'm saying? It can't just be this Black kid who comes of age and decides he wants to be a kingpin. He didn't pick up a gun and start blowing down people who look like him just out of the blue. Feel me?

Dré: Say more about that.

Michael: Take, for example, the controversial “strip club scene” in chapter nine. You have a grown man taking an adolescent boy, getting him inebriated, and paying two women to essentially sexually assault him.

Now, replace that boy with an adolescent girl — there'd be an uproar! Because of the toxically masculine society we live in, we never really talk about the hypersexual socialization of Black boys. It's normalized in our communities and considered a perverted rite of passage. The point is that this sets up how Frank — and other people like Frank — view women as they get older and shapes how they understand intimate relationships. It's a grooming process.

Dré: Right. There's a psychosocial element behind these stories that isn't being illuminated...

Michael: Exactly! Real sociology and psychology are being taught in all marginalized neighborhoods, in our neighborhoods, and they are not any different from what's being taught in these institutions of higher learning. Ours is not a “subculture.” We're not “outlaws” and “antisocial” — all these terms are used to deem our behavior outside the norm of a mainstream, civilized society. No, I reject that misogyny, the victimization of women and girls, predatory capitalism, and making money by any means necessary, regardless of whether it destroys people and ecosystems.

This intertribal violence, where human beings murder each other over all types of created justifications — none of that is unique to our neighborhoods. We read about it throughout not only the country's history but world history! Know what I'm saying? It's playing out in our halls of government, boardrooms, and military operations. Those in power just get to decide what's justifiable homicide or senseless murder, whether you're defending your natural borders, fighting for your country, gang-banging, or committing terrorist acts.

Dré: I ain't gonna lie, big bro, you've kind of changed my mind about urban novels...

Michael: That's why I don't consider my work that — it's more like urban realism. I'm still working on that. I just don't wanna be put in a box and be disconnected, feel me?

Dré: I definitely feel you. I also wanted to ask you about this part of the sociological analysis of the Wild Hundreds [areas within the 100th to 130th blocks in Chicago's Roseland neighborhood] you give in the book's opening. How much of that was influenced by the classes we took through NPEP?

Michael: When I wrote it, I didn't have any concept of sociological terms like “disinvestment,” “deindustrialization,” or Durkheim's functional analysis of crime.

Dré: (*laughing*) Bro, why did you just casually drop that sociology talk on me like that?

Michael: (*smiling*) You a social scientist like me. I knew you'd appreciate that. But I learned those concepts from [professors] Mary Pattillo and Megan Klein; because of those classes, I was able to name processes and effects that I was already being taught.

The old-timers always talked about the “good jobs” they had in the '60s and '70s. When I moved to Roseland from the Robert Taylor Homes, there were people living in all the houses.

“I actually wrote this book back in 2002 when I was stranded down in Menard Correctional Center. This guy hollered in the gallery: ‘Who got some urban novels I can check out?’

I was like, ‘You still read that shit?’

‘Y’all always criticizing ’em — write something better,’ he responded.

And I thought to myself, ‘Bet.’”

They took pride in their lawns; there were businesses — it was like a whole, healthy socioeconomic ecosystem going on. Then, the Jewel closed, the bank moved, and houses were just left abandoned. The Aquaseal factory, the junkyard I mention in chapter 39, that the police chase the hustlers into? That closed, and people just started dumping junk back there: boats, cars, dead animals, even human beings. Drugs and crime got crazy. I was a witness to these things, and even though I didn’t have the academic jargon to describe it, I felt it — it was happening in me and around me. I knew something wasn’t right.

Dré: Alright, bro, I’d be remiss if I didn’t ask you about the character of Frank. You did a great job of capturing the anxiety of his lifestyle and the different situations he found himself in. That resonated with me. Who was your inspiration for Frank?

Michael: Parts of Frank are me: the vulnerable parts, like wanting to hang out with the older guys and finding myself in situations like that robbery in the first chapter. It was like, do I freeze up or let on that I don’t really want to be involved? I really was concerned about disappointing my mom and old man, but also about risking being outcast — not being included or invited to anything in the neighborhood anymore.

Michael (cont’d): Initially, I was affiliated by just living in the neighborhood, so I really wanted to capture and convey the reality that, even if a Black boy doesn’t necessarily come from the harshest, most neglectful, depraved circumstances, he could still be drawn to that because he doesn’t have the maturity to get himself out of those situations.

Dré: Man, I feel like you’re writing my life, so I know this book will resonate with so many different people. Are there any special shout-outs that you want to give?

Michael: First, thank you for being that springboard I could bounce ideas off of. It’s no secret why I chose you to do a review. You’re ethical, honest, and analytical. I didn’t want a pat on the back for writing *One Foot In*. I wanted critical analysis and I knew I would get that from you.

Secondly, I want to acknowledge my friend, Ramona Perkins. She was the first to believe in my writing and put up the money to have it typed.

And this project would have looked so different without Shawn. She took the reins and didn’t drop them.

I’m in their debt and will be forever grateful to these women. ▀

Chicago is one of the greatest cities in the nation, and the South Side of our great city is filled with institutions like the DuSable Museum, cultural celebrations like the African Fest, and community centers like the Women's Justice Institute. These institutions promote engagement with history and culture, while calling us to join in love with each other. This is the Chicago way.

However, as I read Michael Broadway's depiction of the experience of two Black teenage boys navigating the grit of the city, I am reminded that local residents have renamed some of the areas and neighborhoods to describe the violence within them: Terror Town, Moe-Town, Low End, and the Wild Hundreds (Roseland), where Broadway serves us a tale that unfolds all too often within big cities like Chicago.

Readers who suggest that communities are created solely on family values, gang culture, or cultural traditions would miss a key component in Broadway's book, which provides insight into the functioning of communities devoid of economic stability.

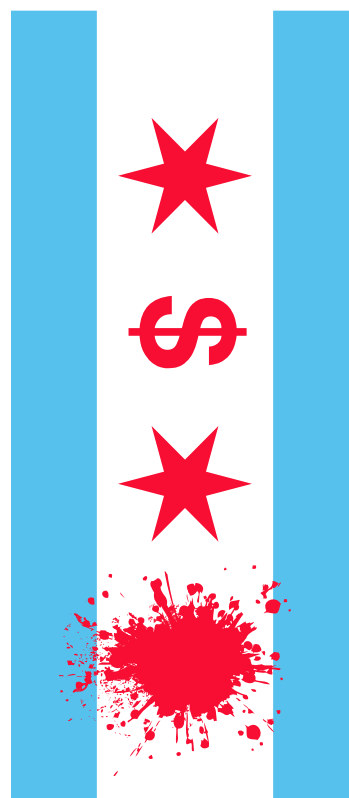
What allows this book — the description of the environment created by the characters Frank and Dupree — to be amazing is that these teenagers show us how often we forget about a young person's inability to use reasoning and logic, how the police brutalize Black teens with the narratives law enforcement creates for them, and how the desire to have financial freedom in a capitalist market intersects with these realities.

Broadway highlights how the centering of drug use and selling, liquor stores, and community violence often exploits urban areas. Although this story is in part fictional, the realities lived by teenage boys who turn to gang culture are too often hyper-emphasized by media outlets, resulting in these communities being treated as ignoble by elected officials and law enforcement agents such as those Broadway describes.

GRIT & GLORY

*A response to One Foot In —
a complex tapestry of
Chicago's South Side through
Michael Broadway's eyes.*

By Erika Ray



Broadway's writing reflects his experience of growing up on the South Side (Roseland Avenue). He intimately describes what real life is like for some youth in Chicago. Capitalism, consumerism, and the need for economic stability impact each character, whether it's the validation and high expectations represented by a pair of Jordans given to Frank by his parents; the confidential informant Jay Dub's ability to gain Frank's trust through helping him make money by selling drugs; or the first robbery perpetrated by Dupree and Frank. The viscosity of capitalism adheres to each character, allowing them to have only one established identity if they engage in the construction of consumerism. Capitalism in Broadway's story is distinctive due to the power and symbolism that transfer from an item (e.g., gym shoes, leather coats, or cars) into the visibility of one's personhood.

These characters and their representation of hood entrepreneurship — through narcotics distribution and exploitation of addiction — while controversial, give us a radical and transformative glimpse into the textured love affair between consumerism and fear of poverty. A desire to have a piece of the free market influences each character's actions. No matter the intention of the characters, the reality they live within, or the unconventional standards they have set for themselves, Broadway reveals through detailed iterations how they might disappear from the story if they lived in a world without financial insecurity. His brilliance allowed me to continually readjust my gaze into some of the dirty business of capitalism and consumerism.

The magnificence of this story pierced my heart because it is old and new. These two Black sons, Frank and Dupree, mirror stories like those

of Larry Hoover and Jeff Ford or John Singleton's depiction of Franklin Saint and his uncle Jerome from the hit series "Snowfall." I can see in Broadway's writing each character's inability to hold on to themselves, a creative vision that mirrors the likes of Ralph Ellison in *Invisible Man* and Richard Wright in *Native Son*. While these stories do not start or end with capitalism, we can see how economic instability severs each character from who, where, and what they dream of being.

One Foot In, while loosely based on Broadway's real life, is complete because it captures the mystification of capitalism and shares a portrayal of love and pain, loyalty and mistrust, power and violence, success and the fear of being erased by enforced poverty.

This story and its ability to make us anticipate the second book mirror Future and Kanye West's declaration of "city on fire" in their song "Keep it Burnin." Broadway sets the city on fire with every page. To truly know Chicago and the plight of Chicago youth we must examine how they are surviving — not only what capitalism and consumerism bring into the city but also what they remove. Broadway's writing is not a call for us to investigate these teens but to look upon them with fresh eyes. Through his story we should all be willing and able to give Frank and Dupree compassion and understanding, to see them as more than the subjective labels that have been placed upon them (e.g., superpredators). This book is a gift to the young person surviving Chicago and a warning to those in power, saying that multidimensional change through economic and social equality will support success and victory for our malleable youth.

Poems & Essays

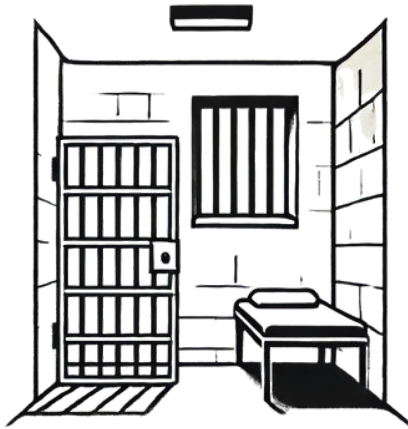
Exploring loss, confinement, and brotherhood

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These Cell Walls Speak

By Michael Broadway

These cell walls speak
I hear muffled screams
Behind years of lead paint and shattered dreams
These cell walls speak
Crying out like a choir, lamenting



These cell walls speak
Deliberate indifferences
Natural life sentences
Environmental injustices
BUT IS ANYONE LISTENING?

These cell walls speak.

The Lost Ones

By Lynn Octavius Green



Angels sit on their invisible
perches, huddled together
like pigeons on a cold
winter night, and watch.

Suffering surrounds them at
every turn, yet all they do
is watch.

Where is the beauty in suffering?
Why does Mercy hide her face from us?

The Angels watch as the century-old
iron rods swell, breaking their
concrete encasement. Cracks run
across the once sturdy architecture.

These walls and the floors become moist.
Just breathing takes a Herculean
effort.

Where are you, Mercy?

Do you hate us because we've made
mistakes?

Are we not the roses that grew from the
concrete, like Tupac Shakur spoke of?

It's hard to breathe.

Brackish water fills my sink basin.

Lead and rust surround my cage of
concrete and metal. I can taste
their poison in my ramen noodles,
I can feel their metallic particles on my skin.

It's hard to breathe.

Calls for help fall on deaf ears, as
the Angels sit on their invisible perches,
huddled together like pigeons
on a cold winter night,
and watch.

A Reason, A Season, A Lifetime

By D.C. Crite

It's 11 p.m. It's quiet. I sit here in the middle of my bunk in my white boxer shorts, a T-shirt. I'm crying.

To write about being overcome with emotion seems almost trite, but it's so damned therapeutic and purgative. This is my way of dealing with loss. Amidst my tears, I am provoked to such heavy thought that I am often left to wonder, "What has led me down this road of query, conviction, and remembrance again?"

Right now, a quote keeps playing in my mind, in my head: "People come into your life for a reason, a season, or a lifetime. When you figure out which it is, you know exactly what to do." Michael Broadway's entrance into my life turned out to be all of the above. I know exactly what to do — I'll never let his impact upon me go unspoken.

When B-Way decided to meet me where I was, I believe he knew I was struggling mightily with some personal issues. He didn't press, but he waited until I was comfortable enough to let him comfort me.

An answered prayer — the reason he came into my life. He came to assist me through my difficulties, to provide me with guidance and support, to aid me physically, emotionally, and even spiritually. He was truly a godsend. He was there for the reason I needed him to be. He held me while I was crossing one of the busiest streets of my life.

This was also a rainy season in my life. As I was enduring my own struggles, Michael proved that when people come into your life for a season, it is because your turn has come to share, grow, or learn. I did all three.

He brought me an experience of peace and made me smile and laugh again. He also taught me something I had never done — rely on myself. As my brother, my friend, my rock, he gave me an unbelievable amount of joy. His authentic love for me and his brilliant smile were the sunshine that I needed after so much rain in my life. Unfortunately, I realize that in the same way that leaves fall from the trees, snow melts, or the moon becomes full and then disappears, our time, our season ended at the divinely appointed time. However, my heart will hold him there for a lifetime.

Some days, I've thought I'd be better off dead; the pain seems to grow, the memories linger, and it feels like a part of my own life has died. I know that though our years together weren't many, I was taught many life lessons in our season together — those things I must build upon to have a solid emotional foundation. Thanks to Michael, I'm growing and sharing; my life has been made better by his being a part of it. He will always be my guiding light.

It's midnight, still quiet, and my tears have now dried. However, my thoughts still gallop down the ever-present emotional gauntlet of loss. As I reach the end — for this moment in time — I remember attending a seminar, and the speaker asked this question: "If you had three last breaths, who would you use them on and what would you say?" Ironically, I could not answer the question then because I had never met Michael Broadway. I can answer now.

The person would be Michael Broadway, and my last three breaths would be used to say, "I love you."

I've come to appreciate that the prayers I sent up were why B-Way came into my life. During my rainy season, he was my protection, my umbrella. And his love, support, and brotherhood have changed me, giving me a lifetime of precious memories. I now know why he came into my life, and I'll forever love him for that reason. ■

“As I was enduring my
own struggles,
Michael proved that
when people come
into your life for a
season, it is because
your turn has come to
share, grow, or learn. I
did all three.”

I am writing this letter in the eleventh hour. My eyes are tired and my body aches, but my thoughts are clear.

“I would never do that to you. I love you, bro.”

These were your last words to me as I sat in Room No. 15 in the education building, typing up another résumé for graduate school. You sat right next to me that day, but only for a moment to speak your piece and embrace me in a hug. Then you were gone.

Just like that, I would never see you again. I’m still coming to terms with that. I sat in the cell on your birthday, and I cried like a newborn baby. A vicious storm raged outside the broken, battered windows that sat almost directly across from my cell. All of these windows are bolted shut, yet water still enters the cell house.

I also wrote to you that day because I didn’t know what to do. I wrote, and I cried, and I wrote some more, then I cried some more.

I don’t remember the storm ever dying down, but I remember lying down with a face full of tears. In a fit of anger, I balled your letter up and threw it across the room.

Where would I send my letter to you?

I lay there in my bunk listening to the storm rage behind me.

“Happy birthday, B-way. You cooked for me on my birthday. So you know I had to cook for you on your day,” I said out loud to no one.

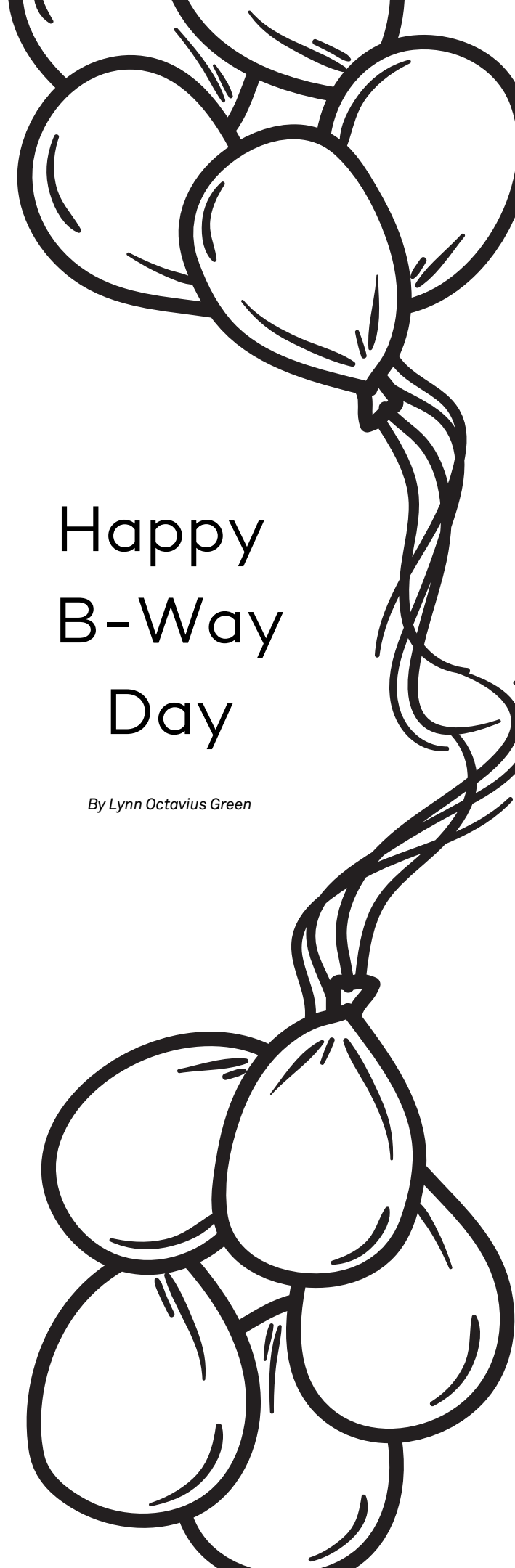
But guess what? Every person, you hear me? Every person from the NPEP community and beyond who you impacted with your light, every person who loved you, like your Cohort 1 brothers, all cooked or participated in celebrating your birthday. Can you believe that?

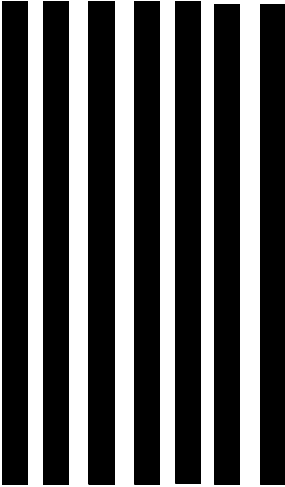
I’m pretty sure we will celebrate your birthday every year. Your birthday may become an NPEP holiday that the entire NPEP community will celebrate someday. Happy B-Way Day! I like the sound of that.

Happy birthday, B-Way. You’ll always be loved, celebrated, and never forgotten. ■

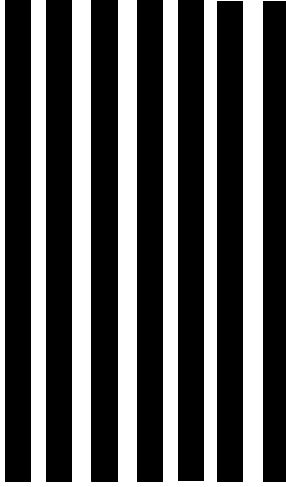
Happy B-Way Day

By Lynn Octavius Green





PATIENT, NOT PRISONER



*The struggle for health care
behind bars*

By Michael Broadway

After nearly four hours in surgery, I burrowed my way back to consciousness, only to find one of my arms and a leg shackled to the hospital bed.

Two correctional officers stood watch over me. The weight of those restraints wore more heavily on my mind than they did on my body; they were reminders that my body remained in a carceral state and needed to be secured despite being incapacitated after undergoing delicate surgery.

Feeling dehumanized in that moment was the least of my concerns. Were the doctors able to successfully remove my prostate? Did the cancer metastasize? Those were my chief fears.

Unfortunately, before I was able to fully regain consciousness and get answers from the doctors who performed the surgery, a nurse informed the officers that I was being released.

With my mind still in a fog, I was dressed back into my prison blues, shackled, and handcuffed. I was helped into a wheelchair and led out of the room into darkness. Would I live?

In 2018, I first started experiencing discomfort in my prostate area.

As a Black man, it's always been hard for me to trust health care officials. The U.S. Public Health Service Untreated Syphilis Study at Tuskegee —

known as the “Tuskegee Experiments” — began in 1932 and involved 600 Black men, none of whom provided their consent.

By 1943, penicillin became more widely available for the treatment of syphilis, but the subjects of the study, 399 of whom had syphilis, were not offered treatment. The study was published in 1972 and quickly ridiculed by the scientific community for being “ethically unjustified” — four decades after the study began.

It's hard to fathom the unconscionable treatment those Black men had to endure; as a result, I have always felt unsafe in health care spaces. I don't believe that they have my best interest at heart. But I felt enough discomfort that I shook off those fears and signed up for a sick call to see the doctor.

I remember being nervous before walking into a room at Stateville Correctional Center no bigger than my prison cell to talk with a nurse practitioner. The room was cramped: a small desk, which the nurse practitioner occupied, and a file cabinet on one side, a miniature exam table, and a plastic seat on the other side. I sat in the plastic seat with my hands stuffed in my pockets, staring at a spider as it spun its web high up in the corner of the office above the nurse's desk. I said nothing.

“The weight of those restraints wore more heavily on my mind than they did on my body; they were reminders that my body remained in a carceral state and needed to be secured despite being incapacitated after undergoing delicate surgery.”

After about five minutes, the nurse turned her chair toward me and asked several questions.

How old are you?

“46,” I replied.

Have you ever had a prostate exam before?

“No,” I said.

Would you like to have one today?

“Yes!” I exclaimed. This is what I had been seeking.

She stood, opened the file cabinet, and grabbed a blue and white Chuck and other medical supplies. I watched her meticulously lay out those supplies and place them on the exam table beside me. Fear was starting to take over after I recognized the tube of KY Jelly, but I knew I had to go through with this exam. I had to know why I was experiencing discomfort in my prostate area.

The nurse put on some blue rubber gloves and asked me to stand up, drop my pants and boxers to my ankles, and lean over the exam table. I paused and looked at her and then over to the open door, where other individuals in custody were waiting to be seen by her. An officer stood guard. Sensing my

apprehension, the nurse said, “Security over privacy.” She smiled at me.

I didn’t find it funny. Where was my privacy? Where was her professionalism? Again, I contemplated not going through with it, but before I could say I was cool on the whole thing, the nurse said she could have another nurse stand guard at the door if that would help. I said it would, but it didn’t.

After going through the invasive procedure and feeling violated by it, I promised that I wouldn’t do it again, especially after I was given the good news that all was okay. Hearing my prostate was not enlarged gave me relief.

However, I continued to feel extreme discomfort and signed up for exams again and again.

Each time, I received the same answer: that my prostate was not enlarged and that I should consider taking it easy playing with myself. It was an ill-advised attempt at being funny that I did not like. From 2018 to 2022, I had four or five embarrassing digital exams and each time I was met with unprofessionalism or a lack of privacy or seriousness about my health care concerns.

It wasn't until February 2022 that I'd finally convinced a nurse coming through the cell house that I had grave concerns about my prostate: I wanted to have a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test run, which would tell me whether I had cause for concern. She advised me to say that prostate cancer ran in my family.

On a Tuesday afternoon, they drew my blood. On Friday, I was rushed to the health care unit, where a doctor wanted to see me. My PSA level was 8.56. A normal PSA level is between 0 and 0.5.

After my positive diagnosis of prostate cancer, I was scheduled to see an oncologist — in December. So, for 10 months, I knew nothing besides the fact that I had cancer. Questions to the nursing staff either went unanswered, or I was told to save all my questions for when I went to the University of Illinois-Chicago hospital.

“For five years, I went through waves of mental anguish because of a lack of care and direction from the health care staff at nearly every step along the way. Why? Because I was incarcerated.”

During this time, I relied on family and friends to do Google searches for me to learn about prostate cancer and what I could expect to happen. In December, I had a biopsy. In January 2023, I received those results: I had an aggressive form of prostate cancer that they feared could be spreading. In February, I had an ultrasound. The good news was that the cancer hadn't spread; I was advised to have my prostate removed as quickly as possible. In March, I had the surgery. When I woke up, I was ushered out of the hospital.

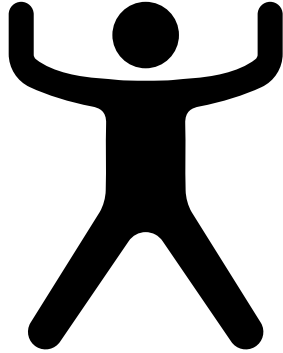
When I returned to Stateville, the doctors and nursing staff didn't know anything about recovery times or expectations concerning rehabilitation. As fate would have it, I suffered a setback. I walked to the school building two days following my surgery, and my testicles had swollen to the point where it was hard to walk. The act landed me in a wheelchair for more than a month.

For two months, I languished, not knowing whether my surgery was a success. It was mental torture. In May, the doctors gave me the good news: my surgery had been successful, and there were no signs of the cancer in the lymph nodes immediately attached to my prostate, a sign that the cancer hadn't spread. All of this was good news to me then — but it could have been too little or too late.

For five years, I went through waves of mental anguish because of a lack of care and direction from the health care staff at nearly every step along the way. Why? Because I was incarcerated.

My journey revealed a harsh reality: incarceration often strips individuals of their right to humane health care. I had to endure unnecessary suffering and mental anguish despite being a patient in need of care.

Health care should be a fundamental right that extends to everyone, irrespective of prison walls, skin color, or ability to pay. We are all human — treat us with humanity.

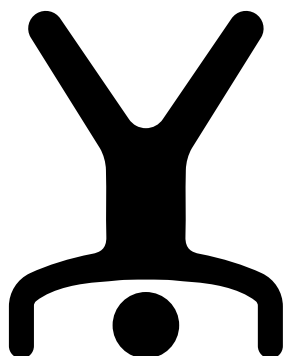


MY BROTHER AND I

*Confronting mortality and
searching for hope amid
despair*

UNITED IN STRUGGLE

By Tony Triplett



Frustration and nervousness plagued me as I sat in the inmate infirmary bullpen.

It had been three hours, and they still hadn't called me to see the doctor. The day turned for the worse when the nurse came over and addressed another inmate, a towering figure covered in tattoos.

"You have Stage 4 cancer," she said.

"Stage 4?" he responded. "What happened to Stages 1, 2, and 3?"

The nurse didn't respond. She casually shrugged her shoulders.

"What does that mean?" asked the inmate, mimicking the nurse's nonchalant manner.

She didn't answer him; she just stared at him as if he were the problem, not her. Frustrated by her lack of empathy, the inmate looked in my direction.

"Is she serious?" he asked.

I didn't respond to him. Instead, I addressed the nurse. "You should probably go to lunch," I said.

She was about to contest my suggestion until she saw the look in my eyes and the veins in the other inmate's neck pulsating from anger. After a few seconds that seemed like minutes, she finally returned to the nurse's station, leaving me with a man who was literally about to die.

All I could do was watch as the inmate paced back and forth.

"This is some bullshit!" he screamed.

He pointed in my direction several times, expecting a response, but all I could do was stare at the white tiled floor. After 20 minutes of ranting, I asked to be sent back to the unit. While he needed empathy, I didn't have any to spare. In prison, empathy is a limited resource, and whatever empathy I had left was for my cellmate, who I thought of more as my brother.

I arrived at my cell in hopes of finding solace. Instead, I found my cellmate Michael Broadway, aka "B-Way," drenched in sweat from an intense workout.

At 5'9" and 250 pounds, B-Way could easily pass for a retired football player.

Tired and exhausted, I tried to get into the top bunk. But B-Way remained jogging in place, blocking my path to the bed.

"What you doing?" he asked.

"I'm tired," I said.

"So, what!" he replied. "Let's work out."

I didn't know whether he was asking or telling, but either way, I found myself running in place alongside him. While workouts hadn't been part of his daily routine, medical circumstances had forced him to take better care of himself. Just like the guy in the hospital, B-Way also had Stage 4 cancer (prostate, to be exact).

We ran together for 20 minutes before my left calf locked up. Surprisingly, I didn't stop; instead, I went for another 20 minutes.

Once we transitioned into doing push-ups, B-Way broke the silence.

"So, what did the doctor say?" he asked.

"I didn't see him," I said.

"Why not?"

"Because the nurse pissed me off."

"What did she do?"

I didn't answer him right away. I pretended to struggle with my push-ups. I found myself in an awkward position. The last thing I wanted to talk about was somebody else having cancer.

"I just got tired of waiting," I said.

"I know the feeling," B-Way replied. Even though I hated lying, I didn't see the point of telling the truth at that moment.

Our next workout was jumping jacks. Normally, we would do them in sets of 25, but we both elected to go for 15 minutes straight.

I didn't respond. I just stayed in unison with him as we did the jumping jacks.

"We can't die in prison!" he said. Why was he saying "we"? I didn't have cancer.

But I knew what he meant.

At 285 pounds, I was overweight. My diet consisted of junk food: cereal, cakes, candy bars, and soups. Even though they served food, it wasn't very appetizing, so I normally ate items I purchased from the commissary.

Even though a doctor or nurse never told me, I knew I was a diabetic. It was only a matter of time before I was laid up in a diabetic coma.

"Ain't nobody dying in prison," I finally said.

After our workout, I stood in front of the stainless steel sink. I let the water run, but it remained brownish-looking. Realizing that it wasn't going to turn clear, I grabbed eight bottles of water, went back behind our makeshift curtain, and began to wash up. B-Way sat crouched on the floor, staring off into space.

"We gotta get the fuck out of here," he said.

I could see the tears streaming down his face.

"We will," I said. "Just be patient."

"I'm all out of time, patience isn't a luxury for me," he said.

He was right. Despite our long sentences owed to the state of Illinois, his time was definitely borrowed. I stood frozen, staring at the cellmate who I viewed as a brother and saying to myself, 'Why him?' Whether he knew it or not, I always envied him. Because everyone gravitated to him, he had a strong support system on the outside, and a loving companion.

"You're going to be good, B-Way," I said, wiping the tears from my eyes.

Twenty minutes later, B-Way and I switched positions in the cell. Just like me, he was forced to wash up in bottled water. As for me, I stared at the 96 steel bars that confined me.

"Do you ever think about dying?" asked B-Way.

"Sometimes," I said solemnly, then tried to lighten the mood. "I spend more time worrying about where I'll go."

"Well, it's got to be heaven," he said. "Because we already in hell." ■



*Mourning, resilience, and
the brutal realities of this
place*

By Yaphet Davis

After submitting several requests over the past couple of months, I was finally moved to Stateville's E-House on Tuesday, July 2. When I entered the building, the guys appeared to be just as pleased to see me back as I was to see them. The sergeant disappeared into his office, leaving me standing at the base of the stairs waiting for him to return to tell me which room I was moving into. His pace indicated that there was a lot going on. The sergeant reappeared, staring at a sheet on a clipboard, his eyes searching for my name.

"Davis, you're going to 909."

While looking up at the flights of stairs I had to carry my belongings up, I saw him quickly disappear again from my peripheral vision.

Unbeknownst to me, 909 was the room Michael Broadway (B-Way) had died in just two weeks earlier. Everyone was taken aback by the fact that they would move someone in there, especially considering there were dozens of empty rooms throughout the building. Besides, B-Way hadn't even been placed in the ground yet. We had lost a good brother, a wonderful friend, and, to some, a close companion, a valuable member of the community.

The news was a gut punch, deflating some of the joy I had from reuniting with classmates and friends. I spent the next 30 minutes despondently taking my things up four flights of stairs, piece by piece, trying to figure out why the placement office would do such a thing.

I couldn't help but believe there was malicious intent behind this move — a slap in the face to a community that is still in mourning. If not intentional, then surely this amounts to gross indifference — the same indifference that resulted in B-Way's untimely death. Either way, it added insult to injury.

When I finished bringing my things upstairs, I stood at my door and forced myself to focus on the next task at hand. That's when I noticed the wreckage left behind from that tragic day. It looked like something violent had taken place, like there had been a scuffle and B-Way was fighting for air as this place strangled the life out of him. To me, leaving the room in that condition for me to clean felt like they used me to help them get rid of the last remnants of his presence.

Most of his things were gone, but there were a few items among a ton of trash: an open cheese cup, a piece of a pickle, a small cup with mayo in it. These were just some of the ingredients of the burrito I found in the sink, the last meal he never got to eat. As I cleaned, throwing things away, I looked for something of his to hold on to — something that would serve as a memento of this great man who is no longer with us. Something I would see and instantly think about what he represented, or maybe recall some of the nuggets of wisdom he had dropped on me on numerous occasions.

“The way he died was an encapsulation of what prison was designed to do to the incarcerated: to suffocate us, to take our voices by virtue of constraining our ability to breathe. Prison is designed to take lives.”

Like one time when we walked from study hall and talked about his book. He always encouraged others to write. I reluctantly told him I hadn't purchased his book because urban novels aren't really my thing. He explained that there is so much wisdom in every experience. Everything he wrote, including his novel and most of the assignments he completed throughout school, was written through the lens of his experiences. Since then, I've tried to incorporate pieces of my story into my writings.

It took four hours to complete my usual relocation ritual of getting my new space clean to my standards. I was quite disappointed not to discover any worthy representation of my now-deceased friend. Wiping the inside of the sink dry, I happened to look up and notice there was a mirror taped to the wall.

For a moment, I imagined B-Way standing precisely where I stood, maybe splashing water on his face to cool himself in the suffocating heat on the ninth gallery. I imagined at some point during those last horrifying moments of his life, while struggling to breathe, he looked upon his reflection and saw what his suffering looked like. I was frozen, staring, my vision blurred by tears swelling in the wells of my eyes. The gravity of

the situation began to weigh so heavily on me that I had to sit down.

But then I began to think about this situation being a part of the ongoing fight for our lives that we have all been enduring.

I told myself to soldier up and gathered myself to my feet and back in front of the mirror, again imagining B-Way's last time standing in that very spot — airways constricted, distressed, his ability to speak for himself constrained. The way he died was an encapsulation of what prison was designed to do to the incarcerated: to suffocate us, to take our voices by virtue of constraining our ability to breathe. Prison is designed to take lives.

I began to see the mirror differently. In the solitude of that room, no one else saw what B-Way saw when he looked in the mirror in the last moments of his life. That last image captured by the mirror. The narrative that exists about incarcerated people has caused society to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the violence imposed on prison populations. Prison was designed to be a mechanism of inhumane brutality hidden in plain sight. Sometimes it appears as if the mirror is the only thing paying attention, capturing every image of the violence that occurs within these walls. ■



MEMORIES

OF

OUR



BROTHER, STUDENT, & FRIEND

*The NPEP community — students, professors,
and friends — share their memories of Michael
Broadway and the lasting impact that he had on
them.*

photo credit: Monica Wnuk

If the measure of a man is determined by the weight of his actions, then Michael Broadway (B-Way) measures to the highest peaks of the tallest mountains.

Soar, B-Way, Soar.

— Joshua Hoeniges, Cohort 4

MEMORIES OF OUR BROTHER

A JOYFUL SMILE



I can still see his smile. He always greeted you with the most vibrant smile that made you feel welcomed, and made you want to smile. Through all his circumstances, he never stopped smiling.

— Miguel Garcia, Cohort 3

B-Way has always been a genuine spirit and an asset to his circle of friends. From the moment I met him, he continuously greeted and embraced me like a pure-hearted and loving big brother. He was full of love and joy, and I truly felt that he wanted to see me with that same joy he had. Therefore, my favorite memory of Michael Broadway is not some single moment but is the entire experience of his presence. May his genuine and loving spirit resonate throughout this community to forever inspire our hearts toward each other.

— Yaphet Davis, Cohort 4

When I was accepted into NPEP, I was nervous not knowing what to expect and who would be there. I saw B-way on the tablet as part of Cohort 1. This gave me great comfort knowing this brother would be there. When I made it to Stateville and he saw me, he greeted me with a smile and open arms. He told me whatever you need, I got you. My first class was philosophy, and guess who was the first person who approached me to help: B-Way. He used to call me Mr. Fundamental, saying I have basketball game like Tim Duncan. Although he has departed physically, I see his smile daily. Thank you, My Brother.

— Oliver Crawford, Cohort 4

We first met back in the summer of 2008. I was introduced to him on the yard by a guy who I still consider a close friend. He extended a hand and pulled me into a hug with an infectious smile that I came to know so well. No matter what I was going through, his smile always got through and when we parted ways I was smiling too.

— Edmond Duffin, Cohort 2

I can't say that I knew Broadway well, but my experiences with my brother were always good! I never experienced Broadway in a negative moment. He would always have a smile and a joyful spirit when he greeted me! He will be missed, not only because of the impact he would have on this world as a powerful Black man, but also his love for life was palpable for us all! He will truly be missed!

— Taki Peacock, Cohort 3

Last year during football season, I overheard D.C. talking to B-Way about how he had a lot to cook, and it would be "tight" on him to try to fit B-Way into the mix. So I offered to cook for B-Way since he's the big homie. I made him what we consider a "Big Boy," which is a huge burrito. Little did I know I got myself into a bind with him (LOL). After he ate it, that's all he wanted me to do for him. My last image of him was a smile on his face and him saying, "Waul won't make that Big Boy for me no more."

— Paul "Waul" Forbes, Cohort 2



When I visualize my memory of Mike, I can't help but smile to myself because of his infectious energy — always bright, vibrant, and upbeat. His smile and optimism were so electric it could illuminate any room, no matter the mood. We love you and miss you, Mike.

— Michael Jorgensen, Cohort 4

I'll always remember Michael's smile and how he lit up the room.

— Jamie Fields, NPEP volunteer

B-Way and I bonded over our basketball and our shared love for someone we both considered a little brother (Jason Harris). As many already know very well, B-Way was the ultimate believer in one's ability to change. He was an optimist at heart and that is what drew me closer. He could find a ray of light in the darkest of places; for many of his incarcerated brothers, he was that light. His smile, his energy, his humility will always be remembered and forever missed.

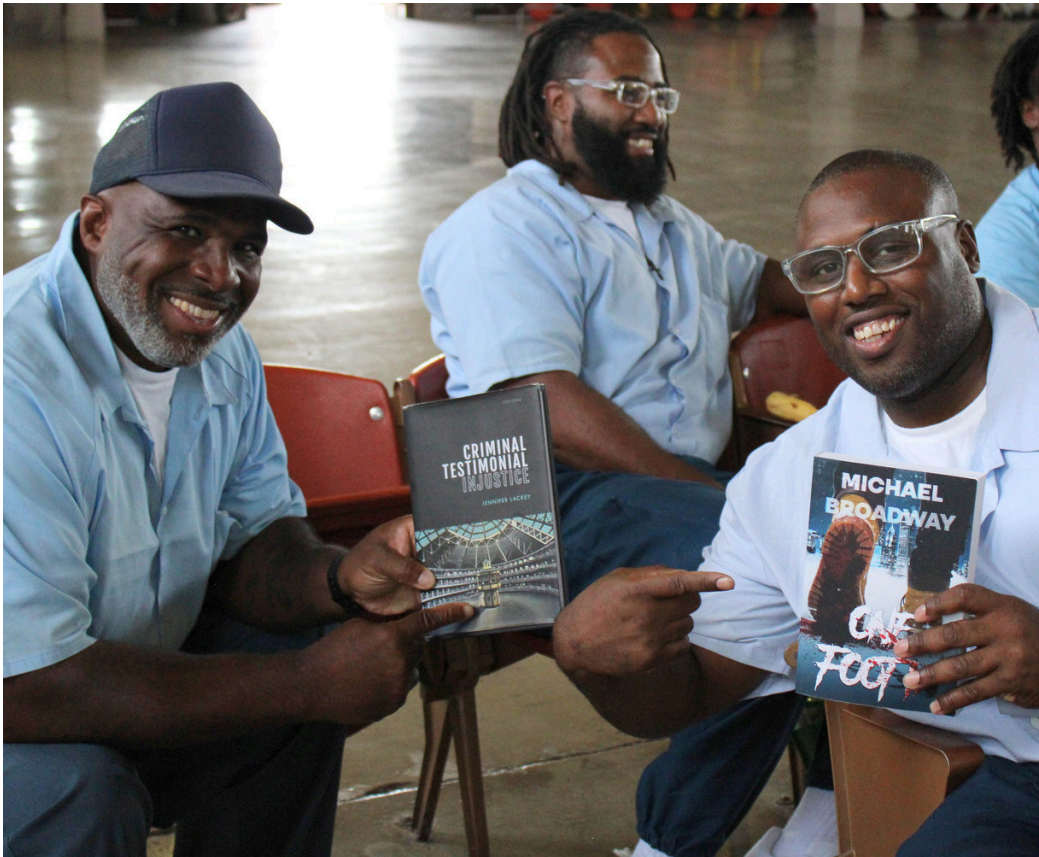
— “The Minister” CD Everett, a friend

Michael was a true joy. I feel lucky to have known him, but remain inspired by his charisma, his charm, and his continued legacy.

— Gerpha Gerlin, NPEP wellness team member

MEMORIES OF OUR BROTHER

THE TRUE DEFINITION OF “BROTHER”



To a man who's done so much, I could say "thank you" a thousand times and it still wouldn't be enough. Thank you so much for teaching me the true meaning of sacrifice and loyalty and for letting me know that it's okay to be my true self. You showed me how to be selfless, generous, loving, and kind. You granted me with the gift of true brotherhood and for that I will forever be grateful. When I wanted to hate, you taught me love, and when I wanted to give up, you encouraged me to keep going. When all is said and done, you were like no other. Being there when it mattered most, a real True Brother. Rest in Power.

Your lil brother, Tony.

— Tony Triplett, Cohort 1

I don't have a favorite memory of Michael. Just being around him made me feel like a better person. He never had a bad word to say about anyone. My world — and others' I am sure — is dimmer with his light not in it. I will keep a flicker of it alive in my heart.

— Robert “Bobaloo” Cloutier, Cohort 1

I'm a writer, and Mike used to ask countless questions about writing a book: “How do you do this? What do you think of that?” Sometimes he would ask the same question twice in one day.

I was so glad when he wrote that damn book! I was also damn proud of him. The accomplishment was so huge. When we got moved back to E-House, we were right next door to each other, and he told me he was writing his second book. Ugh! This time he had all new questions.

He told me once that he wanted to write like me. I don't think he ever knew I wanted to write like him. Man, I miss him.

— Anthony Ehlers, Cohort 1

The Tuesday before B-Way's passing, I spent that morning talking and laughing with my brother. For the past two months, I'd started to forgo yard, preferring the peace and solitude of my cell. However, Monday night at the end of Dayroom, B-Way — with his unique ability to coax folks into stuff they might not otherwise choose to do — said, “Shafiq, you gon' come to yard with me in the AM?” Before I knew it, I was nodding my head in assent. I had no idea that would be the last time I'd see my beloved friend. As always, Mike was giving me a gift without my realizing the value until a later time. I will miss him, Always.

— William “Shafiq” Peeples Jr.,
Cohort 1



“Drizzy!” B-Way appeared at the bars, seemingly out of nowhere, snatching me out of a daydream with his energetic greeting.

“Where you comin’ from, bro?” I recovered from my agitation.

“Islamic Revival.”

“Straight up? I know you started going back to Jumu’ah/Taleem...”

“Yeah, I’m trying to get back on my path....I gotta be right for my grandkids and Shawn...”

He trailed off and we shared a rare silent moment of vulnerability and reflection.

“You straight though?” He switched the focus to me.

“I’m cool.”

“Aight. Police on my door, luh’ you bro.”

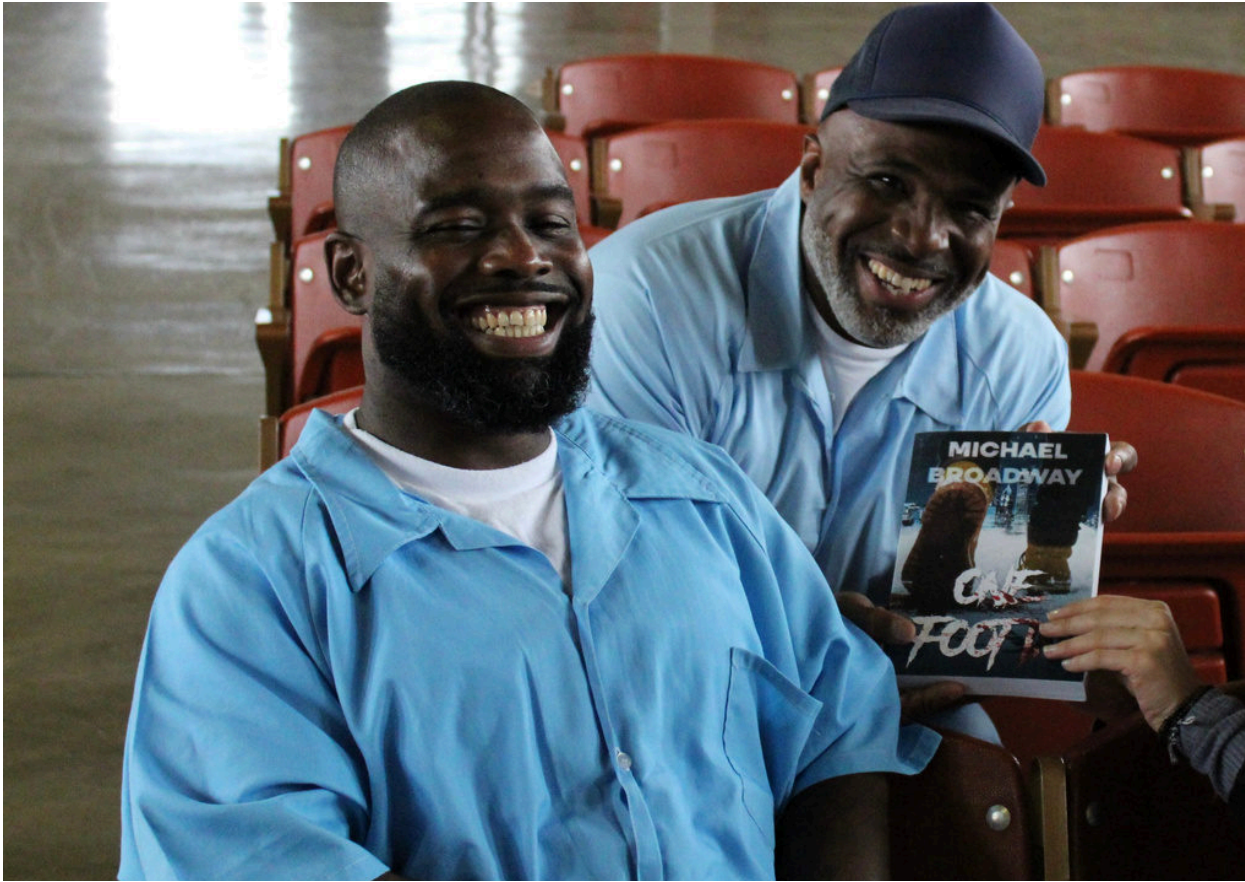
— André “Dré” Patterson, Cohort 1

On May 26, I invited B-Way to a Memorial Day celebration that my veteran’s group was putting on. It was the last time he heard me sing. I sang “Tears in Heaven” by Eric Clapton and “It’s So Hard to Say Goodbye to Yesterday” by Boyz II Men. He told me how much I surprised him and how he enjoyed the songs.

Today, I dedicate these two songs to him. He was more than just a classmate and friend. He was my brother! We had a natural organic connection. I’ll miss his voice calling me “Country Boy.” I’ll miss his smile warming my heart, and above all, I’ll miss his sense of humor and comedic timing. For instance, on my birthday (June 8), he called my name and said, “Happy Birthday, Country Boy” and began to play the “Happy Birthday Song” being sung by barnyard animals. Everyone in earshot got a laugh, and I smiled from ear to ear.

Thanks, B-Way, for enriching my life and showing me how to be an authentic person no matter the circumstances. I love you! I’ll miss you!

— Demetrice “DC” Crite, Cohort 1



At Professor Lackey's book reading, Michael and I took a picture of him holding his book. He acknowledged I was his brother.

— Robert Boyd, Cohort 1

Michael Broadway: A Mind, Individual, Caring, Heroic About Educating Lamentables. His Brave Reality Orchestrating Accomplishments, Dreaming Wisely, Acknowledging Yourself.

Thank you for believing in me and my abilities. Thank you for always having my back. Thank you for never ignoring my sorrows. Thank you for always encouraging me. Thank you for the love you would show, because it was needed. I will always be “yo Lil Bro,” and I will install the knowledge you gave me and make a difference. I love you, BIG BRO.

— Broderick Hollins, Cohort 2

Oh, Michael — you'd be proud of me! I felt a shift on the morning of July 26. Your presence was in my cell telling me to go to yard, pick up that ball again, and start hooping. Remember our last convo? You wanted me to start hooping with y'all. In your memory, I'm trying to get it back. My fat ass lost nine pounds and I'm working in the kitchen. Wishing I could flood you with food — I knew you loved to eat! But don't worry, it's Cohort 1 forever, and our community has come together to honor you. To make sure your memory lives on through your brothers, who love you dearly! You left a hell of a legacy and some giant footsteps to follow. I'll keep stepping, though — I learned to keep fighting by the example you set. Love you, brother.

— Todd Mandoline, Cohort 1



B-Way was like a little brother to me. He grew up with my nephews on 103rd. B-Way had a gregarious spirit. No matter the issue, the moment, the situation, he dealt with it with a smile.

My favorite memory is my first impression of B-Way. Once he realized who I was, he immediately started making calls to the streets to people who knew me, in order to pre-connect them with me to help facilitate my return back to society. I shall never forget his altruism.

— Ramon “Ben Khayil” Montague, Cohort 2

MEMORIES OF OUR BROTHER

A LOVING SENSE OF HUMOR

Michael and I share a myriad of memories together. I will surely miss how silly, funny, and lighthearted he was. Michael would often introduce himself as my father (Tory's father) when speaking of his accolades and aspirations. It didn't matter who it was, especially our professors, staff, and students at NPEP. This was Broadway's way of welcoming outside guests to our space. Although this was his way of joking with me, I found a sense of pride, honor, and joy knowing I was worthy of him loving me and supporting me like a father should a son. He will be forever in our hearts.

**— Taurean "Tory"
Decatur, Cohort 1**



*My favorite memory actually entails a collection of all of our encounters. You see, whenever we were around each other, he would find a way to put everyone at ease with a funny or sly quip. For example, in our English class with Professor Cutler, I read a passage from a required reading — *Borderlands* by Gloria Anzaldúa — in Spanish. When I finished, with a serious face Broadway was like, "I taught him that." Everyone laughed and the room was at ease.*

**— Lynn Green,
Cohort 1**

B-Way always knew how to make a life lesson sound humorous. One day I asked him whether he ever spent time in juvie (juvenile detention), and he said, “Almost. Once, when I was 14, my mom took forever coming to get me from the police station. I mean, she took a long time coming to get me. I was so glad to see her when she showed up.” I guess this would be my favorite memory because we laughed about it together.

— Abdul-Malik Muhammad, Cohort 1

I became fast friends with B-Way around 2016 or so. It seemed as if we were in every program together. I appreciated his friendship and having him in class with me because he was always positive and uplifting. Despite his intelligence, he seemed to feel that he had a lot of intellectual growing to do, so his inquisitive nature led him to absorb all that he could learn from his teachers and peers.

B-Way moved in a way that exuded love for anyone he interacted with. I know that I felt his love and genuineness every time I saw him. I was able to experience that love on June 18, 2024, the day before he passed away. We were in line waiting to be escorted to the dining room for lunch when he noticed me behind five or six other guys standing behind him. The instant he saw me, he flashed that big ol’ smile and began to walk toward me with his hand in the air. When he reached me, he slammed his hand into mine, squeezed, and pulled me in for an embrace. He never failed to greet me and show me love every time I saw him.

I won’t say that was the last time I’ve experienced his love because his love lives on in me and everyone who experienced his love. I love you, B-Way. You will be forever missed and forever in my heart. May you live eternally in God’s loving embrace, peace, and care.

— Benny Rios Donjuan, a friend

The first time I met B-Way was back in Menard. I was working as a janitor. One day he called me to his door and looked up at me and said, “Man, you are a huge dude. You must have played football!” I looked him square in the eyes and said, “Nope. I used to be a model — a runway model.” We stared at each other for a minute before we busted up laughing. Ever since then we made each other laugh.

— Dedric “Champ” Moore, Cohort 3

MEMORIES OF OUR BROTHER

AN INSPIRING SPEAKER



My favorite memory of and with Michael was the day of graduation. He and I were discussing his speech, and as a result instead of using his moment to praise Stateville, he used the moment to shine his light on himself and those who helped him along the way. Michael gave us all the awe-inspiring, tear-producing, and impactful line, “Mamma, how did I do?” A line that many of us wish we had the opportunity to say to our loved ones. Michael, you did well!

— Christopher Greathouse, Cohort 4

I was inspired by Broadway's graduation speech in relation to his beloved mother. The part that moved me most is when he asked his mother whether he had done enough to be good enough. I believe that Broadway was able to accomplish what thousands of youths don't get to see because of the street life they live. One thing that I can relate to is wanting to make our mothers proud of our own worth and our good will to carry on. For that I will continue to carry Broadway in memory and in my heart's goodwill to care. R.I.P. Broadway!! One love, Charles.

— Charles Serrano, Cohort 2



I first met Michael here in Stateville in 2020. Sharing space and time with him was a blessing that won't be forgotten. Not many people in here remain positive, but no matter what he encountered, it didn't change his radiant personality. There is no way to feel alone or down around him. When he gave his graduation speech, his heartfelt and emotional words got me emotional, knowing how hard he fought to make his momma and family proud.

— Hugo Ocon, Cohort 3



My favorite memory of Michael Broadway would have to be his speech at his graduation, where he spoke to his mother. That speech had such a strong impact on me. It brought me to tears.

My other favorite memories would be times spent talking, playing ball on the yard, and just kicking it in the cell house. One huge thing about B-Way is his humble ways and how any and every interaction with him felt genuine. I really do miss that brother, and I pray he is in a better place.

— Christopher Douglas, Cohort 3

MEMORIES OF OUR BROTHER

A WISE, DEDICATED WRITER



Please let Michael's family know that Michael inspired me in my journey to publish my own book. He would always take the time to encourage and mentor me. I've actually known B-Way since I was a kid. He and my older sister, Tamekia Dixon, grew up around one another. I loved hearing stories he'd tell about people from our neighborhood. I could tell too many, so I'll focus on his book One Foot In and his deepfelt desire to humanize the characters in his book with the hope of having the world respond to people from communities like Roseland with true respect and dignity.

— Mark "Yohanan" Dixon, Cohort 2

When I arrived at NPEP and introduced myself as a published author, Michael told me about his book on the way. We sat in the dayroom the day it went live on Amazon. I saw the same joy and sense of accomplishment that I had when my book did the same. I quickly ordered One Foot In. He autographed it and inspired me to work on my next book. The last study hall we attended, I read excerpts from his sequel. His legacy is established. He inspired and motivated me in ways I'll never forget. Rest in Power.

— Jabari Nicks, Cohort 4



Michael was an inspiration. With all that he dealt with, he always continued to rise and overcome. As an aspiring author myself, seeing Michael fulfill a dream of writing and publishing One Foot In under the conditions of a carceral environment put into perspective what's possible. He opened doors with his words and shined a light on all that we can do if we have the right mindset. He will be sorely missed not only by those who knew him personally but by the world that he was trying to positively impact. Rest in Peace, B-Way. We got you now.

— Ian Valencia, Cohort 4

One of the first conversations I had with Michael, he was showing me the cover art for his book One Foot In. I congratulated him and said, “That’s a great accomplishment.” He told me, “You’re gonna get a great education and be proud of yourself, but make sure you use this opportunity to leave your mark and create something memorable.” Michael was a true inspiration.

— Jason Gorham, Cohort 3

My heart aches in this moment. There is a memory that will forever stay with me. We were walking around the yard about 15 years ago, just building on our past, present, and what we dreamed for the future. I told him that I wanted to change the community. He said, “Cin, we are going to change the world one mind at a time.” I understood then, but today my understanding is really clear. B-Way set the example for me to make the needed change, and all I had to do is get one foot in their mind. I wouldn’t know it would turn into a book. That statement is a blueprint for change — one foot in their mind, one foot in their heart, then you are all in to help bring the needed change. I will forever love my brother. I will carry him with me in all that I do.

— Cincere Knowledge (Jamal Jones), Cohort 4

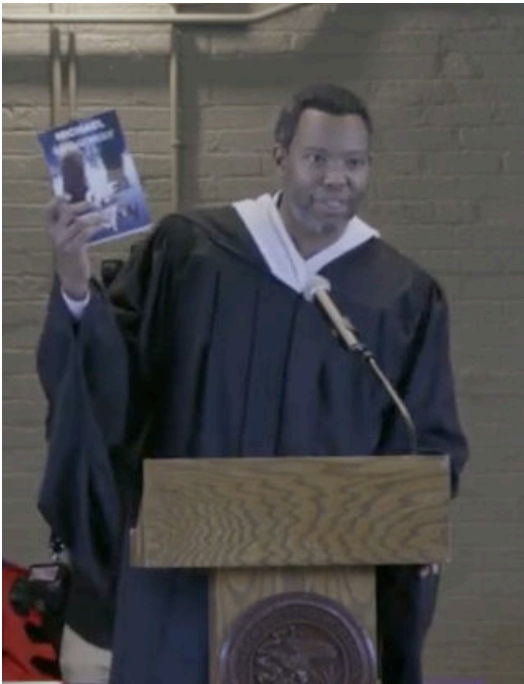


One of the last times I saw Michael was at his graduation. We were thrilled to have Ta-Nehisi Coates as the keynote speaker for NPEP's inaugural graduating class, but he brought his prepared remarks on his iPad. While this would have been a perfectly ordinary plan at any other graduation, our students were graduating in a maximum-security prison, and even Ta-Nehisi Coates can't just bring an iPad into Stateville. He would have to give his remarks off the cuff.

I remember being really moved that he spent so much time with the graduates while they were getting ready, donning their gowns, adjusting their caps, intermittently spot-checking and teasing one another about how they looked. When Coates stood to give his remarks, he explained his mistake and we all laughed at such a perfect anecdote to highlight the miracle at hand: where even Ta-Nehisi Coates cannot bring an iPad, these guys had just earned degrees from Northwestern University.

Going further, Coates immediately singled out Michael, noting that he had accomplished all of this while fighting late-stage cancer, and also, somehow, writing a book? Every person in the room beamed with pride. I'm not sure whether he knew yet (surely someone told him, eventually), but in the audience for Coates' address was Michael's mother, who that morning had seen and held her son for the first time in nearly two decades. It was an unforgettable day, in an unforgettable life. I will never forget him.

— Lauren Leydon-Hardy, founding GSAC member & admissions committee member for Cohort 1



MEMORIES OF OUR BROTHER

A LEADER BY EXAMPLE



*He was a man-made miracle
His smiles contagious
His laughter electric
His passion omnipotent
His tutorship warm and direct
His character humbling
His visions otherworldly
His love eternal
His memories still here.*

— Will Williams, Cohort 3

He was my Muslim brother and fellow NPEP community member. It hurts to believe that his life was needlessly cut short, but I am comforted by knowing that ALLAH is the Best of Planners, and He allowed B-Way to fulfill his purpose here on earth. My favorite memory of B-Way was seeing him every Friday at Jumu'ah (Muslim Service), being greeted by his bright smile and kind words. He was a leader who led by action. I will never forget him.

— De'Andre “Furooq” Robinson, Cohort 3

There are so many memories I have shared with B-Way. It is difficult to share just one here. My favorite thing about him is his ability to laugh in the face of adversity. While we were downstate, there were some tough times, and his laugh and smile helped get both of us through it all. A favorite moment of mine was when we were facilitating Lifestyle Redirection class. B-Way was running late for class and all the participants were asking whether B-Way was going to make it to class. You could feel the love from them all! He was just five minutes late, and you could feel the anticipation of his arrival.

— Scot (Scoti) Miller, Cohort 4



In the latter part of the pandemic, my job assignment was a “Cell House Gallery Worker.” During this time, Stateville unfortunately suffered from a water crisis, where we could not drink out of the faucet in our cells and the prison provided water in a 50-pound bag daily. Each man would receive eight bottles of water.

As the worker, I would have to carry these bags to where my and Michael’s cells were located and distribute it. The men were asked to keep empty bottles and I was to pour water into their bottles. Some guys would try to get 10-12 bottles a day, but B-Way would do all he could to make my job easier. Sometimes he would just ask for four or five bottles of water to make sure I had enough to finish the job.

His discipline was infectious and admired. When I could, I would give B-Way a whole 50-pound bag of water, against the rules. I wanted to reward him for being so disciplined in such a dire time. B-Way embodied such strength in a subtle way. He was a great leader and showed by example.

He will always and forever be a genuine friend.

— Kevin Scott, Cohort 2

I had the honor of meeting Michael for the first time while on the yard. He had an approachable character that gave me confidence to speak. From that day on, Michael would be a man who I could trust, look for advice from, and build on any ideas. He was an encouraging leader with a great smile and an amazing storyteller. I will always remember the talks we had about community, family, and life and will carry his memory forever.

— Kobie Singleton, Cohort 3

While Broadway was our TA in one of our recent classes, he and I were asked by our professor to walk with her to the principal’s office to retrieve laptops for our class that morning. While I could hold my own, and my safety level was good as I’m in Stateville’s school building five days a week, it was during this short walk with Professor Aquiline and Broadway that I personally felt protected by his presence when he assured Professor Aquiline that we had her back and that she was safe. His charisma and confidence were on full display that day. I regret not telling him how much I admired that charisma.

— Donnell Green, Cohort 3

MEMORIES OF OUR BROTHER

A MENTOR TO ALL AND AN ENCOURAGING BEACON OF LIGHT



My favorite memory of my brother B-Way took place in the E-House dayroom. Three of my cohort members and I were huddled together on the leather couch, discussing our Oakton graduation. B-Way came by with a big smile and said, “I’m proud of you brothers for your ability to come together and do something big for your graduation.” I was encouraged tremendously.

— Demetrius Cunningham, Cohort 3

I'll always remember how Michael would seize the moment to center others. He would do this in public and in private. He knew I was having certain issues, and he would let me know that as soon as I was able to merge my identity with my academic personality, everything would be just fine. Michael was right.

— Leon Fields, Cohort 3

The memory I would like to share of B-Way is fairly new and helped me regain my focus after I almost made a bad decision. B-Way was a different type of dude who always paid attention to details in people, places, and things. Although we didn't talk as much as he talked with others, he took his time to approach me and tell me he knew it was hard to walk away from the situation I did and that he was proud of me for doing it. That conversation, which was only a few words, helped me to totally refocus, and I will always carry it with me through the many dark days ahead. Stay strong and together, but there was a real loss. May Allah be pleased with you, B-Way.

— Abdul Karīm (James Hale), Cohort 4

At a critical moment in my transition into this environment, B-Way gave me an unexpected gift of guidance. Not knowing who to trust my ideas with and my being standoffish was not enough to stop B-Way from being who he is. It was due to my demeanor, the way that I view life, that caused B-Way and me to start bonding. Each moment we spent was brief but well spent. He blessed me with his wisdom and did more than just point me in the right direction. B-Way actually lived the message he spoke and his legacy will forever live on.

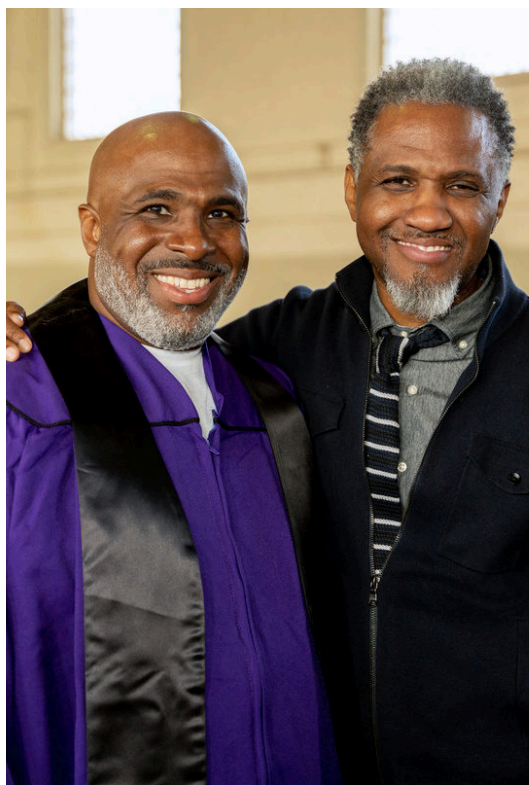
— Darion Nance, Cohort 4

I was having trouble being at Stateville when I first came here to start NPEP. Michael did not know me but he could hear me talking about my problems and he understood that I just needed someone to talk to, so he pulled up a chair to the front of my cell and just sat and listened to me complain for the whole dayroom (three hours!). He didn't tell me I was wrong or I needed to suck it up. He just let me vent and that is what I needed. He is loved and will be missed.

— Anonymous brother

There was a moment when Michael and I realized we had mutual associates when we were free, and while we bonded over knowing the same people, engaging in nostalgia and reminiscing, we never stopped leaving the past in the past. I valued his ability to remember yesteryear, but still to stand firm in the present and also be willing to look forward toward the future. With that said, there is not a single memory that can capture his aura.

— Brandon V. Wyatt, Cohort 2



One week before Michael's passing, he took it upon himself to continue to be the brother and encouraging beacon of light that I needed. That week, I helped a fellow inmate reset his broken ankle in place while we were at the yard. Michael Broadway saw that, and he wanted to make sure that I knew it. He approached me and said, "Congo, you are my hero and from this point on I'm calling you Dr. Congo. When everyone ran away from the guy with the broken ankle, you stayed with him and helped him. You are my hero." In addition, B-Way gave me my first opportunity at stardom. He asked me to be part of a panel for his book event for One Foot In. I really loved that. The book event was great.

— Palfrid Mihindou, Cohort 4

One thing that I will never forget about Michael is his willingness to be there for others. He personally looked over a paper that I wrote to show me where I could make it better. I had gotten a lot of feedback from the professor and was about to trash that paper and start over, but Mike encouraged me to not do that because what I wrote was perfect. It just needed to be tightened up. I listened to him and ended up getting an A on that paper.

— Shawn Thigpen, Cohort 3

B-Way was a tutor in our English 102 comp class. I had missed 10 weeks of class due to a suspension. There were only four weeks left, and I was determined to finish the class. B-Way gave me a big hug my first class back and told me, “I missed you, lil bro.” I told him that I was going to finish the class with the rest of my cohort even though I was behind, and he smiled and said, “I know you will, and I’ll be here if you need any help!” He believed in me and also encouraged me to be the best version of myself, and I appreciate his perspective on life and the joy he brought to this world.

— Marquis Harrison, Cohort 3

One memory I have of Michael Broadway is when he congratulated me on finding my own lane. He said that some guys were saying that he and others were standing in the way. He liked that, in spite of what they thought, I had become one of the editorial team and writers for the Northwestern Insider. He was happy that I was graduating from Northwestern University, like he did, and he wanted me to continue to grow. I promised him I would. He flashed that perfect smile and gave me a hug. “I love you, Bro. See you soon.”

— Flynard “Fly” Miller, Cohort 2

My favorite memory about Michael Broadway is when we used to have discussion in Jum’ah that revolved around Islam and academics. Coming from two different generations, Michael knew like I knew there is a disconnect between the younger generation and the older generation, so Michael and I would have in-depth talks about closing that gap and reconnecting both generations. I really enjoyed those conversations because they felt like they mattered.

— Tevin Louis, Cohort 3

When survivors describe a loved one who has passed too soon or unexpectedly, there seems to be one common trait they use to reference their late loved one's character: "They were always smiling." This description, of a consistent smile, is true of my late friend Michael "B-Way" Broadway. Except there was something much deeper and distinctive about that warm, pearl-white smile B-Way kept on his face. It was certainly infectious and sincere, but it was also purposeful. When he smiled it wasn't necessarily because he was happy. It was his way of trying to give you a reason to smile and to check on you. If you didn't smile back, he'd always stop and ask, "Is everything cool?" or "Are you good?" On most occasions, this can be but an empty gesture. They walk off before you can even muster an answer. Not B-Way. If time permitted, he would listen to my issue and offer up something to challenge my perspective and inspire a positive outlook.

In the free world, an untimely smile can be mistaken as a provocation. "What you smiling at?" In prison, smiles are definitely not plastered on everyone's faces — which makes smiles like B-Way's even rarer. Even at Menard, a maximum-security prison notorious for its racially hostile and violent atmosphere, B-Way showed his pearly whites. His smiles were never off-putting or misplaced. He was just trying to make the best out of a shitty situation and appreciated that no matter how bad it was, it could be worse.

He also used his smile to disarm and to inspire. The first time I met him, I was still young and reckless. I had a dispute with staff and B-Way used his words, his own transformation, and, of course, his smile, to de-escalate the conflict. Once the volatility of the situation died down, I asked him: "Why are you always smiling, bro?" He looked at me and said, "Because I know what it feels like to not have any reason to."

B-Way wasn't the type of person who smiled because everything was always rainbows and gumdrops. He smiled when he was fighting Stage 4 cancer because he knew, from his experience, that things could be worse. Surely he had his own sordid past and struggles, but he smiled with the purpose of inspiring others to reevaluate their situation, to envision something greater, and to triumph toward a higher purpose. When he smiled, it wasn't that he had forgotten where he was or where he had been. B-Way smiled because he refused to allow his circumstances to define his character. He smiled because he valued how far he had come and he knew exactly where he was going. He was a butterfly that never forgot that he was once a caterpillar. He used his beautiful wings — his smile — to help transform a person, a situation, and influence this transformation for others. Behind B-Way's smile were his selflessness, his story of transformation, and the kind of inspiration that this world will sorely miss.

Smile on and fly away, my brother.

— Jamal Bakr, a friend

MEMORIES OF OUR BROTHER

A STUDENT & A SCHOLAR



I will always remember watching Michael file into the purple classroom for our 6:30 a.m. DTEN/Zoom Social Problems class during the pandemic. He'd make his way to his front-row seat, put his face right up close to the camera, smile and say hi before he got down to business and let me know he had a LOT of ideas to cover in that day's discussion. His contagious energy, keen critical eye, ability to find amusement and profundity in small things, and genuine care and concern for his people are what I find myself missing most. I'm grateful for our years of correspondence and friendship and I know his influence will continue to shape me as a teacher forever.

— Professor Megan Klein

Michael was a wonderful student and a beloved classmate. He was an exemplary interlocutor in class: thoughtful in conversation, and ready to comment on the day's readings. But what shone through most was his character: he was quick with a smile and gracious in conversation with others — as ready with a joking quip as he was with a compliment to his fellow classmates. He will be sorely missed.

— Professor Sandy Goldberg

In a poetry class, you come to know students in a deep and abiding way because they attend to their own dreams, fears, and imagination to enter worlds that are infinitely foreign yet strangely the same as their own. Michael did this with honest self-reflection and heartfelt precision. He had a passion for the transformative power of language and his enthusiasm was contagious. His classmates eagerly waited his turn to perform the assigned poem.

In our first conversation (and my first day of teaching at Stateville), Michael discovered that I taught English and drama at his old high school — Percy Julian High — before he was old enough to attend. We laughed and talked about how the school had changed for better and worse, his favorite classes and teachers, and the old neighborhood. He was warm and kind. What also impressed me was how he truly loved learning, creative thinking, and expressing ideas, even as early as his high school years!

Sometimes, before and after classes, a couple years after our class ended, we'd see each other passing back and forth outside or in the education building. Michael would call out, "Love ya', Prof," and I'd call back, "Love ya' too, Mr. Broadway!"

— Professor D. Soyini Madison

Although Michael has passed on, he and his kind eyes will be with me for as long as I live. His graduation photo with his grandbabies is hanging in my office; I'm always so proud to tell people I had the opportunity to teach him. I will always remember his essay about drinking water fountains during little league practice as a kid, and the connections he made between lead, drinking water, and violence in his neighborhood. Broadway, you are missed.

— Unsigned

We are at our best when we are connected. Michael embodied this. He was deeply connected with himself and others. When I had individual meetings with team members, Michael explained that sometimes he stepped back for students lacking support. He knew he had strong family support that not all people experienced. He was loved, and he felt it.

Michael's very existence was a form of resistance to the carceral system. He lived out abolitionist ideals each day by creating the realities we want to see. His approach to life challenged systemic norms of violence. Everyone who knew Michael was enriched by his presence. His legacy endures through the relationships he developed and the lives he touched, reminding us of the transformative power of genuine human connection.

I hope to honor Michael by carrying forward his light.

— Professor Annie Buth

Michael was a student in the course on the mathematics of voting that I taught at Stateville in the fall of 2019. I will always remember his superlative final paper on the design of a voting system for the Chicago School Board. Anyone who has the chance to visit Stateville is aware that Michael did not have ideal conditions for our class: his cell had no horizontal surface on which to write, and the use of regular pens or pencils was forbidden.

Against all odds, our students put a lot of effort into their study, and some of them revealed new ways of viewing the material that I, as their teacher, was grateful to have been exposed to.

Michael was one of these students. I wrote in 2020, when there was a chance he might be paroled, that I hoped that I would have the chance to welcome him into my classes on the Evanston campus one day. He was patient, thoughtful, considerate, and a great partner in the enterprise of learning.

— Professor Ezra Getzler

Michael was a student in my playwriting class at Stateville. The last assignment for the class was to write a play inspired by a song. When I announced it, he smiled a huge smile (he was always smiling, but this smile was really super huge) and said, "I know exactly what I want to write!" And he did! His short play, "Project Window," was inspired by the relationship between his mother and his aunt and their long and lively phone conversations. It was funny and sweet and wise — just like Michael. He is sorely missed. The world is an infinitely poorer place without his smile.

— Professor Rebecca Gilman







Behind The Cover

By Anthony Ehlers

I drew this picture of B-Way while I was mourning. I poured my pain and sadness into it. I wanted to convey who B-Way was, his smile, his serious side. He was a beautiful person, and that's what I wanted people to see. The clock is at 4:10 p.m., the time he died. The gears are the wheels of time that keep on turning. He is gone, and the closing of Stateville is a part of his legacy.



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