

## LUCASVILLE: THE UNTOLD STORY OF A PRISON UPRISING

By Staughton Lynd, Gary L. Anderson, and Christopher Fidram

### A NOTE TO READERS AND PERFORMERS

Whether the following script is presented as a dramatic reading or a full theatrical production, three things need to be happening.

First, the audience should be encouraged to grapple with the question: Who killed Officer Vallandingham? During the 11-day uprising, the prisoners occupying L block killed nine prisoners and one hostage correctional officer, Robert Vallandingham. Public attention focused on the death of the officer, and so does the play. By the end of Act One the audience should have a pretty good idea of who was sentenced to death for killing Officer Vallandingham and who the prisoners think did it, and should be asking themselves: Who was the murderer?

Second, in the reactions of various prisoners to the uprising, and then to the judicial process that followed, the audience should discern a morality play between Good and Evil. Evil is selfishness carried to the extreme of “snitching” on an innocent fellow prisoner to save oneself. Good is an effort to consider the welfare of all human beings involved, exemplified by George Skatzes’ concern for the eight hostage officers and their relatives anxiously waiting at the high school outside the prison fence.

Finally, the audience must be drawn into the action. When George Skatzes and Cecil Allen go out onto the recreation yard with a white flag of truce and a bullhorn to begin negotiations, they should leave the stage (L block) and go out into the audience (the recreation yard), so that the audience feels itself to be on the yard. When Skatzes takes the first hostage officer out to the yard to be released, he should remove Officer Clark’s blindfold, and Clark should then walk down the center aisle toward his own community and colleagues imagined to be waiting at the back. And at the end, as first Skatzes’ sister and then recanting informant Kenneth Law come onto the stage to stand beside those sentenced to death, at least some members of the audience should experience the wish that they too might stand in solidarity with the condemned men.

With a very few exceptions, every word that follows is drawn from video tapes, tapes of telephone negotiations, trial transcripts and other original sources. See Staughton Lynd, *Lucasville: The Untold Story of a Prison Uprising* (Temple University Press, 2004).

### THE CAST

Siddique Abdullah Hasan formerly known as Carlos Sanders

Keith LaMar

Jason Robb

George Skatzes (pronounced Skates)

James Were also known as Namir Abdul Mateen

Anthony Lavelle

Muslim Prisoner (Cecil Allen, Stanley Cummings)

Prison Negotiator (Dave Burchett, Dirk Price pronounced Price)

Sgt. Howard Hudson

Tessa Unwin (may also be Jackie Bowers)

Hostage Officers Darrold Clark, Tony Demons and Jeff Ratcliff

Kenneth Law

Chorus (prisoners 1-4, reporters 1-3, military personnel, Tate, Trooper, Wilkinson)

Hasan, LaMar, Were, Lavelle, Muslim Prisoner, Officer Demons, and Kenneth Law must be African American

# Lucasville Justice Project

## ACT ONE

*(In the dark, when possible, the Chorus and sound effects provide the sounds of a riot in progress. The first sounds will be shouts assigned to individual actors. Most of the voices are the voices of prisoners. A few—"Man down!," "Close the crash gates!," "Lock up!"—are the voices of correctional officers.)*

Man down! Man down!

Where are the keys? Give me the keys.

Close the crash gates. I told you to close the fucking gates.

We're taking over!

Kill the snitches!

They fightin' the police, man. Open Up!

Lock up! Lock up now, damn it!

Kill the snitches!

Guys are running around with masks on!

They've got the fucking keys!

*(Horrible bloodcurdling screams, then muffled screams. Sudden silence.)*

You are **our** prisoners now!

*(Lights come up. Five men, three black and two white, walk to center stage and stand, facing the audience.)*

HASAN: You are about to hear the untold story of a prison uprising. In April 1993, 400 men took over and occupied cell block L at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility in Lucasville for 11 days. During the first hours of the disturbance, black prisoners killed six white inmates believed to be informants, or "snitches."

In all, the prisoners in rebellion killed ten men: nine prisoners and one hostage correctional officer.

Five men are now on Death Row for these murders. Three of us are African Americans. George Skatzes and Jason Robb were members of the Aryan Brotherhood at the time of the riot and Jason Robb still is. We have become known as the Lucasville Five.

My name is Siddique Abdullah Hasan. I was formerly known as Carlos Sanders. I was convicted of commandeering a car at gunpoint and was serving 10-25 years at Lucasville when the disturbance began.

ROBB: I'm Jason Robb. At age 17, I killed a man while high on PCP, Methylqualudes, Valium, pot and liquor. I was serving 7 to 25 years.

LAMAR: I'm Keith LaMar. At the time of the riot I was serving 15 years to life. I murdered my childhood friend in 1988. We shot each other over drugs and were laid next to each other in the same operating room. He died and

I was sent to Lucasville. We were only 19.

NAMIR: My name is Namir Abdul Mateen also known as James Were. I did five years in 1975 to 1980. I got out, got off parole, got married to my wife, had two kids, times got hard, couldn't find no job, pressure was too much, no food in the house, looked over, took my pistol, went out there, and I robbed a drug store with a gun to get money to feed my family. I was serving 5 to 15 years for Felonious Assault and 6 to 25 for Aggravated Robbery.

SKATZES: Hi everybody. I'm George Skatzes. Just call me "The Old Convict."

I was doing a life sentence for a murder I did not commit. I was framed by two lying snitches! Ain't nothing gonna change that fact, my brothers, let me tell ya. Maggot snitches!

ROBB: When I got to Lucasville from the Ohio State Reformatory, they told me, "Well boy, it's like this; you're not in the gladiator school no more. Now you're in the penitentiary."

My first experience was in the day room. They got a little TV in there and little card tables and a couple steel picnic benches. They're all bolted to the floor. TV's bolted too. Everything was pretty well bolted down.

And while I'm sitting and playing cards, two inmates got in an argument over in the far corner. Everyone kind of got quiet. (*The Chorus starts doing as the next sentence describes.*) Then the other inmates just got up and started going over to stand against the windows that face the outside hallway so the officers couldn't see what was going on. (*Robb does the same.*) So I got up and put my back against the wall.

The next thing I know, one inmate pulled a knife out and started stabbing the other guy. It was a pretty big knife! The guy getting cut took off running around the day room. He run towards a group of people, figuring he can get behind these people and hide from the guy with the knife. They wouldn't let him. (*Chorus won't let the guy in.*)

I didn't know what the hell was happening. Ten officers were standing in the hallway at the window, watching this inmate stab this other inmate. That man was on the floor being stabbed. Finally they came in there and got the man. That's when I learned that in here--there's really nowhere to run.

LAMAR: In the fall of 1990, a new warden was appointed. His name was Arthur Tate. Prisoners called him (*pause for emphasis*) "King Arthur."

Warden Tate instituted "Operation Shakedown." Prisoners were required to march to chow, chapel, commissary, infirmary, recreation, school and work. Warden Tate had yellow "caution" lines painted on each side of the hallway floors to create physical and psychological distance between inmates and correctional officers. If you were caught crossing the yellow "caution" lines, you could be slammed head first into the wall and then rushed to the hole to face disciplinary action.

Prisoners who had been living together in a particular block for years were forced to move to other blocks. White racists were forced to cell with black militants. The whole penitentiary was thrown into this crucible of oppression and, consequently, was on the verge of exploding.

Warden Tate wanted to build a high security Supermax unit inside the prison for these violent offenders. Not enough money, he was told.

What they needed was a justification for funding. (*Pause*) What they needed was a riot!

HASAN: Shortly after Tate's arrival, he began dissolving almost all the programs in the prison. He did away with the music and literary programs and a host of other positive avenues that men were using to do their time.

Overcrowding was a contributing factor. Prison conditions unnecessarily deprived prisoners of the opportunity to rehabilitate themselves or even maintain the skills they already possessed.

Tate declared that all of the aforementioned implementations were to make Lucasville "safer" for those confined there. But the record attests to the reality that the rapes, assaults, beatings, stabbings and murders continued.

SKATZES: This guy Tate came in here. He was about the punishment phase. He was about shoving a man's face into the ground and kicking him when he's down. You can't treat people like that. He thought he was God!

The King had snitches everywhere. Everybody was so paranoid and wired. I've got kids, and hell, we were only allowed one five-minute phone call per year at Christmas! It was ready to blow sky high.

NAMIR: Before the riot, I was on a list to leave the maximum security prison at Lucasville. If the warden would have sent me to another prison, I would have never been there when that riot happened.

The guards would beat you for just talking while you were in the hole. But you would even hear guards saying, "Something is going to happen." I'm surprised there was no riot before.

ROBB: Rules were made up on a daily or weekly basis and not put into writing or issued to prisoners. And guards implementing these rules and regulations abused their power and authority causing more conflict.

I felt a lot of tension in there, like static in the air. You could feel it. There was something gonna happen.

HASAN: With Allah's help we hope that you will hear the untold story of this prison uprising. If we do not stand up to protect our brothers, who will?

SKATZES *(A few seconds behind Hasan in a contrapuntal fashion; as far as possible the audience should understand the words)*: With the Good Lord's help, we hope that you will hear the untold story of this prison uprising. If we do not stand up to protect our brothers, who will?

HASAN: You could say the last straw was the TB skin test.

Muslims have always fought to practice our religion. At Lucasville, we were not permitted legally to change our names, to wear our Islamic headgear throughout the prison, to buy prayer oils, prayer beads or other Islamic artifacts. Furthermore, while religious diets were provided to Jews and Hindus, our requests for Islamically lawful meals were summarily denied.

Tate mandated tuberculin skin testing through a process which would require the injection of phenol, an alcoholic substance, causing us to violate our religious tenets. In Chapter 5 Verse 90 of the Holy Qur'an, Muslims are prohibited from ingesting alcohol in any form.

I wrote to Warden Tate and asked him to understand our position.

TATE: I am Warden Arthur Tate. I replied to Hasan: "I received your message. I believe you realize that I have the utmost respect both for you personally and for your religious beliefs. Your position relative to TB testing is, however, one that is not rational nor will it be accepted by me. Your options have been explained and I expect full compliance to my orders for all SOCF inmates to be tested. There will be no deviations to this order.

I trust you, as well as others who feel as you do, will comply with this policy. You are in no position to dictate to me how you perceive this should occur. I am certainly hoping there will be minimal difficulties associated with this process."

*(Pause.)* But on Easter Sunday, April 11, a riot erupted. Prisoners returning from recreation on the yard overpowered guards.

PRISONER 1: Lucasville is ours!

PRISONER 2: It's us against the administration!

PRISONER 3: We're tired of these people fucking us over.

PRISONER 4: Is everybody with us? Let's hear ya. *(Prisoners roar their approval.)*

LAMAR: During the first hours of the rebellion, African-American prisoners killed white inmates whom they suspected of being snitches. I was later convicted of commanding the death squad that killed these men. In reality,

I left the recreation yard to check on the property in my cell in L-6, and after only a few minutes, went back to the rec yard and did not return to L block.

(LaMar exits. Two Muslim prisoners, Hasan and Cecil Allen, approach George Skatzes. Skatzes looks around. Allen and Hasan are shocked, scared, out of breath.)

ALLEN: George! *(He places a hand on Skatzes' shoulder.)* This thing has gotten out of hand and we need some help. Blacks are killing whites they think are snitches.

SKATZES: It's pure chaos.

HASAN: We've got to get this under control.

ALLEN: We need you to tell them this is not a race thing. This is not a race war. It is a war against the administration, against Arthur Tate. Would you be a spokesman?

SKATZES: *(Pauses. This is the million dollar question. George doesn't know how to answer. He stares at Allen and Hasan. We hear the noise of the inmates. We witness the inmates forming upstage into two groups, black and white. They are violent and angry.)* Sure. If I can help in some way, I will do that.

ALLEN: George, come over to the gym. The whites are all on one side, the blacks on the other.

SKATZES: *(The three men move into the groups, almost swallowed up by them. Somehow Skatzes makes his way to the top of the crowd. He stands side by side with Allen to address the men in the gym.)*

Guys....Listen up!....Let me talk here for a minute. What's happening here...all this...This is against the administration. We are all in this together. This is not a black and white thing. Don't be paranoid. This is not the time for you to be calling me "honky" or for me to be calling you "nigger." If they come in here, they're going to kill all of us. They're going to kill this black man and me, no matter what color we are. We're all gonna die.

*(Acting on the proposition that black and white prisoners are together confronting the prison administration, Skatzes and Allen leave the stage—L block—and go out on the yard, that is, come down the steps at the front of the stage, or in whatever way the physical setting permits, come right up to the front row of seats. Allen carries a huge white flag of truce. Skatzes has a bullhorn. He addresses the Tower, at the back of the audience and as high up as possible. The audience should feel they are between the two sets of negotiators, on the yard, in the play.)*

SKATZES: Don't try to cut us down!

TOWER: Give me that bullhorn. Hurry up, God damn it! *(Now on bullhorn.)* This is the Ohio State Patrol if you want to talk now. George, come over where I can speak with you. Your safety is guaranteed.

SKATZES: We want somebody to negotiate with, so we can get this shit over with and get these guards out of here. We've got guards in here that are hurting and we are concerned about it just like you are.

*(Allen consults with him.)* We want somebody who will listen to what these people in here are demanding. Do we understand each other?

TOWER: We understand.

SKATZES: You can go ahead and kill us if you like. But I stress to you that the boys have got eight hostages in there, and if something happens to us out here, I don't have to tell you what time it is. We are as interested in ending this thing as you are. We don't want no more deaths.

TOWER: What is it you want?

SKATZES: We want somebody to negotiate with that's sympathetic to our beliefs. Somebody that will listen to what we want. *(Confers.)* We don't want to talk with anybody in this administration. They've been jacking us off. We want a high-ranking official either in the State Highway Patrol or, preferably, in the FBI. *(Confers.)* And we want the news media.

TOWER: OK, George. The news media is around. I'm the one that has to talk to you from the State Highway Patrol. Now the Federal government...you're talking a long time before they'll be able to get here. *(Aside.)* This bullhorn isn't worth shit! *(To George.)* George, can you get us a phone number? We're wanting to negotiate and what we need is some place I can call.

SKATZES: I tried to establish phone contact with somebody.

TOWER: If you call 245, you will be talking to a high-ranking official.

*(Skatzes and Allen turn around and re-enter L block. The negotiations now switch to phone.*

*Skatzes seats himself at a small table with a telephone, center stage. The phone is an old AT&T rotary-dial, black phone, with hand-held receiver. It sits on the table.*

*The following dialogue between Skatzes and Burchett is long. The two men share a common culture and somewhat Southern accent—which is why the prisoners thought Skatzes should negotiate—but are coming from very different places. Christopher Fidram, an experienced director, comments: "It's great dialogue, yet it goes on for a while. My advice is for the two actors playing the roles to make clear dramatic choices in approaching the scenes. Constant anger and frustration will become monotonous, and although there should always be an intensity in their cat and mouse negotiations, I would strongly advise them also to consider covering the realm of emotions that can be drawn from the text. In doing so, a dramatic arc of anger, concern, apprehension, deceit, humor, trust and hope will likely be created. Like two boxers in the ring, punches are sometimes few, sometimes rampant; but there's always the constant strategy and fancy footwork that make anticipating the punch as exciting as the punch itself. How the actors listen to one another is even more important than what they say. The actors should never forget this."*

HUDSON: I'm Sergeant Hudson, Ohio State Patrol. I was a member of the prison negotiation team, and after the riot, I was the lead investigator.

In any hostage situation, there are two options. The first is to make an assault to free the hostages forcibly. That is a very, very dangerous option.

The second option is to negotiate: to maintain the dialogue between the authorities and the hostage takers, and to buy time.

Also, to increase the pressure on the prisoners, we cut off electricity and water in L block on the morning of Monday, April 12.

SKATZES *(on the phone)*: I'm dispatching my people to wherever these hostages may be right now in the complex. You and I better be praying that one of these fucking idiots hasn't already killed one of them. You got our demands. No more talk. Get on the ball. Can you hear what's going on in here?! *(Men screaming.)* I'm gonna let you talk to Officer Ratcliff for a minute.

*(Ratcliff, who is blindfolded, is brought in.)*

RATCLIFF: This is Officer Ratcliff.

PRISON NEGOTIATOR BURCHETT: Hi Jeff. How you doin'?

RATCLIFF: I'm just fine; I'm OK.

BURCHETT: Are there things we can talk about that would make it easier for you in there?

RATCLIFF: The main thing is the lights. That's the main thing--the lights, where we can see and everybody's not a nervous wreck. Hey, just listen. Do what these men ask. They're treatin' us great. You're takin' things away from us too. The water--that's ours too. They're givin' us water. They're checkin' on us ev'ry ten minutes. The lighting is ours. They're givin' us a radio so we can listen. They're givin' us ev'rything. They tried to get me an outside phone call--you guys wouldn't let me have. They just want to cooperate. Don't put our lives in danger. I just want you to .....*(Ratcliff is taken out.)*

BURCHETT: Jeff...Jeff...

SKATZES: It's me again.

BURCHETT: Hold on a second George.... *(Confers.)* The word I've got, send us out two hostages--employee hostages--and we will turn on the power and water.

SKATZES: No deal. This is not...

*(Clark is brought in, also blindfolded.)*

CLARK: Hello... This is Clark ...

SKATZES: Hold on there, Darrold. *(To Burchett.)* This is not a trade-off. You assholes have taken water and electricity away from us. Somethin' that's essential to these employees' safety. This is somethin' that you are gonna give back to us. Non-negotiable items. We want this electricity. We want this water. We want this TV on.

CLARK: This is Officer Clark, 346-B. Please do this. Please?

BURCHETT: Darrold, how're you doin'?

CLARK: I'm doin' great. These guys are treating us very, very, very well. And they don't wanna do no problem; they don't want to hurt us, or nothin'. They want to get out of this peacefully, but you guys are forcin' them to do this shit.

BURCHETT: Tell me your birth date.

CLARK: Huh? My birth date, 3-26-70.

SKATZES: Give him your kids' names.

CLARK: My, my, my baby is Eden Nicole Clark. And my eldest one is Olivia Clark. And my wife's name's Christie Clark. And my mother-in-law lives right next door to me. And I live at, I live at, oh, I can't remember—

BURCHETT: Don't, don't worry about that. You're doin' fine. You need to know that we're doin' everything that we can. We want to cooperate. We want to get you out.

CLARK: All you gotta do, if you want to cooperate, is just turn the fuckin' shit on. This is my life, buddy.

BURCHETT: I understand that. We're doin' everything we can to keep you safe. That's what we want.

SKATZES: You're a lyin' son of a bitch. *(To Clark.)* These people don't care nothin' about you. *(Clark is taken out.)*

BURCHETT: George, if you would send us two employee-hostages out, that we asked for, then we'll turn the power and water on. I mean, we have to come to some kind of a trust somewhere.

SKATZES: Whatever started this, I do not know. But thank God that a few of us were able to regain control in here and you are destroyin' that structure for us. You understand that. You turned the fuckin' lights off.

We have had this situation cast upon us. Lives are at stake. But it's not my life I'm worried about. I don't care whether I live or die. I got officers in here that I'm worried about.

BURCHETT: I'm worried about them as well. I'm not trying to mess with you.

SKATZES: Alright Dave, if this fuckin' shit lasts for six months we're prepared to go that. You turn the lights on first because that is the most important thing. And maintaining control of this--we're havin' an inability to see. We need to see what the fuck we're doin' out there in these quarters and wherever else these officers may be. You understand that?

BURCHETT: Yes, I do understand.

SKATZES: I've put their safety above mine. What does that tell you? This is trust. You have my fuckin' word on that.

BURCHETT: You haven't given me anything to support your word. You need to give me something.

SKATZES: David, turn on the lights. I'll come to a phone and call you. Good day sir.

TESSA UNWIN: My name is Tessa Unwin and I am the public information officer for the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. It's now the morning of April 14th.

*(Skatzes returns to the phone.)*

BURCHETT: George, you and I, we've been at this for a long, long time.

SKATZES: It seems to me for a long time, you're right.

BURCHETT: I know, and I'm certainly getting tired.

SKATZES: Well, hell...if you're not authorized to meet our demands, why can't you put us in contact with somebody that is authorized instead of going through all this bullshit all the time?

BURCHETT: George, I'm just like you. I'm just a human. I can only do so much. We just have to work a step at a time.

SKATZES: Bullshit. Have you talked to anybody about us, even so much as talking to the news media? Have you even done that, instead of sitting there and telling me you can't, you can't, you can't?

BURCHETT: We're talking about it and trying--

SKATZES: Yeah, we're talking about it. Motherfucker, you've had two days to talk about it.

BURCHETT: That has to go up the line, George. You know I can't make that decision myself.

SKATZES: You can't make it! Listen, motherfucker, I'm asking you now, *(Screaming)* can you talk to somebody that can make that decision!

BURCHETT: *(Pause.)* George, you and I screaming at each other is not going to help this at all.

SKATZES: I'm asking you one question. Have you talked to somebody that can at least authorize us to talk to the news media?

BURCHETT: George, didn't you mention something earlier about batteries for those TV's? Let's talk about the batteries.

SKATZES: Are you hearing this now? It's about batteries. Oh man, I'll tell you, I've never seen people like you in my life.

BURCHETT: I asked you for a hostage for the batteries. Is that too tough?

SKATZES: Enough with batteries Dave. There was another demand made this morning. You people have done nothing towards that.

BURCHETT: What demand was that, George? I wasn't here.

SKATZES: I'm tired of your shit, man.

BURCHETT: What demand was it, tell me again.

SKATZES: This is really entertaining. This is more fun than watching cartoons, pardner.

*(Four prisoners come to the front of the stage, holding signs on which the prisoners' demands appear in homemade lettering. The idea was that if negotiations would not provide access to the media, they would improvise an alternative. The signs—which in reality were sheets hung from windows in L block—should remain in place, visible to the audience, for the remainder of Act One. The prisoners speak the words on their signs.)*

PRISONER 1: The State is not negotiating!

PRISONER 2: This administration is blocking the press from speaking to us!

PRISONER 3: We want to speak to the FBI!

PRISONER 4: If our demands aren't met soon, a hostage is going to be killed.

BURCHETT: Listen, give me one of those guys, I'll get you every battery you need.

SKATZES: Is that right!

BURCHETT: That's right, if I have to go to town and buy 'em myself, I'll get 'em for you.

SKATZES: You're all heart, man. Why can't you turn the electricity on?

BURCHETT: Let's work with the batteries. I can get those for you.

SKATZES: Cut it out. You think I'm twenty years old or what? I've gotten shit on all my fuckin' life. You can't guarantee me nothin'. So what is it we have to talk about?

BURCHETT: *(Pause.)* Well, how many batteries did you need again, George?

SKATZES: *(Pause.)* Four dozen C, four dozen D.

BURCHETT: Four dozen.

SKATZES: C and D.

BURCHETT: C and D. Four dozen of each?

SKATZES: That's right.

BURCHETT: I can get them for you. I'm telling you I can get them.

SKATZES: Well, go get 'em.

BURCHETT: Give me one of these guys. We can do that, can't we? We've been talking, we're alright.

SKATZES: We're alright?

BURCHETT: I think we're alright, you and I.

SKATZES: You'd kill me at the drop of a hat! You're gonna tell me we're alright?

BURCHETT: No, I wouldn't.

SKATZES: Let's cut the small talk. Let me explain something to you, pardner. We're not gonna buckle on this for a bunch of batteries. We as a convict body have gone too far and the price for this is far too expensive.

BURCHETT: What price have you paid?

SKATZES: Come on, man. I know when this is over--if we even make it through it--it's gonna be a hell of a price to pay for what's goin' on in here. Personally, I really don't really care, y'know. But I'd like to see those officers get out.

BURCHETT: I know that you'd like to see them get out cuz you care about them too. I know you do.

SKATZES: Well, we can't give you everything for nothing. *(Confers.)* So what would be the problem with news media? Dave?

BURCHETT: We don't trust the media. You and I talked about that. We don't trust them.

SKATZES: We want to air our grievances out there so that people can see and understand what's goin' on in here.

BURCHETT: How's that going to help? You want the truth to come out and I want the truth to come out, but I don't trust the media. One side telling the story is not going to get the truth out.

SKATZES: Well then, hold your side for a while and let us tell ours. We will die for our cause.

BURCHETT: What cause exactly?

SKATZES: What we're goin' through here. This is our cause. You can't treat people like the way we been treated. That's all there ever was to this whole thing to begin with.

BURCHETT: You sound tired George.

SKATZES: Well, you would be too, but I'm as strong as a motherfucker. Believe that. You ain't killed me yet.

BURCHETT: That's the furthest thing from my mind, George. You gotta work with me though. What are some of your other concerns?

SKATZES: Dave, cut this shit out, man. You know where we left off last night. We left off with the power, the water, the TVs, news media, two hostages free. Well, you couldn't do anything. Our guys got up today and they added they wanted to talk to the FBI. You bullshitted about that all day.

BURCHETT: Alright, alright. Work with me on some safety issues, George. So you're safe and I'll be safe during this whole process.

SKATZES: What the fuck have you got to worry about? You're sitting out there in a big plush chair. I'm here in the war zone and you're out there.

BURCHETT: Well George, maybe we could talk about—

SKATZES: If you say "Batteries" one more time, I fucking swear! What I don't understand is, I'm willing to walk outa here with two of your people in my pocket and hand-deliver them to you and you're not willing to even....

BURCHETT: Well, I can't guarantee the press.

SKATZES: Then what the hell are we talking about?

BURCHETT: George, I want you to know, I know you're going to come out of there alive. I know you're strong and that you care.

SKATZES: It doesn't matter to me. It doesn't matter. I have been dead for over ten years.

BURCHETT: It doesn't have to be that way at all.

SKATZES: It's that way. I'm doing life forever. I'll never get outa here, do you understand?

BURCHETT: But you've got a life here.

SKATZES: What kind of a life do you call this in this fucking cesspool? So you come in here blowing my fuckin'

brains out ain't gonna bother me a bit. I don't even care.

BURCHETT: Well, I care. Don't you even care how I feel about things?

SKATZES: *(Pause)* What do I care how you feel? You don't give a fuck about me. You don't give a fuck about these guards. You don't give a damn about those other convicts in here. How am I supposed to give a fuck how you feel?

BURCHETT: Well George, if I didn't care, why would I be here talking to you?

SKATZES: It's a job. You make money doin' this. That's what it's about.

BURCHETT: This is not my job, George.

SKATZES: I suppose you're donating your time. I'm donating my time too, by the way.

TESSA UNWIN: *(Standing on small box.)* Good morning everybody. I have some announcements to make and then I can hopefully take some of your questions.

REPORTER 1: Tessa! Miss Unwin! How many people have been killed?

REPORTER 2: Is the National Guard making plans to storm the place? And when?

REPORTER 3: *(Louder than the others)* Miss Unwin—any comment from your office about the message that said if the demands weren't met, they were threatening to kill a hostage officer?

UNWIN: That's petty stuff. They've been threatening something like this from the beginning. It's part of the language of negotiation.

*(Unwin and reporters exit.)*

PRISONER 1: She don't think we are serious!

PRISONER 2: Tell this Tessa we mean business!

PRISONER 3: We want Tessa Unwin to know that we are real and to take back what she said about us!

PRISONER 4: She called ass on us, man!

LAVELLE: Why don't we dump a body and let them see that we are serious?

*(The others turn and look at Lavelle, then all exit.)*

SKATZES: Well, that woman who's talkin' to the press from the Department of Corrections, where is she comin' up with that shit?

BURCHETT: I don't know what she's saying. I can't hear what's going on. I don't have a radio in here.

SKATZES: You don't have a radio—ain't that a bitch! We don't have no electricity.

BURCHETT: Well you know George; I think we're making some progress here.

SKATZES: Do ya?

BURCHETT: Yes I do.

SKATZES: Man, you're really on some kind of drug. Gimme some of that. You think we're makin' some progress!

BURCHETT: Did you ever think that my reason to be here is to help you resolve this?

SKATZES: No sir. I'm not goin' to lie to you. No sir. Do you realize what it's like to keep up the morale amongst people that don't have shit and they're facing death?

BURCHETT: No George, I don't know what you're going through.

SKATZES: Do you realize what it is to keep people from going off on one another and to keep these people from going after those guards?

BURCHETT: *(Pause.)* Are you with me, George? You sound like you're getting more tired. Have you had a chance to rest, George?

SKATZES: I've probably had maybe five hours sleep during all this. Don't matter.

BURCHETT: It does matter. You're going to ruin your health.

SKATZES: So you want me healthy when you come in to kill me. That's a good one, Dave.

BURCHETT: Why don't we mutually agree to solve this, okay? I think that's what we want to do. You and I are the ones who can do that.

SKATZES: I'd like to see that. Maybe you'd get a promotion and maybe I wouldn't get killed. How 'bout that? *(Both laugh.)*

BURCHETT: Well, I certainly wouldn't want you to get killed. And a promotion sounds pretty good to me.

SKATZES: How long am I going to have to sit around here and hold my nuts till you give me any kinda decision on our demands? Where is King Arthur? Is he in the Bahamas or something?

BURCHETT: Where will you be?

SKATZES: Now just where in the fuck do you think I'm gonna be. Oh, I'll be right here. In the dark. Curled up in the corner. Smelling the backed up shit from the toilets. You can bet on that.

HUDSON: As time goes on, the hostage takers get hungry, they get tired, they fall asleep. If you just continue a dialogue and buy time, these things begin to work for you. The more time that goes by the greater the chances for a peaceful resolution to the situation.

SKATZES: What's happening?

BURCHETT: I've been working on it and it sounds real promising. Things are going the way we want.

SKATZES: Alright, alright. Talk to me, man.

BURCHETT: Alright George, if we're able to work out all the details, live coverage.

SKATZES: Live coverage!

BURCHETT: Well, George we've got to do a lot of work with the media, to sell them on this.

SKATZES: No, no, no. Come on, Dave, you know the media wants to come in here.

BURCHETT: Well George, there's about 300 of them. There's so many of them out there!

SKATZES: That's their problem. I'm not going to worry about hurt feelings because somebody didn't get to be first. We're worried about lives in here.

HUDSON: It is April the 15th, just after midnight. The State is preparing to resume negotiations later this morning, but also preparing for an assault. More than 2,000 armed personnel from corrections special teams, the Ohio State Patrol, the Ohio National Guard, FBI, and local law enforcement agencies have been moved into the area and placed on standby.

*(During the following exchange among military personnel, it is especially helpful to show slides of the layout of L block, the hand-written change of plans about where to blow a hole—taken from an actual drawing by the military—and the location of skirmishers who will shoot down unarmed, fleeing convicts.)*

MILITARY OFFICIAL: Listen up. Our updated information from listening devices and negotiations has made it very clear that all existing doorways and corridor entrances are heavily barricaded. It is now obvious that any assault through one of these entrances would only be met with a wall of obstacles. Because of this factor, the following plan is being developed to use explosive devices to enter L block and the gymnasium.

Two explosive charges will be set. The first one will be set and detonated by members of the Ohio National Guard. It will blow a hole in the floor of the corridor... *(The Captain interrupts with new whispered information.)*... There appears to be a change in plans. We will blow a hole in the roof of the corridor between two of the day rooms and we will not be blowing a hole in the floor. A second explosive device will be set between the two doors of the gymnasium. State troopers will then open the air vents and drop "Clear-Out" canisters of tear gas down each of the vents. Captain?

CAPTAIN: The National Guard is sufficiently armed to accomplish its missions. Ammunition is on site. Skirmish lines are being set up to meet fleeing inmates on the recreation field. 5,000 pieces of cardboard have been donated to be used for target practice. Lieutenant?

LIEUTENANT: The time is now 12:45 a.m. It is April 15. We've just received a message from Command Center. It is requested that the appropriate staff from the Ohio National Guard meet at the Portsmouth Patrol Post at 0-600, in exactly 5 hours and 15 minutes, to review the draft of a plan of attack.

MILITARY OFFICIAL: Attention! Dismissed.

*(Prisoners position themselves on chairs and boxes in a semi-circle at center stage. What follows is a highly condensed version of a meeting that lasted 50 minutes. Actors should speak slowly and clearly.)*

CUMMINGS *(can be played by the same person who played Allen)*: I want us to leave here with an understanding that the non-negotiable things is all that we are talking on. We want the lights and water turned back on before

we bring a hostage out of here. The media, etc., is negotiable. We are going to give them a time element to give us what is non-negotiable. Tell them: "We want back what you took. Once you do that, then we go to the next phase."

LAVELLE (*menacingly*): We know that when they first get back to us they gonna say, "Well, we can't do this." Well that's when we tell them that the hardliners gonna take care of the situation now.

CUMMINGS (*to George*): We try to work with you, George. We know you're a good guy but you're losing control over things. George, go back and tell them, the hardliners came up with the non-negotiable things. Give them the time element if they don't do these things. We'll meet back after we put our non-negotiable things out.

(*Telephone negotiations resume. The negotiator for the State is now Dirk Prise but can be played by the same person who played Burchett.*)

SKATZES: These people want electricity and water. It's non-negotiable. That's the way it is.

PRISE: Shit, George, you got to give us something. You want it your way. We want it ours. We have to negotiate.

SKATZES: We did not ask you to take the power off.

PRISE: We did not ask you to take hostages.

SKATZES: I'm telling you. The law has been set down to me. If I can't get you people to give us something, the hardliners will take this and control this.

LAVELLE (*next to George*): Tell them 10:30, turn that shit on or there is a dead man out there.

PRISE: We are concerned with safety.

SKATZES: It's a safety hazard to be here in the dark. There's no electric damage been done. Try it. Turn it on and see what happens.

PRISE: But George listen....

SKATZES: Get this clear and this is the bottom line. You have till 10:30 to get the lights on or you will have one dead hostage. Again I stress to you, if you turn this on, you think you might electrocute somebody. You don't know if someone will get electrocuted or not. If you don't turn it on, it's a guaranteed murder.

PRISE: Now see, George, if I turn the electric on—

SKATZES: That's it. Do your thing. 10:30 or a dead man is out of here.

(*Hasan moves center stage front.*)

HASAN: Between 11:05 and 11:10 a.m., four prisoners carried a blanket containing the body of Officer Vallandingham out to the rec yard. As they did so, Skatzes was still talking on the phone, pleading to have electricity and water restored.

SKATZES: Do it! You're wasting valuable time!

HASAN: Officer Robert Vallandingham, beloved son, husband, father of two, well-liked both by colleagues and prisoners, had been strangled.

*(Skatzes gets up and wanders in a daze toward one side of the stage.)*

SKATZES: I can't believe this. I can't believe this. I think they really did a guard. I don't know if we are ever going to make it out of here. I don't know if none of us is. They ain't listening.

ROBB *(comes to the front of the stage, sits in the chair Skatzes has vacated)*: There was no reason to kill Officer Vallandingham. It was counter productive to our cause. Yes, L block was occupied by oppressed prisoners. Yes, many threats were made. But nobody imagined it would be carried out. When I found out about the killing, I knew it was over. Killing a guard meant the end.

*(Namir, also dazed and shell-shocked, comes to the side of the stage furthest from Skatzes and speaks to Hasan.)*

NAMIR: Did you authorize anyone to kill a guard?

HASAN: No!

*(Lavelle appears near Hasan and Namir. Namir moves quickly and approaches Lavelle from behind, grabs his shoulder and spins him around. )*

NAMIR: Lavelle!

*(Lavelle looks at Namir and slowly backs away.)*

NAMIR: You gonna be held responsible for that call you just made, man. You're not strong enough to make a decision like that. You didn't have no business making that call, man. Do you know what you've done? You ain't nothing but a little punk.

*(Namir knocks Lavelle to the ground.)*

END OF ACT ONE

# Lucasville Justice Project

## ACT TWO

*(The table and chair remain at the center of a bare stage. Skatzes enters slowly from the side of the stage where we last saw him. Everything is the same but also changed. Skatzes' manner is subtly different: where before he was alternately elated and depressed, he is now—initially at least—resigned and stoic.*

*The prison negotiator on this late afternoon of April 15 is once again Dirk Prise, but again can be played by the same person who played David Burchett in Act One.)*

PRISE: Hi, George. I'll tell you what I've got... *(He confers)*... I've gotten the OK from my superiors. I've got the radio people ready right now. The TV people are getting ready.

SKATZES: Okay.

PRISE: Now there's a real important thing here. George, you guys have upped the ante on me. Now you want radio and TV. George, in a show of good faith, can you get me three hostages?

SKATZES: I will take that before the committee but I honestly believe that I can only get you two, because they're paranoid about you getting' us down to a minimal number of hostages and then stormin' the place and killin' everybody in here.

PRISE: George, we're not going to do that. We want everybody out. I've never lied to you. This is Dirk. We've talked quite a bit together.

SKATZES: If we have, I can't really recall. I'm too tired. I think I can try for two officers...Hello?

PRISE: Hello, George. Okay, so here's what's--

SKATZES: Unfortunately we can't get this together at this time. We can't agree on terms in here.

PRISE: Look, George. Please listen to me carefully. I've got people out there that saw us carry one of their buddies out of here. I want to put a stop to this in a peaceful, orderly manner. I want nobody else hurt. We've given you what you asked for. You asked for media coverage. Let's face it, George. If the Rodney King verdict comes down and they settle Waco, your cause is going to the back of the list. We need to take care of this and cut all this shit we've been playing. You know I don't want to play games.

SKATZES: I want that too, but listen. We're dealing with more than just one decision-maker. Not one man in here makes all the decisions. We can't possibly get this thing done tonight. I don't like it no more than you do, but that's the way it is.

PRISE: What are you going to do, George, throw us another body tomorrow?

SKATZES: No sir, not if I can help it. I didn't want that to happen this morning.

PRISE: What happened, George? Did you lose control or what?

SKATZES: Never had control. I'm just a negotiator. I'm just one man. We're dealing with multiple personalities, multiple people. And unless we can come to an agreement with our shit synchronized, then we can't move.

PRISE: The tables are being moved in the yard as we speak. *(Confers)* I want you and them to give me somebody now to talk to me face to face on live radio.

SKATZES: Can I come out there and talk to you on radio? Is that what you said?

PRISE: Yes, George.

SKATZES: Me? *(Pause)*

PRISE: Yes, George.

SKATZES: Without a hostage?

PRISE: No. One hostage with you.

SKATZES: I can't do that.

PRISE: Yes, you can George.

PRISONER *(Down on one knee near Clark and Demons)*: Officer Clark and Officer Demons, we've been talking to negotiators and we've decided to let two hostages go. We're choosing the two of you to be the ones to leave.

*(Skatzes, Cummings, Clark and Demons come down the steps at the front of the stage, or depending on physical arrangements, make their way right up to the front row of seats. Clark and Demons are still blindfolded. They stumble. When the four men reach "the yard," Skatzes removes the blindfold and takes his hands off Clark. Clark moves slowly down the center aisle, at first in small careful steps as if still blindfolded, then faster until he disappears among his imagined colleagues at the back. Cummings then removes Demons' blindfold but Demons steps up to a mike before he exits. He wears Muslim regalia.)*

DEMONS: My name is Officer Demons. My Muslim name is Mustafah Ah-Qualin *(phonetic)*, which also means the chosen strong one. I would like to say something.

First of all, the Muslims did not kill the seven [inmate] hostages. The institution wants people to believe, wants the media to make you believe that those hostages were killed by the Muslim brothers. That is not true.

Those boys were killed because they was snitches. Them boys, the Muslims did not touch. The Muslims have kept every officer in there alive. I feel that the institution has done everybody in there just wrong by keeping everybody in there for so long.

Now, I knew Vallandingham. He was a friend of mine. The only reason that man is dead [is] because he sat in there so long, because they want to cut off water, turn off electricity, which had me scared for my life in there.

So I adjusted to the Nation of Islam. I'm gonna tell you that now. I'm proud of that. I fear no man, no thing. Only thing I fear is Allah himself. I'm telling you all that. Can you all hear me in there?

*(There is a roar of approval from L block. Officer Demons straightens himself, squares his shoulders, and with dignity walks down the center aisle and out of sight. Cummings joins prisoners at the back of the stage and Skatzes is left facing the audience.)*

SKATZES: All right this is inmate negotiator George. I'm out here on the yard at the microphone. My brothers in L-Block, if you can hear me on that radio, please holler at me.

CHORUS: *(Yelling in the background).*

SKATZES: Okay, I'm out here. I know there's a lot riding on my shoulders right now. I'm gonna do the best job I can. Everything's kind of tense. Everybody's a little nervous, but before I come out here everybody in the world had something they wanted me to say.

I can't possibly remember all of the demands but I'll touch on some and what I feel are the most important. You still hear me up there?

CHORUS: *(More yelling in the background).*

SKATZES: We are a unit here. They try to make this a racial issue but it is not a racial issue. Black and white alike have joined hands at SOCF and have become one strong unit.

We have endured pure hell that they have put us through. We are still standing strong and we will remain strong until we either negotiate this to our liking, or they will kill us. We are prepared to die, if need to be.

And we hope it doesn't come to that. We hope there is no more violence. We hope there are no more unnecessary murders.... We as a convict body send our condolences to Bobby's family. I can't pronounce his last name so I'll have to use his first. But that is something that had to happen. A lot of us didn't want it but that's-- I'm sorry--that's all I can say.

We're not gonna take no more oppression. Am I still on the radio up there, brothers?

CHORUS: *(Applause in background).*

SKATZES: Okay, I'm very limited in time. The list of demands and all like that is by no means short....

*(Prisoners move toward the front of the stage. Hasan, Robb and Lavelle—the prisoners who negotiated the surrender—articulate the key agreements.)*

HASAN: Number 1. SOCF is committed to following all administrative rules of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

ROBB: Number 2. Administrative discipline and criminal proceedings will be fairly and impartially administered without bias against individuals or groups.

LAVELLE: Number 6. SOCF will contact the Federal Court for a review of the consent decree which requires integrated celling.

HASAN: Number 12. Attempts will be made to expedite current plans to install a new phone system.

ROBB: Number 14. There will be no retaliating actions taken toward any inmate or groups of inmates or their property.

SKATZES: I do have one more thing. A man asked me to do him a personal favor. He asked me to bring a note out here to his people. I wasn't permitted to bring a note. I will say, Jeff Ratcliff sent his love to his momma and his papa and his people and he said that he is hanging in there strong. Your boy was with Darrold Clark all the time, he is doing good and I hope we will have him out of here soon, too.

And I say to this radio audience and my brothers in there, we are not going to bow down, we are not going to give up, we are going to remain no matter what they put on us! If we die, we die. If we're still alive, I hope that we can continue to negotiate.

*(Skatzes returns to the stage and walks between two lines of prisoners holding—the electricity still being off—lighted candles.)*

HASAN: April the 21st, a negotiated surrender took place. As 407 prisoners, tired and dirty, walked out to surrender peacefully, the last five correctional officers also emerged from their ordeal as hostages. The inmate and state negotiators could feel that they had averted a far greater catastrophe. During the 11 days of the Lucasville uprising, nine prisoners and one officer died. At Attica, in 1971, there were more than 40 deaths. . . . Then came the trials.

WILKINSON: I am Reginald Wilkinson, the Director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. The key to winning convictions was eroding the loyalty and fear inmates felt toward their gangs. To do that, the Special Prosecutor's staff targeted a few gang leaders in order to convince them to accept plea bargains. *(Stays to observe interrogation.)*

*(Hudson enters and approaches Skatzes.)*

HUDSON: Hello George, I'm Sgt. Hudson. We are in the process of getting on our side as many of the rioters as we can. Those that don't help us will be on the other side. They will be left to fight for themselves.

SKATZES: I don't have anything to tell you. I don't wish to continue this interview.

*(On the other side of the stage, a Trooper approaches Lavelle.)*

TROOPER: Mr. Lavelle, I'm with the Ohio State Patrol. Let me say up front that you can walk out of here with a deal in your pocket. It's a good deal. I'm just assuming that you didn't kill Officer Vallandingham. I'm just assuming that you were there and you saw it happen. All it takes is for you to say, yeah, I was there. I saw it. Put a little bit of detail on it. See what I mean? That's all there is to it. You got a deal in your pocket right now.

HUDSON: George, if you don't help us, we will see to it that you spend the rest of your life in prison, whether or not you are tried on charges related to the riot. You are doing a life sentence for aggravated murder to begin with. We can keep you in prison with no problem. But if you help us, we can help you.

SKATZES: There is no way I can do anything to help you.

HUDSON: We are here to give you one last chance. The next time we come we will charge you with three capital murder cases: Officer Vallandingham and two of the prisoners. We're trying to keep you off Death Row.

TROOPER: They are talking about electrocuting the people who actually did the hands on murder. My gut feeling is that you were just there. If you were just there, that's what you need to tell me. I want to know who the people were that were involved in it.

LAVELLE: I didn't do it. I didn't touch him. I didn't go no where near touching him.

TROOPER: You saw it happen?

LAVELLE: I know who ordered it. I mean, I heard him giving orders.

DEPUTY WARDEN: George, I am the Deputy Warden. Let's see. Your cell is right between Lavelle and Hasan, isn't it? Do you think it would be wise for you to go back to your cell today?

SKATZES: Yes! If I don't go back there, it will make me look like a snitch.

DEPUTY WARDEN: Well, Central Office has decided that you can not go back to your cell. That is non-negotiable!

LAVELLE (*reading letter out loud*): "Jason, I am forced to write you and relate a few things that have happened down here lately.

Yesterday morning George said that he had a lawyer visit. He failed to return that day. And now today they came and packed up his property which leads me to the conclusion that he has chosen to be a cop.

Now if I am wrong, I will do all I can to correct the problem. But Jason, I am not wrong. If you don't believe my words check it for yourself, and then get back with me as soon as you can." (*Pause, as it were for drawing a very deep breath.*)

I made my decision to cooperate after Prosecutor Stead told me, "You are either going to be my witness, or I'm going to try to kill you." I couldn't see myself spending the rest of my life in prison. I definitely did not want to die. If I wouldn't have testified or agreed to testify, both of those possibilities was there. I saw myself going to Death Row.

HASAN: Since all physical evidence was destroyed by the prosecution, the prosecution's case against us depended entirely on the testimony of prisoners like Lavelle. Our trials became essentially a formality with an overwhelmingly probable outcome.

At my trial, my lawyer called an expert who was going to testify about the major causes of the riot: bad administration on the part of the warden, staff not following policy and procedures, psychological brutality. The existing system provided the environment for a riot to occur. But the judge ruled that I didn't need an expert. The judge said, "Riots are not created by the prison. Riots are created by the inmates."

(*Pause.*)

I was sentenced to death for the aggravated murder of Officer Vallandingham.

NAMIR: Good morning ladies and gentlemen of the jury. I cannot speak that well or that good. I just doing the best I can.

They said I was guilty of kidnapping. I was locked up in cell 80. When the riot broke out, Vallandingham fled to the restroom. The inmates kidnapped him before I was even out of the cell. So how could I be guilty of kidnapping?

They say I killed Vallandingham. I kidnapped and killed no one. In my life, I never have, and hopefully, I never will.

I'm not one truly to plead for my life. I don't believe I'll die until my time comes. The Creator runs that. And none of us know when we gonna die.

I pray. I bow down to Allah, my God and your God, trying to do what's right. I tried to assist in teaching others the religion, not racism. I'm not a Black Muslim. I'm a Sunni Muslim.

I never once forced a guard in a cell. But I did try to make sure they be treated fair and get water. I did try to make sure things were peaceful. That's what I did.

In the 10 years I was at Lucasville, I had no more than two write-ups. Why would they hire me to work for them in a hospital around women if I'm so dangerous and cruel as the prosecutor tried to make it seem?

I'm just being real with you. Prison is where I been living most of my life, from childhood to adult, and it will be my home probably until I die.

(*Looks into audience and sees Mrs. Vallandingham.*) Mrs. Vallandingham, I couldn't save your son's life. I didn't have the power. I did what I could. That's all I can say. And thank you.

(Pause.)

I was sentenced to death.

ROBB: My name's Jason Robb. In junior high school, I started to experiment with different drugs. At 15, I got addicted to PCP.

One night I was partying, mixing drugs. I got in a fight and shot and killed a man. I had just turned 17. I pled guilty to manslaughter.

I went cold turkey off the drugs. My mom and my sister seen me not being able to control myself. My father visited me for a while. It was the first time I saw him cry.

Later I was sent to the Ohio State Reformatory. Guys told me, "If somebody approaches you and gets right in your face, you don't back down from them, you don't show no type of fear." I weighed 141 pounds.

One day, I got into a fight with several black guys. I couldn't whip two of them, but I stood up and I fought. A lot of people seen that.

After my second fight with a black inmate, I was approached by a group of pretty big-sized white guys. Nobody bothered them. They told me, "You won't let these guys run over on top of you, we like that. Listen, man, be one of us and we'll watch your back."

It was the Aryan Brotherhood. They got me a good job in the penitentiary, and interested me in education.

The first real contact that I had with blacks was in there. After a while, I kind of had a racist attitude. Then my attitude voiced down some because I got to talking to these black guys, working on jobs with them. You got to respect an individual if you work with him. We built an esteem of respect between us. So, I went into a separatist-type attitude. They stay on their side, I stay on my side. There's a difference in my eyes between a racist and a separatist. A racist is a person filled with hate, who'll cause trouble between the races.

I never tried to hide the fact my beliefs was different, but I would never blatantly come forward and disrespect them. You don't do that in a penitentiary. You ain't gonna make it to the door at the end of the hallway if you do that.

I didn't commit these crimes, but I still feel I let my family down because I'm here. And now... either I'm gonna die or I'm gonna spend the rest of my life in prison. I'm never gonna see the streets again. I'm never gonna be with my family. I'm never gonna be able... Oh, man. I don't know. It's something that I have to deal with.

(Pause.)

I was sentenced to death.

*(LaMar is initially seated in the chair by the telephone table.)*

LAMAR: The State charged me with multiple murders. You see, along with those who chose to stay inside, I, too, had been subjected to the daily degradations, the frequent and arbitrary changes of rules and regulations, and had spent several years living under the constant scrutiny of King Arthur's informants. It was from this place and state of mind that I and others decided to speak out against the administration and advocate a position of non-compliance with the subsequent investigation. Because of this, I was singled out and charged. Before the judge pronounced his sentence, I made the following statement:

*(Stands)* Seems like everybody has something to say and everybody has an opinion on what they feel should be done with my life. Well, I want to say what I feel about my own life.

So first of all, I want to say that--that I stand unbowed and unbroken by what has been allowed to transpire inside these walls within which I sought justice. I want the record to reflect that I have absolutely no faith in the system and no faith in the power that would permit such a miscarriage of justice to take place; and though I stand here convicted of nine counts of aggravated murder, I want the record to reflect that the only thing I'm guilty of is being innocent and that once again a man is being made to pay for the arrogant insensibility

of a people who are so intoxicated by their myths that they don't realize that the dream has turned into a nightmare.

I'm here because I'm expendable to a society that has become so desperate to thwart the threat upon their precious status that they would stand by and watch an innocent man be killed--killed by the same system who would have us believe that killing is wrong.

Throughout the whole trial it's been said, repeatedly said by the prosecutor, that every man must be held accountable for his actions. I agree with that.

The prosecutor, every man must be held accountable, except the man who hides behind the shield of an unjust system, a system that would kill a man in order to escape their responsibility, in order to escape the stupidity that would leave 15 correctional officers in charge of 400 violent men--men who have been stripped of their humanity and left to live like animals, unworthy of respect, unworthy of understanding, and unworthy of reason; men who are being stripped of the very soul that makes them human beings.

I could stand here and I could beg you not to kill me, but my faith won't allow me to do that. I just want the record to reflect that I stand unmoved by your threats or promises of death. Death is a given. It is inevitable. I've been living with death my whole life. All of us must face it.

Within the confines of prison I found myself and I'm not willing to belittle myself or bow down to something that I don't believe in. And I don't believe in what took place in this court.

*(Pause.)*

I was sentenced to death.

SKATZES: I got two death sentences and a life sentence plus up to fifty years for kidnappings coming out of that riot. I would have been sentenced to death for the murder of Officer Vallandingham but Officer Ratcliff testified for me. He said I saved his life, so I got life instead of death on that one.

RATCLIFF: I'm Officer Ratcliff and I testified in court on behalf of George about that broadcast. My mom was over at the school waiting to hear something. Well, it seemed, every time she turned around she was collapsing from the strain, you know, waiting to hear, wondering if I was dead or alive. The other group inside--that had been holding me--had been beating me pretty well. I mean, I was beat from head to toe. But when George came to bring me over with him and the other officers, I had no problem with him the whole time.... *(Ratcliff suddenly stops talking.)* You see, if George wouldn't have come and got me, I wouldn't be here now. I would be dead.

*(When Ratcliff finishes speaking, he exits.)*

SKATZES: Officer Darrold Clark--the one I released during the radio broadcast--Darrold testified against me. Good ole Darrold. They said I kidnapped that man. I never murdered or kidnapped anyone! I know that I sure as shit don't belong in here and so consequently we have to know that the State murders innocent people.

Nothing's ever gonna change, even one little bit, until the people in the public demand it. Our cases have been dragging on for years. My case is not even in federal court yet. I think they want to just leave me up there in my cell until I die.

*(A woman in her 50s emerges from the audience. It is Skatzes' sister, Jackie Bowers.)*

JACKIE BOWERS: I'm Jackie Bowers. I'm George Skatzes' sister. I have been running around in the snow collecting affidavits from George's friends and relatives. Now they tell me these statements are hearsay and the jury can't hear them.

Will you be George's jury? Will you be the jury for all the Lucasville Five? May I, at least, share my affidavit with you? I write to all five of them, but I'm going to talk about my brother George because he's the one I know best.

"George and I had a very hard childhood. Our parents were divorced when we were very young. Our

house was like growing up in a hell hole. Mom had a new boyfriend every time we turned around. Many times George and I have come in from playing and would find her in bed with one of her men. They made us get out of the house. That also meant no meal times.

I left at the age of seventeen. Couldn't take it any more. I didn't have sense enough to think about George or what he still had to go through. I strongly feel that if I had taken him with me, he wouldn't be where he's at today.

We have forgiven our mom a long time ago. We have learned never to hate anyone or hold grudges. This just destroys a person. It is better to make peace and go on.

My youngest son was killed in a car crash. His death devastated George, but through his phone calls and letters he has helped me through it when no one else could. I feel George saved me. He made me realize that I needed to get God back in my life. Because of George, I have come a long way since my son's death. We all need George. We need the chance to prove his innocence. Thank you very much for your time."

*(The five men have been projecting: "We are maintaining, we are doing what we can, but it's not enough." The atmosphere has been so heavy it might be cut with a knife. These men are preparing to die with whatever dignity they can scrape together. Now Jackie takes up a position beside Skatzes. There have become, so to speak, the Lucasville Six, standing in a line, facing the audience. The atmosphere suddenly becomes electric.*

*. An unidentified African American man comes slowly onto the stage from the audience, and takes his stand beside the Five and Jackie Bowers.)*

LAW: My name is Kenneth Law. I grew up in Youngstown. I am now in a prison out West. I am one of the prisoner informants who has recanted. I want you to hear my affidavit, too.

"I, Kenneth Law, am making this confession voluntarily to clear my conscience of the injustice I was forced to play a part in because of my fear that I would be prosecuted, convicted, and possibly executed for a crime I did not commit. I want to expose the scandal executed by the Ohio State Patrol and the prosecutors involved in the riot investigation.

During the Lucasville riot of 1993 I slept in the block that Anthony Lavelle and his Black Gangster Disciples controlled, and I overheard many of their conversations.

On the morning of April 15, 1993, I heard Anthony Lavelle talking about killing a guard. Lavelle left along with two others whom I recognized to be Gangster Disciples, despite their masks.

A few minutes later, I also left and went toward L-6. As I approached, the two masked Disciples came out. I entered and saw Lavelle inside. I looked into the shower and saw Officer Vallandingham dead. It was clear to me that Lavelle and his associates had killed the guard.

When I gave this information to the prosecutor, I was asked to change my story. 'Lavelle is a state witness,' they said.

I refused to change my story, and the next thing I know I'm charged with the murder and kidnapping of Officer Vallandingham. I went to trial. The jury found me guilty of kidnapping although there was no witness who stated that they saw me kidnap anyone. All I did was bring Vallandingham a blanket to make sure he was warm.

On the more serious charge of murdering Vallandingham, the jury hung. The prosecutors increased the pressure on me, and even my own lawyer pressed me to cooperate and avoid a second trial. They made it clear that I would die for something I had not done unless I said what they wanted me to say.

I eventually broke and gave false testimony. The prosecutor had a deal for me that would not really be any time if I testified against Hasan and Namir. I feared going to Death Row for something I did not do, so I agreed.

I was interviewed before both trials and told what to say. This is the truth and I am willing to pay the penalty for my perjury against Hasan and Namir. To this day, I regret having lied in my statement and on the stand. It was Anthony Lavelle who killed Vallandingham. I am willing and able to testify to the foregoing, if called."

And you know what? There are others like me, men who became snitches and can't live with themselves. They too are coming forward.

*(As Law says these last words, three men—prisoners 1 to 3—stand up in the audience and silently make their way to the stage. Without saying anything, they take positions beside the Five, Jackie Bowers, and Kenneth Law. As they do so, the remainder of the cast moves to the front of the stage so that the Five are now surrounded by more than a dozen supporters.*

*All on stage join hands and raise them silently.)*

THE FIVE: Our lives are in your hands!

THE END