

“American Supermax”

By Joseph Dole (2008)

A guard informed me upon arrival that
there are benefits to this isolation.

He promoted the fact that we are now
all safe from gang retaliation.

I had to ask “But what of the
retaliation of the prison administration?”

He smiled cryptically as he enjoyed
this in ecstatic contemplation.

None of what I was experiencing was
making me feel safe. But then, by “grace,”
I see a new definition. I’m safe from
my family’s loving embrace.

I’m safe from having education take
ignorance’s place.

I’m safe from recreation keeping my
heart’s healthy pace.

How I wish I could articulate this quasi-
existence that I’ve grown to hate.

Or get an answer to why so many strangers
sadistically enjoy my monotonous fate.

They say societal enlightenment takes time, but what if it takes
longer than your life, and you’re forced to wait?

Joseph Dole was confined in Tamms Supermax Prison from 2002 through 2012 when a court ruling gave him and other inmates at Tamms a due process right to a fair hearing, which allowed him to win a transfer out of Tamms. Coincidentally, Tamms would be emptied of prisoners on Mr. Dole’s birthday in 2013. He can be reached by writing: Joseph Dole, K84446, Stateville Correctional Center, P.O. Box 112, Joliet, IL 60434. More of his writings can be found at www.realcostofprisons.org/writing/