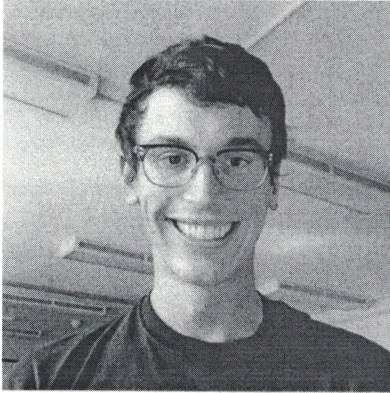


# The Amplifier

Plug into news that informs and encourages

October 2016

## Interview with Steve Sherman



As a topflight journalist for *The Amplifier's* newsletter, I keep my busy ears to the street for future interviewees. One name in particular has been ringing throughout the resource rooms, computer lab, and institutional hallways—Mr. Steve Sherman.

There have been many descriptions of his easy-going yet animated personality, but the terms

“smart”, “witty”, “resourceful”, and “charismatic listener” reign supreme.

“Charismatic listener.” The first time I heard those two words joined together made me smile, and that description is on point when it comes to Mr. Sherman. Why didn’t I think of that?

The academic talents and tools that Mr. Sherman skillfully imparts upon us new-millennium scholars are astonishing. At the very least, EJPers are receiving a multi-thousand-dollar scholastic education for free. Who doesn’t like the word “gratis” especially when it comes with a high quality education?

I had an opportunity to sit down with Mr. Sherman after he won the Writing Resource Center Award at the 2016 EJP Awards Convocation. Here is an edited version of our discussion.

**RG:** How does it feel to win the Writing Resource Center Award in less than one year of being an on-site volunteer?

**SS:** It was a big surprise and a humbling experience. But I don’t do this for the accolades. I’m involved with EJP because I feel that more people should be involved with the prison educational movement. So for me an outside pat on the back is bad, although an internal pat on the back is good because it intensifies my commitment to the program.

**RG:** What does your Curriculum Vitae look like?

**SS:** In 2002 I graduated from New Providence High School in New Providence, New Jersey, in 2006 I double-majored in English and American Studies and received a Bachelor’s Degree from the University of Iowa, then in 2011 I earned my Master’s Degree in Urban Planning from the U of I, and by 2018 I will have a PhD in Urban Planning from the University of Illinois.

*[Wow! At this rate, intellectually, he’ll be living in a deluxe apartment above George and Weezy in no time.]*

**RG:** What are some of your intellectual interests?

**SS:** Urban economic development involving universities and hospitals, and other “anchor institutions” or anything that involves the economy of cities.

*[What is the highest level of nerd?]*

**RG:** What drew you to EJP?

**SS:** Life experience, my old job as an urban planner, and my education have taught me that “criminal justice,” “policing,” and

“crime” is often code-wording for something else. I knew I wanted to aid somehow in unpacking those concepts. When I moved to Illinois in 2014 I heard some good things from other professors about this organization. So when I met Ms. Ginsburg and she shared with me the goals and aims of the program, I was eager to join.

**RG:** In what ways if any has being a part of EJP shaped/alterd your worldview?

**SS:** I’m more empathic. When I hear about some of the daily challenges that you men face, it blows my mind. Then to pursue a higher education on top of those pressures, I’m floored and inspired all at the same time. I’m also more aware of white privilege. I have often benefited from being white in one way or another. So I feel the need to work with those who have been marginalized. I can’t remember his name, but I was watching a short promotion about EJP and a man said, “Imagine being judged for the rest of your life by the worst thing that you have ever done.” That was profound on so many different levels. So I’m generally saying the titles that we give people are often harmful, and misrepresent people to harmful ends.

*[EJP alumni, aka brilliant Jonny Page, is the man in the promo.]*

**RG:** Do you find being a part of EJP fulfilling? If so, how?

**SS:** Yes, of course, for me to step outside of day-to-day research work is like a breath of fresh air. I also get a chance to work on my craft, which is writing. I truly enjoy critiquing and editing essays, term papers, and creative material. Plus it’s a privilege to talk to and learn from others who are serious about their intellectual development.

**RG:** What are your hopes for the future of EJP?

**SS:** A robust network of alumni, alumni involvement, additional classes, more students, and continued IDOC support.

**RG:** Last but not least here’s a question I ask all great minds that I come across. Using one word or phrase, how would you describe yourself?

**SS:** “Somewhat lost.” *[Laughing.]*

**SS:** Better yet, “Indecisive.” *[Laughing harder.]*

I’m not privy to this information but whatever system Ms. Ginsburg has in play when hiring volunteers, keep it going. She is batting a thousand and Mr. Sherman is the epitome of an infield homerun.

—Raylan Gilford



### Eddie’s Enigmas—CRYPTIC CIRCLE

One formula for the area of a circle is  $A = \pi r^2$ , which can be phrased as  $AREA = PI * R * R$ .

Determine which digits can replace the letters A, R, E, P, & I, as in a cryptogram, to make the latter formula mathematically correct.

Rating = ●●●○○

# October

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
5p WAMP 3	11:30a SRR 4 5p Language Partners 5p WAMP 6p Academic Advising	5p All Student Meeting 5 	8:30a <i>Makes you tick!</i> 6 12p <i>Python group</i> 5p Language Partners 5p Mindfulness	9a Newsletter 7 9a CAVE  5p For-credit courses: Finance II 199 Teaching & Learning 446 Ethical Theories 421 Environ Sustainability 370 New Student Reading Group
5p WAMP 10	11:30a SRR 11 5p Language Partners 5p WAMP 6p Academic Advising	9a CAVE 12 6p Library work	8:30a <i>Illinois Politics</i> 13 11:30a <i>Computer Programming</i> 5p Language Partners 5p Mindfulness	9a Newsletter 14  5p For-credit courses: Finance II 199 Teaching & Learning 446 Ethical Theories 421 Environ Sustainability 370
5p WAMP 17	11:30a SRR 18 5p Language Partners 5p WAMP 6a Academic Advising	11:30a Pit Crew 19 5p <i>Personal Finance</i>	8:30a <i>Bio information</i> 20 11:30a <i>Computer Programming</i> 5p Language Partners 5p Mindfulness	9a Newsletter 21 9a CAVE  5p For-credit courses: Finance II 199 Teaching & Learning 446 Ethical Theories 421 Environ Sustainability 370 New Student Reading Group
5p WAMP 24	11:30a SRR 25 5p Language Partners 5p WAMP 6p Academic Advising	9a CAVE 26 5p <i>Horticulture</i>	8:30a <i>Makes you tick!</i> 27 12p <i>Python group</i> 5p Language Partners 5p Mindfulness	9a Newsletter 28  5p For-credit courses: Finance II 199 Teaching & Learning 446 Ethical Theories 421 Environ Sustainability 370
 31	The measure of a man is not found in what he inherits from his ancestors, it is found in what he leaves his descendants that will last generations.  -Ibn Da'wud			

CRYPTIC CIRCLE HINT:  
Pick a value to test for R, and then try various values for the P and the I in PI that will make the value of R in AREA also equal to your selected value. Right away, you know that R is not equal to 1 or 9, because  $1^2 = 1$ , and  $9^2 = 81$ , and multiplying these numbers by PI will make the value of A equal to the value of I.



# ILLINOIS

## Education Justice Project