

## Moral Mondays Illinois goes directly to jail

By [Fred Kinsey](#)

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Our arrest happened much faster than we anticipated. As we unfurled our banner based on the “unjust scales” of Amos 8, the police moved in.

We had gathered at a magnificent skyscraper in Chicago’s financial district for a meeting with Ken Griffin, Illinois’s richest citizen and top financial contributor to Governor Bruce Rauner.

Following the Moral Mondays movement in North Carolina tradition, and with the blessing of its leader, [William J. Barber II](#), Moral Mondays in Chicago began when people of faith and conscience felt an overwhelming need to demonstrate against the immoral budget proposed for the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

On this [Moral Monday](#), we were unable to confirm our appointment with Griffin at the reception desk. As soon as security officers saw the Moral Monday protesters assembled outside, they shifted into emergency mode. Police appeared out of nowhere, two or three times the number we had seen at any other action, working swiftly to empty the lobby and lock it down on orders of the police commander himself. There were no warnings, no negotiations, as in past demonstrations. Officers on bicycles attempted to block the view of our scales of injustice, while we were cuffed and walked into waiting police wagons.

Griffin, a billionaire who makes \$90,000 an hour, is the CEO of Citadel, one of the largest hedge fund companies. Griffin gave \$13 million, the single largest campaign contribution in Illinois history, to Rauner’s campaign in 2014.

We came to ask Griffin to call the governor, a billionaire hedge-fund buddy, so we could talk to him about our demand to raise revenue from those who can afford it instead of making draconian cuts to social programs that low-income people depend on.

These are life-and-death decisions. The governor insists on balancing the budget with cuts to child care programs, universities, Medicaid, and mental health services.

Illinois is a wealthy state and could fix the budget tomorrow if politicians in Springfield would raise revenue in a moral and fair way.

“Listen to this, you who rob the poor and trample down the needy!” said Amos. “You measure out grain with dishonest measures and cheat the buyer with dishonest scales. . . . I will never forget the wicked things you have done!” (NLT)

The scales of justice have been out of balance for a long time, and income disparity is now greater than in the 1920s. This is an issue for people of faith whose tradition stands with the widow, the poor, and the immigrant.

The Chicago police, whose pensions are also under siege by the new governor, are usually sympathetic to our Moral Monday demonstrations. On this day however, they moved to protect Citadel. The halls of power cannot be trifled with. Otherwise, hills may be brought low and the valleys filled, and the scales of injustice swing back toward a balance.

We stood holding our banner to Citadel’s windows, singing “Whose side are you on,” accompanied by a host of faithful laypeople and clergy. Perhaps we should have known that our action would attract this kind of reaction. But as we were whisked away to jail, I realized that we had accomplished our goal, having struck at the heart of the matter, exposing the unjust scales of power and the immoral system corrupting the realm of God, with which we have been entrusted.