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Criminal Justice Reform Event

On May 23, 2023, I created & hosted an event inside of Pennsylvania state prison, sci Coal Township. It was this prisons largest and most successful Criminal Justice Reform event in the 30 years this prison has been open. I would like to direct readers to 2 articles written on this event. The first was by Former Lt. Governor Mark Singel, it was written on PennCapital-Star.com around May 26 or 27. The 2nd was written by: Joe Piette of Workers World newspaper which I believe can be found at Workers.org if not I am sure you can google it. Joe wrote that in July of this year. We were blessed with so many outside guests and I wish to acknowledge the inside attendee's in this. These men who are serving life without parole, the men who are rehabilitated, men who not all took a life, are all sentenced to die in prison. No 2nd chances. No possible way to redeem ourselves. I have not written in quite some time because I have been lost in prison life. I have been focusing on myself, fixing myself, not making mistakes anymore, changing who I once was. I am proud of the man who I have grown to become. But society isn't. Pennsylvania can be a very vengeful state. I can't blame the family of a murder victim or someone who was assaulted or worse. All we can ask for is to allow us to find a way to redeem ourselves. Isn't everyone worth redemption or once you make a horrible mistake or choice, you are not worthy of life anymore? There is no easy answer to any of this but I am here to tell you there are good people in here who made horrible choices as kids or young men. Just because I was 21 doesn't make me a man. I can promise you, when I was 21 and I killed my victim, I was not a man. I was a damaged kid who had never matured. But today I am 46 yrs old and I am not that damaged kid anymore. 44 out of 50 states in America offer 2nd chances to people like me so why doesn't Pennsylvania? We have lawmakers who are fighting for 2nd chances for those who are rehabilitated, and have served 35 yrs in prison. Prison is supposed to be about more than just punishment, it is about rehabilitation. So how have we gotten so far off track that all we continue to do is punish? Why not release people who have been rehabilitated in order to help the communities in which they came from? Over 300 juvenile lifers were freed and not a single 1 has committed another murder. Its a rare thing for a lifer to be freed and commit another murder. I'm sure if someone searched online they could find cases in the USA but in Pa, the rate of commuted lifers returning is about 1% And in my lifetime the only one to reoffend was Reginald McFadden. He wasn't only released on his behavior he was also freed because he was a snitch for the prison system and he aided them in identifying leaders in the Camp Hill riots in the late 80's/very early 1990's.



I don't claim to have all of the answers but as a man who has been in here for 25 yrs, I am rehabilitated, I am remorseful, I am a good man who is worthy of a 2nd chance for committing a horrible crime 2 & a 1/2 decades ago. I understand the impact my crime has had on my victims family, the community, my own family but I also know that I am capable of so much good. The event I created was called: Changing the Narrative, We are not our crimes, we have grown to become so much more. Yes its a mouthful but I couldn't describe it properly without all of the words. It was a great day in which DOC (prison staff & employees) came, may lawmakers, lawyers, supporters, people who were victims of crime, government people, all came to meet with 30 men sentenced to life in prison, or as we call it, death by incarceration. So I will end this with recognizing the men who helped make this day special and productive in possible future 2nd chances. Remember, every man here, except Oscar Lugo, has been convicted of taking a life, or being involved in a murder. Mr. Lugo crime was drug related & he received a virtual life sentence for selling drugs. Created by: Robert Pezzeca (Me), Co-Hosted by: Derrick Stevens, participants: Draye Durham, Nyako Pippen, Virgil Tuttle, Jay Sanders, Dominick Serratore & his dog Ranger, Gary Gerber, Nathan Scott, Shawn Harris, David Lee, James Morris, Carlos Meja-Castillo, Oscar Lugo, Perry Poole, Raymond Armstrong, Frederick Willis, Denovian Royster, Bryant Arroyo, Derrick Cramer, Tito McGill, Matthew Murphy, Kevin Coleman, Rob Jones, Harlow Cuadra, James Corley, Brian Parnell, Shelby Zablodny, Byron Lawrence, and Mr. Beyah Sulieman skipped because he was very sick.

These men helped make this event the best criminal justice reform event this prison has seen in it's 30 years of being open. I publicly and privately thank these men for making it such a success and for making it an experience these guests will never forget. There are good people in here who have made horrible choices and decisions decades ago. Aren't we a nation that believes in 2nd chances? I think so. What about the women who were being raped and abused by men and they killed their abuser. Now there are laws in place to protect them in Pa but decades ago, there weren't, yet those women are still serving life sentences and unless we have change in Pa, they too will die in prison. It's easy to say everyone deserves it but I can assure you, not everyone does. Maybe I do, maybe I don't, but by closing the door on redemption, it ends any possible chance of a 2nd chance and it closes the door on yet another life, plus the ripple effect of those who are close to that person, it damages their life too. Doesn't my child deserve a good father to be there for her? She was an infant at the time of my crime. So lets not close the door on everyone. Thank you for reading what I write. Please feel free to comment. I welcome it. I have been, and will continue to be a rehabilitated Prison Dad.