

Freedom is a Must

During the past 22+ years of incarceration I have personally seen and experienced much; the anger, pain, frustration and psychological suffering are real. I will remember many events for the rest of my life. Others, I do my best to forget.

However, the one thing that has never changed is my desire to be reunited with my family - as a FREE man. I would rather spend thirty years struggling in society, as opposed to experiencing one great day in prison. After being deprived of so much for so long, I yearn for the opportunity to live a normal life. How many incarcerated individuals feel this way?

For this to become a reality, the current laws governing our criminal justice system must be amended. Specifically the parole commissioners' discretionary powers. Thanks to the Internet, these issues have been receiving a lot of attention over the past couple of years. Unfortunately, not enough of our own people are personally getting involved.

This is where the prison population is needed. Let us all unite for a common cause - FREEDOM! We must inform our families and friends that the time has arrived to become proactive. There is no longer any time for excuses. Unless, of course, we choose to accept the situation, which will only worsen with time. It's our option to take advantage of this window of opportunity, which has finally opened, before it's too late.

Over the past two decades there have been various advocates and organizations who have lead this fight. However, for them to actually be successful, they require our participation. Let's stop playing games and show society that we are genuinely ready to reenter society by giving these dedicated and loyal individuals our full support. They deserve nothing less, their positions have already been established. How much longer do we expect others to do for us what we refuse to do for ourselves?

Our loved ones can start by volunteering their time and support to dedicated organizations. Participating in rallies, events, etc. Their assistance would be greatly appreciated and highly effective. All they have to do is contact their local criminal justice reform advocates and inform them that they're ready and able to support the struggle. For those who do not know where to start, simply call (518)253-7533. They will be more than happy to guide you in the right direction. Tell them Mr. Hattley sent you.

With about 54,000 individuals currently in state custody, there's absolutely no logical reason why we should be denied this long-awaited victory. Everyone in prison knows at least two people on the street, and those two know two more, etc. When you do the math, we should have at least 200,000 people willing to make a significant difference. Specifically since it's our own neighborhoods directly impacted by this. We need to start reconnecting with our communities by showing them that we care.

It is our obligation to spread the word by any means available to us (visits, telephone calls and/or correspondence). We must explain the importance of this movement to anyone who will listen - two or three times if necessary. This is our freedom at risk here. I personally have no desire to remain in prison for an additional 2-10 years after completing my minimum sentence. Do you?

Visualize this: Would you rather have your family continue bringing you a food package on a visit every month, or personally be in a position to take your family food shopping every week at your neighborhood grocery store? If you choose the latter, then your actions must reflect such. Let's do what's necessary to return home to our families and loved ones - sooner rather than later.

If we made it this far without giving up hope, why start now? We must remain strong and optimistic throughout this ordeal, regardless of how difficult things may appear or become. Our strength comes in numbers (we must never forget this); the things we could accomplish TOGETHER are limitless. Now it's time for us to step up and show our families and communities that we are the responsible MEN they expect and need us to be. To keep you motivated, always remember this . . . Freedom is a must!

Written By: Matthew "Red" Hattley
Woodbourne CF