

Why Higher Education Should be Provided & Allowed at Max Prisons

by Ronald Kliner

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My name is Ronald Kliner and I am presently serving a life sentence for a 1988 murder, having been commuted in 2003 from my death sentence to which I received in 1996 in Cook County, Illinois.

I'm supposed to now die in prison for what I not only didn't do, but was never at to begin with, having been a real estate broker in Chicago at my office that night. How can this be true? It's Illinois and their record for wrongful convictions is a disgrace to say the least. We even have DNA tests and results on hairs in/on the victim's leather gloved hands and it is not me, nor am I identified either! Oh, and the DNA results were not allowed to be used in an evidentiary hearing! My case is presently under a purported "Review" by the Cook County States Attorneys Office's Conviction Integrity Unit. They're supposed to review the conviction and the appeals they got and have defended!

I'm presently represented by the University of Chicago Law School's Exoneration Project and Loevy & Loevy law firm by Jon Loevy and Tara Thompson, with DNA Attorney Allan Sincox, etc. I keep my faith in God!

I graduated from Northeastern Illinois University in 1983, from John Hersey High School in 1979, and in 1985 got my graduate-level paralegal degree from Roosevelt University. I was born and raised in Chicago and grew up on the streets and at Riis park. My grandparents came from Italy in 1950 to America and to Grand/Ogden in Chicago. I'm first born in America amongst the grandchildren and first to graduate from college. I took education for granted, as if a given to be assumed, but God works in mysterious ways and I cannot begin to reveal to you what I've learned by what I've gone through, seen, experienced and know, of which no education, school or university could ever give you. And to know what I know, invaluable in itself, I'd not suggest you volunteer for it as the 25+ years I've lost are too great a cost, and the loss you suffer beyond words. Family members pass, all you worked for, had gone, wrongly convicted for killing someone I didn't and the stigma even upon an exoneration, a marriage lost for my one true love, my son – now 25 – and maybe seeing my elderly parents, mom and step-dad, once a month on a Sunday. You get the picture? I'm now 56! You can't get the time back no matter how much money they give you. I'd rather have my 25+ years back!

Throughout this living hell of this ongoing nightmare I've done everything I can to assist and help so many desperately needing legal help and advocacy, and my observations couldn't be put in more simpler terms by all I've seen and know. Please indulge me.

Why is education in prison a must? Bluntly put it's cost effective. How can that be and why should society expend tax dollars on this? How can they afford not to, when you consider why it costs more to not providing it! Costs more to not do it? How? Well, priceless speaking the lives saved by providing education in prisons and in society, and cheaper because each human being not killed by senseless murders is invaluable and priceless, us being 'penny wise and pound foolish' if you'll excuse the adage. Besides all other crime and victims, the money spent on education in prisons for those likely to get out and even those not, as when I was on death row which stopped and shouldn't have been, is worth doing again and the sooner the better to repair what is wrong. We can't afford not to, for to consider what we continue to do and repeat the same mistakes is the hallmark of insanity! And the results of human loss. They say five zip codes in Chicago are where all the crime and murders are and parolees and those released from prison are from and go to. Why?

It is not rocket science, and ask why spend millions to incarcerate and keep doing what we are with same results can't be but intentional and stupid! Is "justice" a business to make money or a cure for crime and society to deal with their ills? Why not spend the millions on education in society, ie: those areas (five zip codes) and in prisons as was once done, for jobs and housing and uplift these communities – hey we may stem the cycle of crime, and business of prisons may have to suffer, but the change to our society, in prisoners, for those in and to get out, would be worth it and must be done and demanded. Consider –

Do we not know by now, man cannot be controlled by fear. To employ that method is to admit defeat for even attempting a saner course. Saving criminals in its last analysis, is only saving children. Hey wait a minute, that's not my brilliant deductions but Clarence Darrow's from how long ago? In his book on "The Story of My Life," how is it not better to put all the money, funding, manpower into education and preventing a child from

becoming a criminal, then to go to prison where then the burden on society is forevermore? Is it not better to put those same dollars into education and jobs and stopping that same child from becoming a criminal and have a taxpayer harmed as a result of the crime? See my article in Stateville Speaks, Winter 2014, p 8. "The Revolving Doors of Prison, Systematic/Legislative Changes Needed; a New Philosophy and Approach".

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Per Tyrone Fahner, President, Civic Committee of the Commercial Club, and Paula Wolff, Director, Illinois Justice Product of Chicago, (Tribune 8-4-15). Pell grants, denied since 1994 have a chance again via the Obama Administration, and cite how this makes 'economic sense'! Imagine that - when to lock a youth up costs \$130,000 a year while maximum Pell grants \$6,000 and those who participate in education programs in prison are almost 30% less likely to end up back in prison! This is pound-wise for pennies! Especially where in Illinois more than half of inmates return to prison within 3 years! And the cost to society in loss of life, the crimes for this to happen beyond any dollar amount. If we don't fix the source of the problem how will it change or be expected to? As a doctor traces a condition to its cause to prevent it why do we not put such effort with the knowledge we have and do the same thing for crime? Remember, I read Darrow's book! Education for all should be the norm, for society cannot afford to NOT do this, the same as health care for all makes sense!

Look, I've been in prison, albeit innocent, but nonetheless not blind to what I see and know, and society too is no fool and knows even by not being in prison what is known and not because of me or those like me writing about this; There is a \$5 return for every dollar spent on education in prisons. Sounds like a great "investment opportunity" that can't be ignored.

Prisoners, again my thanks to Tyrone Fahner and Paula Wolf, participating in education programs are much more likely to conform to prison rules, cause less trouble and create a good influence in prison and once they get out are more likely to be employed too! Less recidivism means communities more safe!

How is that not a good thing? Why is it, in Illinois prisons, "IDOC" denies so many volunteer programs, citing security equals too much 'work,' but yet staff salaries are paid nonetheless and are here regardless so why not offer more programs? Ah, too much work! For who? Those being paid to run the prisons and my tax dollars being spent anyway and what's more important, the benefits to society or 'it's more work'? We know the answer!

Gov. Bruce Rauner wants to reduce the prison population by 25% over 10 years. Its smart, ambitious and right and with education increased and allowed and with "real" courses and teachers, not inmate aides doing their jobs!

I, with a college degree, a B.A. 1983 from NEIU with the Roosevelt paralegal degree, have availed myself of anything educational or remotely so and positive from DePaul University's Restorative Justice, its "Think Tank" (of whom without there'd be no paper you're reading now), Kairos, Malachi Dads, Life Skills, Anger Mgmt, Depression Group, and Grief too, Advanced Christian Living, etc.

And I have worked at the law library two tours, and also started and ran the "F-House" Segregation "Law Clerk" program at Stateville, worked as a gym worker, and school porter too cleaning toilets! And, I wish I could do more, but I can honestly tell you education is not only needed and worth it, but hungered for by those in prison who may have never had the opportunities I did and deserve to have them as I did and no less!

I applaud with all my heart, the courage, time, effort by everyone who is pursuing this to happen and pray, upon exoneration I could join you. God speed and God bless!

Sincerely,

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please go to: freeronaldkliner.wordpress.com
Blog

and, change.org for my "petition"

(to Cook County states Attorney Fox for
a new trial)

Become a "supporter" & sign on, COMMENT!

Thank you!