

## A Personal Proposition

### (Lifer seeks to hock his life by asking to sign death penalty contract and to have an implant monitoring chip placed in him to regain freedom!)

UPDATE REVISIONS: I originally wrote this proposition to the Governor of Iowa Terry Branstad in 1996, as a limited means of re-implementing the highly debated *Death Penalty* issue. My name is Gentric (Abdullah) Hicks. I am a 72 year old African American inmate at Iowa State Penitentiary and have been incarcerated since May of 1976.

In the last election campaign, Governor Terry Branstad made enormous political strides to win out over his democratic opponent, Mrs. Bonnie Campbell, using the death penalty issue as one of his strongest and successful tactics, as he hailed to victory, continuing to master the gubernatorial throne he held for the last twelve years. In view of this political fact, one could reasonably deduce that majority of Iowa voters can tolerably stomach reimplementations of the death penalty more than previously thought, by strongly supporting the incumbent who made the death penalty one of his central themes of fighting crimes. I must say, in some cases bringing back the death penalty is deservedly justified. But, as a general practice for a crime deterrent, with some blind expectations of reducing the crime rate, I seriously disagree with. For that, there are effective ways to fight crimes than using the death penalty as a deterrent. Because such a practice would grossly embody qualities of un-fairness and injustice to be considered legally suitable, especially toward certain racial groups.

Of course, as I do favor the death penalty in some cases when there has been an inhumane and a grotesque treatment to the victim. But none do I favor more than the one I am writing about in this personal proposition. However, by offering my perspective measures of reimplementing the death penalty, I certainly hope not to offend anyone, especially those who are so dead set against it. But my proposition is dealing strictly with myself and other lifers here who think like me, so by chance one day after all considered ***there may be a crack in the doors of commuting life sentences to return some worthy lifers back to society as rehabilitated/productive citizens.*** I truly advocate with the greatest hope and expectation that whenever the legislators begin to ponder over what aspects of the death penalty would be morally, politically, and economically feasible, they will adopt my proposition.

Sincerely, I do believe that after a changed, rehabilitated lifer has 25 years of incarceration, and if they are released on a closely supervised parole, with a monitoring implant chip, and by some incorrigible propensities commits another crime comparable and/or more grisly to the one they previously served time on. Certainly, undeniably deserve and qualifies for the death penalty under my proposal, and there should be no mercy of time spared before they meet death! This would be only fair and righteous to society that gave its trust and forgiveness to a lifer parolee.

To start with, the power to commute life sentences should be legislatively removed from the governor's responsibility, by doing so would free her from the entanglements of political pressure and criticism that currently prevents him from using the power to commute life sentences, especially for the lifers deemed worthy of a commutation. Of course, any reasonable person can clearly understand the governor's reluctance to commute any lifer's time (other than in special circumstantial cases), under the current system and the drumbeat of political backlash. But the Death Penalty Contract would be a justifiable rationale the incumbent could use to combat such political criticism by those looking for reasons to do so. Because, there would be too much to lose politically if a paroled lifer would commit another heinous crime, especially without having some kind of personal commitment hanging over their head. I mean, "a life-forfeiting commitment!" The Death Penalty Contract I am proposing would minimize the public backlash and give assurance to the safety of the people. Also, it would assure the public that a paroled lifer is committed to going straight, or be put to death if they commit another grisly crime. Moreover, this life-forfeiting commitment (the Death Penalty

appeal Contract), undoubtedly would reduce any risk to public safety now feared, if not eliminate such fear and skepticism all together.

Needless to say, there should be a more feasible and cost-effective approach taken in dealing with this rapidly growing lifer's population here in Iowa, besides just warehousing them, which runs into millions of dollars annually, and indicating from the continual growth of lifers coming into this penal system, there will be more than 700 to 800 in this decade or beyond, higher than any other state per capital.

Furthermore, one lifer locked up twenty years or more at a cost over thirty thousand dollars a year and constantly increasing as time goes, unnecessarily draining taxpayers of their much-needed money, that could be used for family-related matters other than warehousing rehabilitated lifer, definitely demands a change. I seriously hope I am presenting one that would justly deal with this future lifer's problem before it becomes too financially demanding on Iowa tax payers. Lifers, as well as law makers and politicians, and crime victims/families, all must be reasonable and objective about coming up with feasible solutions to deal with such potential, future problems. Opposed to the present, antiquated system leaving reformed/rehabilitated lifers locked up for the rest of our lives at such huge expenses to the taxpayers. As the most advanced country in this world, as we know it, we certainly can do better than we are doing to deal with this problem.

To further emphasize the point just how expensive it is keeping reformed lifers locked up beyond appropriate punishment and character reformation. It currently costs more to house and to maintain one lifer yearly than it does to attend some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in America today. This is an undeniable fact! I often ask myself this question. *"Is this fair to the taxpayers?"* In order to answer this question, it demands of me the truest, objectivity, subjectivity, rationality of a (yes-and-no answer). Yes, it is demanding and common sense for the taxpayers to pay whatever costs to keep the incorrigibles locked up as long as needed protecting society from the incivility of their conduct. But, NO, on the other hand, it is not fair nor financially prudent to the taxpayers to keep lifers locked up who have consciously, spiritually, socially, morally, and mentally reformed and pray daily for divine forgiveness for the inhumane suffering caused to the victims and families of such criminal acts experienced.

However, what I am about to say might strike you as being dishonest but believe it or not, there are some lifers here that could easily be returned to society, as working, productive and lawfully abiding citizens and taxpayers, importantly, saving millions of dollars currently spent taking care of us. I must say, like myself, some lifers here are totally committed to staying out, if we're ever given the chance to prove ourselves. The public trust certainly would serve as a catalyst constantly encouraging me and other lifers to go straight and never violate the heartfelt trust given! I must say also to further illustrate my point, of all the *paroled lifers* whose sentences were commuted and released back into society none have committed any crime and returned to prison. However, I do know of one lifer whose sentence was commuted and released violated his parole due to a domestic fight with his wife decades ago. He was returned to prison for a very short period of time before being released again due to the *non seriousness* of the incident. But, other than that *there has not been one lifer who committed another crime or returned to prison*. Iowa has a *Super Success Rate* when it comes to the recidivism of lifer parolees. So, why not continue such a *Super Success Rate* by commuting and paroling lifers back into society as rehabilitated, productive citizens? It's proven that lifers here in Iowa have the best and 100% safety risk to society.

Thus, I am objectively advocating a reasonable and an inexpensive approach that would be fair and balanced to deal with the future-lifer problem this current, antiquated system would inevitably experience if something more feasible, rational is not implemented to filter out these low-risk and older lifers back into society. The majority of tax payer's money spent on lifers is spent on the older lifers for medical purposes. The older and longer a lifer is kept incarcerated the more money tax payers will pay. Moreover, I must emphasize again, *release us under certain contractual stipulations I am citing and advocating in this proposition*. The explicitness of the (Death Penalty appeal

Contract) simply means with certainty, that if a lifer's time is commuted, and he or she is given a parole, shall be required to sign this death penalty commitment, in order to regain the pawn-off freedom that resulted from the criminal actions that were committed. Further, such contractual stipulations if agreed to would state that, "*if a paroled lifer consciously and purposely commits another infamous, heinous crime, then he or she forfeits the right to live among civilized society.*" This death-threat agreement would squarely place responsibility to make appropriate/rational choices and decisions on the shoulders of the parolee to maintain humane civility and lawful conduct.

This proposition is hardly anything for a lifer to fear, that is, if his or her intentions are honest and noble, showing that he or she is totally committed to living and abiding by laws of society. Needless to say, I'd be the very first one to sign such stipulations if my proposition ever becomes law. For that, I am absolutely certain that I will conduct myself according to the lawful expectations society demands of me as any other taxpaying citizen.

Wholeheartedly speaking, for myself and perhaps many lifers here, we do concede to the suffering of severity and longevity in punishment of our worthy incarceration for the debt we owe to society. I say worthy incarceration because it truly has made me and others more humane and God-fearing persons we are today, and because such *hard* time of suffering day in and day out over 42 years certainly has decriminalized my mind. I am truly ***incarceration-FATIGUED***, as opposed to being ***incarceration-INTRIGUED*** as I once was. So why not give me and others like me another chance to show you, (the taxpayers, victims' families, as well as our families), that your tax dollars have paid off in some very, very positive, productive, constructive rehabilitation I've been made the recipient of, and as well as others who are incarcerated here and throughout America; however, (to the contrary of some opinions), my incarceration is not a waste. Surely, in this case, you cannot expect much more for your money than I and many lifers here exemplify through our reformed characters and actions. It would only be a great waste of your hard earned tax dollars to keep rehabilitated lifers locked up beyond appropriate punishment and proven reformation in characters of our past criminal behaviorism.

Also, to keep reformed lifers locked up for the rest of our lives, even though, we are sufficiently rehabilitated, is no more than an outright admission to the lack of confidence in the past and current penal system to rehabilitate those seeking a change. As I understand it, the correctional officials, penologists, administrators, and politicians who are paid to make the system work effectively in reforming and returning back to society better citizens than we were before coming to prison. If this isn't done, then it is a huge waste of taxpayer's money. However, if the taxpayers of Iowa share in supporting and maintaining this current system, then they are heavily contributing to the waste of their own hard earned tax dollars, at the least.

I believe the present penal system in Iowa is anomalous to the original purpose and philosophy that set the foundation of the penological structure many years ago by the forefathers of modern penology, who were concerned with law and order. The purpose and philosophy were the precepts of implementing constructive programs coupled with the appropriate degrees of punishment that could reasonably induce motivational incentives of encouragement to do right and dissuasion from doing wrong. So that prisoners could choose to make themselves better social and productive converts to be return back to society at no safety risk, who no longer appeal to criminal activities as an acceptable way of life, and who commit themselves to staying out by keeping within the bounds of the laws!

Truly, this is the real purpose of the penological precepts and foundation. Because during the old days there were not what consider a lot of money put into the penal system by State Governments as there is today just for keeping prisoners warehoused for political reasons and backlash releasing those who have rehabilitated back into society. I can imagine what the taxpayers and law makers of the old days would have thought about such huge amount of wasteful money allocated just for warehousing reformed lifers. They, (the forefathers and taxpayers), are probably weeping spiritual tears in disappointment looking down upon this penal system as being primitively ill-fated, doomed for

failure, and truly a great waste of the taxpayer's money, and thinking that today's taxpayers certainly deserve much more than what the current system is giving.

Personally, politically, and financially speaking, until there is a sincere, genuine effort to return to the original precepts, purposes, and intents that set the framework penology was built on, that is, to rehabilitate those incarcerated here in Iowa, as well as throughout America, it will always be a tremendous, unnecessary waste of taxpayer's money, as occurring now.

Considering from the high non-lifer's recidivist rate, in Iowa, the taxpayers simply are not getting what they are paying for, in terms of returning better persons back to society. Instead, they are criminal defects that are still harboring the same anger and unreformed criminal identities they brought in, with such volcanic tendency to commit more crimes, just waiting to be released upon society again. But only this time, the sprawling eruption of their criminal lava will be more harmful and deadly, certainly indicative of their unreformed behaviorism. In my opinion, it is because the present system is designed by some implausible means to release the high-safety risks of those incarcerated and keep lowest risks locked up.

Statistically speaking, the lowest safety risk of a perpetual criminal attitude are the longtime incarcerated and rehabilitated lifers here in Iowa penal system that is costing taxpayers absolutely too much wasteful money just because the current system does not have an established built-in-release exit to return incarceration-FATIGUED lifers who have chosen to decriminalize themselves due to the positive effects of their longtime punishment, and who have learned to deal with their problems through a more rational and legal choice-making decisions that will inevitably confront them (lifers) in everyday life's responsibilities of survivor, and who hold to the highest honor in being responsible for their choices, as any other lawfully abiding citizen would be expected to do.

It is the deeply felt and everlasting remorse rehabilitated lifers harbored so deeply in the core of our minds for the inhumane and callous acts that were perpetrated on their victims, that constantly instilling unshakable courage, compassion in the reformed lifers to make rational and proper choice-making decisions, which they failed to do that resulted in the criminal behavior of theirs so rightfully suffering and enduring punishment entitled and befitting.

For your information, I am a lifer who has been incarcerated for over the last four decades and has taken full responsibility for my actions. During such times of longevity in punishment, I've learned enough knowledge, insight into the structure of this penal system to speak on the effectiveness and ineffectiveness that currently exists, especially in times with so much political effort trying to find ways to reduce and balance the national deficit. Certainly politicians and law makers could start by releasing some of these reformed, incarceration fatigued lifers here in Iowa. I do not hesitate to say ***this approach I'm advocating will save taxpayers millions of dollars.***

In a realistic and objective assessment of the penal system here in Iowa, there must be a more cost-effective change made in the future dealing with this bulging lifer's population. Besides, there are some lifers here who just did not commit the crimes they are serving time for and they are actual and factual innocent of the crimes they were convicted on.

Of course, by now you are probably thinking, (besides knowing that I am a lifer inmate), to yourself and asking the questions: What qualifies him to make such statements, or is he qualified to say the things he's saying? How does he measure up to the learning he's sharing with us? What kind of academic and empirical qualifications has he achieved to make such observations on such a profound subject? Well, if I am to impact any objectivity and validity to the issues I'm raising, than these legitimate questions must be answered in all fairness. So, I waiver not in my objectivity in doing so!

Academically, I have accumulated the accredited hours equivalent of a ***Bachelor of Arts in Political Science***, from Western Illinois University, in Macomb, but I must say, truthfully, my most proud possession of learning is from the

streets, which serves as the fundamental essence of my knowledge today, and such profound and vast street leanings make me a "Streetologist", by profession, and like any other professional, I pride myself in sharing my knowledge with the public. (*A Streetologist is a total reformed ex-criminal, who is completely decriminalized in every sense of the word rehabilitation, and who views the acts of committing crimes most despicable, non-civilized, undemocratic and non-patriotic; a Streetologist is well educated in streetology, "the ways, means and intricacies of the street life of survival, which mainly criminals are engaged in; the obvious difference between a streetologist and that of a criminal, is that, a streetologist no longer commits crimes and uses his or her knowledge/streetology in preventing crimes; a Streetologist uses his or her vast accumulation of knowledge fighting to bring about a crime-free society, in order to preserve the constitutional freedoms of this great democracy. Because a Streetologist knows well the freedom-destroying impact committing crimes has on the democratic rights offer in this country; a streetologist must be well balanced and objective in sharing the views of his or her knowledge/streetology.*)

As you glean from the above title and definition, as I have described my learning, most certainly qualifies me to make these un-equivocal statements, and again, I waiver not in my objectivity doing so. But as a Streetologist, I like to assure the taxpayers of Iowa not to despair about their hard earned tax dollars being utilized in this penal system, as is, because most of your money is well spent in supporting the dual factors of treatment and punishment to rehabilitate and not to stagnate. However, such dual factors between treatment and punishment must be highly sufficient and well balanced in their applications and approaches with the absence of an overkill of each factor. Because too much time harms and does not reform.

For instance, to some inmates too much hardcore punishment and not enough self-building treatment just will not work, and by-the-same-token, the lack of sufficient punishment does not serve well in the rehabilitation of an inmate. In order to instill the best rehabilitation into core thinking of an inmate for positive changes, there must be a well balance approach taken between these dual factors, constructive programming and appropriate punishment. One without the other will not encourage a positive change in those inmates who need such rehabilitation. I grant there are some inmates who need more punishment than programming treatment and vice versa. In such cases this would be most effective in making better persons to be return to society. Certainly, none more equipped and productively fitting to be returned back to society than the reformed, incarceration-fatigued lifers.

These reformed lifers could easily become hard working citizens and taxpayers helping to afford the huge cost to incarcerate and protect society from the incorrigibles resisting constructive changes. As a streetologist, I can speak with certainty to the fact that some inmates here and elsewhere just do not take well to rehabilitation and seem to be stuck in the mold of committing crimes. In these cases, longevity of punishment is the only sensible and effective prescription to deal with the hardcore criminal recalcitrants, as such. Also, I must not hesitate in saying emphatically that the taxpayer's money is well spent in keeping these incorrigibles behind bars till there is a complete decriminalization of their minds conforming to the laws and norms of society. By doing so, truly would put America on the long-awaited path of achieving a crime-free environment. As a Streetologist, I am totally committed to help bring about a crime-free society.

The best method to achieving a crime-free society, in my opinion, would be the (inside-to-outside approach,) by progressively dealing with the repeated offenders, and by using the knowledge and skills of the streetologist to help reform the criminal recalcitrants. I must ask this question. "Who knows any better how to fight against crimes than those once committed them, and are in mix of the criminals studying and learning their patterns?" If America intends on solving her crime problem, then the streetologist/reformed, incarceration-fatigued ex-criminals must be allowed to play an active role in doing so.

Furthermore, I am in the process of formulating a chapter establishing a *Crime Free Society Organization (C.F.S.O.)*, here at I.S.P., consisting of totally reformed ex-criminals/streetologists, serving as a think tank helping society

come up with ways to solve the crime problem we helped to create. At the very least, we owe this much to society! The C.F.S.O. if given the chance could play a vital role in bringing about a crime free society.

For certain, all freedom-loving Americans must be concerned with the crime problem, regardless whether we are reformed ex-criminals or not. We all must share in the preservation of our constitutional freedoms equally! No doubt, the reformed, incarceration-fatigued lifers are most qualified in their experienced streetology, seriously assisting bringing about a crime free society, like the one I am speaking about in this personal proposition, behind and outside these walls. By virtue of such hardcore impact of the life sentences having on us that caused us to become decriminalized/ incarceration-fatigued. In every instance of committing crimes there are effective ways to fight them with the rehabilitated lifers, serving as a *Think Tank*. When taken into account, a reformed/ incarceration-fatigued lifer is willing to sign a death penalty appeal contract and have a monitoring implant chip placed in them will assure the public of its safety being protected. Considering what the current penal system has to offer by way of releasing reformed lifers back to society, I hope and pray that this personal proposition will attract support and approval from all Iowa's politicians, lawmakers, and citizens, especially those who are concerned about the huge price tag of warehousing rehabilitated/incarceration-fatigued lifers, that are no longer a threat to the safety of the public and who could be out working and paying into the tax pool to keep the criminally incorrigibles locked up... I must say, this is one of the most financially prudent ways to address this future lifer's problem, besides taking us all before a firing squad of *slow death of longevity of no return to society*. Oh! Yes, bad idea, just kidding!

***Thanks to all for the time, energy, consideration shared reading this personal proposition. To reiterate, Iowa paroled lifers have a zero recidivist rate of all parolees during Iowa entire prison history. With such successful record, it meets all logical reasoning Iowa prison system should mandate a policy to commute and parole rehabilitated/incarceration-fatigued lifers again. Gov. Kim Reynolds said Iowa workforce needs necessary, highly trained skills out there. Yes, I do indeed agree with the Governor. A lot of highly skilled persons in Iowa prison system need to be out working and paying taxes. None are more skilled and qualified than rehabilitated/incarceration-fatigued lifers, as myself.***

Cc:

Gov. Terry Branstad

Iowa Law Makers

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