

A Call For Action

To whomever may be reading this, I want to thank you first and foremost for taking the time to read this open letter. To those of you who are in a position of authority and can bring about change, I ask you, "To what extent do the lives of prisoners have meaning?"

Ask yourselves honestly. Do you feel there have been real changes and/or commitments concerning prison and criminal reform? Is there anyone who's looking at the statistics on recidivism of inmates who are 35-years-old or older, with great institutional adjustments? If not...who's fooling who?

It is only righteous and fair that I give you the benefit of the doubt; that you may not be fully aware of the underlying "issues" that are taking place behind these walls. I fully blame those in your chain of command for not sincerely informing you.

Throughout the years of my incarceration, I've seen things that I thought were just "Hollywood dramatizations" from the movies. I used to notice the thought going through my mind, "This can't be right". Of course, there was the possibility that I was biased, living in the middle of all this, but now, I'm not so sure.

In May of 2013, the Economist Magazine contained an interview with the Director of California's Department of Corrections. The Director had come to the same conclusions - that America's approach towards those who get released from prison is "flawed" and can be "corrected". However, little has changed!

I was forced to ask myself, "Why is it that even a Director of the D.O.C. is unable to gain support in fixing such an obvious problem. Has the Judicial system adopted the mantra "Convict at all cost, and let the truth fall where it may."?"

I thought to myself, "Challenge the moral ethics of those who say they have compassion for another human life." It is not enough to stand by in the shadows and comment about these injustices. Words are not enough. Someone must step up and do something about it. We are not cogs in a wheel or pawns on a proverbial chess board to be sacrificed to secure the success of the king by whatever means.

I believe even Lady Justice is to be blind to whom it is she's dealing with, whether rich or poor. That does not mean society should adopt any blind eyes to the manner in which the Scales of Justice are being interfered with. Such blind eyes will only allow injustice to go unnoticed.

I, Antwann Johnson #524659, fully understand what it feels like when justice is ignored. Rarely are the incarcerated spoken for. I've went above and beyond to cry out for help concerning my wrongful conviction, but every knock on the door continues to go unanswered. So, what do I need to do? Let's just say someone like Kim Kardashian gave a statement to the press saying that she was pursuing justice for Antwann Johnson. It seems to me that I would get more attention, and that justice would come swiftly, because of her influence.

What about the many inmates who don't have an influential voice? I've literally watched these men suffer in the midst of trying to get something as simple as adequate medical care; only to be told, "I'm sorry sir, there's no easy way to put it, you have cancer." Do you have any idea what this does to an inmate psychologically? This is why I've continued to make my voice heard through their stories.

Imagine being told by a staff member that nobody cares about you, and that you might as well kill yourself. Even worse, imagine you just received a letter from the courts and it was the denial of your last appeal; only to be confronted with the traumatic news that this inmate actually hung himself.

All this being said, there are those who question my anger, asking "Why do we get so mad?" It's due to years of neglect, being stepped on, and treated less than anything but a human. It's my hope that one day we experience some sense of justice, other than this dark cloud that's been over us. That's why I'm hoping that whomever is reading this letter would be the one to give hope and confidence to those that the Missouri Department of Corrections has told "Leave all your hopes and dreams behind".

We're tired of living with this underlying fear of dying in a prison cell before we can experience true freedom. Where death is not considered to be the only option for freedom.

With all due respect, and I mean with all due respect, if this letter isn't resignating with you, feed it to the shredder and pretend you never read it.

Heavenly Father, I come to you this day, and ask of you to please show them a sign that they may believe.

Antwann Johnson

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