



December 2018

Volume II: Issue 6

NEWSLETTER

Welcome to another edition of Second Chance Quest newsletter. Second Chance Quest was founded by prisoners and family members to bring much needed light to the plights of prisoners in the United States. Mind you, the U.S. currently has the largest prison population on the planet, so it becomes quite evident that more attention needs to bear on its causes and effects. SCQ was formed to meet such challenge. With that said, it is imperative that we call the attention of the people of the United States and the world to take note of the grave injustice perpetrating upon the citizens of the United States.

The mass imprisonment of U.S. citizens is having a tremendous impact on the spouses and children of the more than 2.3 million incarcerated men and women across the nation. That pic-

ture is certainly not the type of image that we all come to believe democracy represents. The United States look the world straight in the eyes, time and time again, and states, "follow our lead, we are a just society," yet she outdo every other nation on the planet in locking up her citizens, and in some cases, for the simplest infractions imaginable. Our justice system is broken and is trapped in a never ending downward spiral with what seems to be no way out. However, there is optimism, Second Chance Quest propose that our political officials seriously revisit the countless proposals of implementing "alternative sanctions", especially in the case of nonviolent offenders. And furthermore, give those offenders who made grave errors in the commission of violent crimes, (if shown they are truly rehabilitated) a genuine second

chance in life. Giving them a second chance, is in truth, saving their spouses and children from falling into the same pitfall. Furthermore, saving the tax payers millions of dollars in the housing of the largest prison population on earth.

Second Chance Quest invites you to become a member as we press forward in bring about lasting changes to our failing justice system. Thank you for your support.

T. Bravo President SCQ

Second Chance Quest - Support Group has held the first of our annual "Healing Environment Forum" in Buckingham Correctional Center on July 29th, 2018.

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Second Chance Quest Support Group



The Second Chance Quest Group

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the ad-

ministration at Buckingham Correctional Center for their continuing support of Second Chance Quest-Support Group. Our hats off to Warden B. Booker; Ms. R. Trent, Chief of Housing & Program; Ms. S. Toney,

Institutional Program Manager; and Ms. Ivey, Secretary.

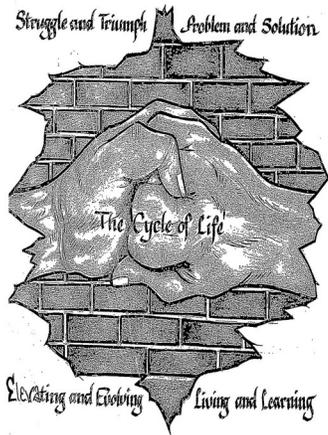
Second Chance Quest would like to also extend our heart felt gratitude to our volunteer guest speakers, Mr. Paul Taylor, and Mr. Richard Walker. Both of whom have taken time out of their busy schedule to attend and address the prison population. Safe to say, both men left a lasting impression on the minds and hearts of the prisoners at-

"An individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law."

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Second Chance Quest Support Group (Cont.)

The Second Chance Quest Support Group



"Nothing ever comes to one that is worth having, except as a result of hard work."

Booker T. Washington

tending the forum.

Who is Paul Taylor, and Richard Walker? We will take this opportunity to give you a brief bio of those two remarkable men.

Paul Taylor was convicted of homicide in 1994 and sentenced to life plus 26 years in prison. He spent 23 years in prison and was released 10 months ago. He is currently working with high-risk youth and men to help them become productive citizens, fathers, and sons.

Paul Taylor grew up in the inner city of Newport News, and was considered the leader of a neighborhood called "The zoo," in which the name describes the culture. This led to his conviction and being sent to the Virginia Department of Corrections, where he thought he would spend the rest of his life.

Paul Taylor states, "In 2012, Gov. Bob McDonnell appointed Harold Clarke as the director of the DOC, he changed everything about my experience in the DOC. From that point, he emphasized that re-entry begins on day one and began implementing programs to help inmates to think differently and acquire employable skills.

The re-entry program offers many classes and certifications that are valuable in the workforce, such as forklift, serve safe, genie-lift certifications, GED, etc.." Paul Taylor co-facilitated multiple treatment programs in re-entry, such as Thinking for a Change, Victim's Im-

pact, and numerous other programs.

Paul Taylor stated, "When I was released from prison, I felt over-qualified to re-enter society. I was armed with pro-social concepts and definitions, and the tools necessary to succeed."

Paul Taylor and business partner Jawad Abdul, formerly incarcerated, have recently formed the RVA Basketball League for Safer Streets, in which they offer workshops utilizing social skills, problem-solving, and critical thinking tools necessary that they have learned on the inside. They've partnered with Richmond Police Chief Alfred Durham, and have seen immediate results.

For more on Mr. Paul Taylor find him on the web at: www.richmond.com/opinion/their-opinion/guest-columnists/paul-taylor..., or contact him at: 921taylorp@gmail.com

Who is Richard W. Walker? Mr. Walker is the founder and CEO of Bridging The Gap In Virginia (BTGIV). Not unlike Mr. Paul Taylor, Mr. Walker also served time in Virginia's Department of Corrections. He continue to prove himself to be a champion for the incarcerated men and women in the state.

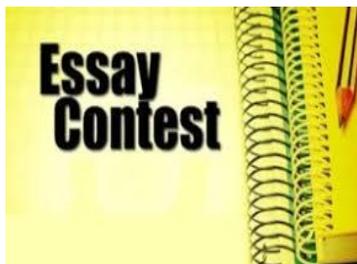
His organization provide comprehensive pre and post release judicial and community restorative justice services to returning citizens, as well as other citizens with adverse judicial records.

Richard Walker's organization is focus on reducing the recidivism rate and promoting a healthy, wholesome lifestyle by providing rehabilitative services that ensure successful transition back into the community.

His program maintains a working relationship with returnees, local businesses, educational systems, and various criminal justice system agencies, and aims to assist with employment, housing, family obligations and promoting personal responsibility.

Richard Walker, a convicted felon, has had his rights restored and now has worked diligently collaborating with others for rights restoration. Restoration restores the right to vote, ability to serve on juries, serve as a notary public, and run for public office.

Contact Richard W. Walker at: (804) 248-6756, or email: rwalker@bridgingthegapinvirginia.org



Essay Contest Winner!

Congratulations to the Second Chance Quest -Support Group graduates of the class of (summer semester) 2018.

Congratulations to "Snuff", the winner of the essay con-

test of the graduate class of 2018. The following is that winning essay:

"I would like to take a few minutes and explain briefly what the commitment to the Second Chance Quest-

Support Group has done for me. To be honest it was the group's name that caught my attention and I've yet to meet a fellow inmate that wouldn't jump at a second chance. However, in the beginning, I wasn't interest-

Congratulations! (Cont.)

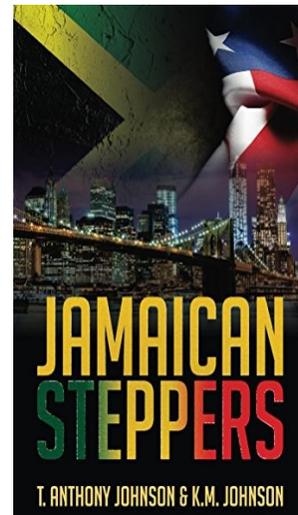
ed in making any changes. My approach to my D.O.C. time plan was: I'd tolerate them as long as they tolerate me. What I discovered when I arrived at the first 'Group Think Session', as I like to call them, was how easily I could compare myself out of the group and leave, (the door doesn't lock behind us). Instead I remained and found we all share a common bond of being sentenced harshly with excessive time. We are books with a wide range of covers and many captivating stories.

Each week as we covered a new topic a mentor from a previous Quest Group would step up and guide our way;' Through impromptu skits and open discussions. I absorbed an understanding of things I merely thought I knew. I was seriously impressed with the patience and stability each mentor displayed when freely passing on the knowledge/advice that had been passed on to them. Week 12 is when the 'ah ha!' moment was for me. It was when "Day-Day" (a mentor) took the floor with 'Commitment To Change'.

You see, I am a spiritual creature. I have a core belief in a higher power whom I choose to call God. All do respect to any God of your understanding. However, during my eight years of incarceration I've eased God out (ego) of this equation of the life I maintain... and from the outside I do o.k., but on the inside I've found prison to be a lonely place and this 64 years sentence gets down right heavy!

Most of the guys here at Buckingham Correctional Center know that I've been unsuccessful in choosing proper methods to cope with this loneliness. I found out the hard way that I can't chemically alleviate the stress that accompanies such a long sentence. After I was flown (medi-vac.) off this compound and remain in a coma at Medical Center of Virginia (MCV) for three days. No, the drugs only added other stresses. However, without a pain staking, thorough moral inventory, any change will be short lived. I knew I had to take this step for quite sometime. I've needed to 'grow up' for some time and thru this experience I've

learned too that I'll always grow, as long as I humble my pride and remain teachable. No, I (Snuff) don't have all the answers. In fact, sometimes I'm simply a walking/breathing example of what not to do. If I can only reach one person in my journey, then my story would be considered a success. I like the word success, it has a nice ring to it. I also like positive energy and want to transition into a much more positive way in doing my time. With Second Chance Quest-Support Group I've received a good start. I'd like to thank the mentors and current group attendees for their open and honest way of sharing. I've always heard that you can't keep anything you aren't willing to pass along, Peace.
By: Doug (aka Snuff)



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Voices From Behind The Walls

"My Advice"

Whether you're serving short or long term sentence, we share a common struggle. Once you've been labeled a felon it stays with you forever. Rather than complain, turn the negative into a positive by changing your life for the better, and struggle to change the system so others don't have to go through what you're going through.

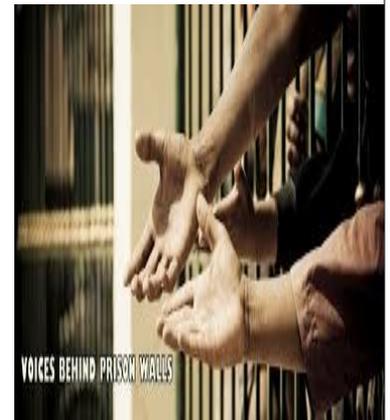
Everyone must be held accountable for their actions, you won't find any argument from any prisoner

in that regard. We believe in the rule of law, when it is just. However, as it stands, "justice" is still somewhat off the mark. Case and point, if we had true "justice" that is handed down according to the books, then the courts would see it right and correct to overturn far more cases than it current does. What we see from the courts, far too often, is their upholding a conviction by stating, "harmless error". There should be no room in the appellate court for such language when it stands between a person's freedom and decades in prison, no

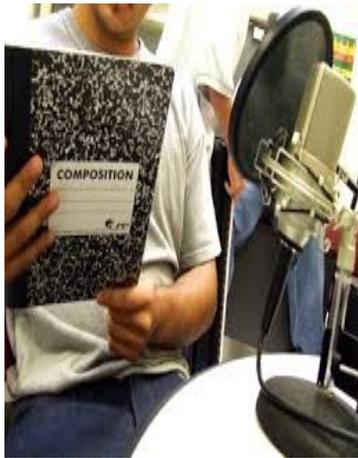
error can be harmless in that regard.

It is the same when the Parole Board deny paroling a person and give the reason as being, "the serious nature of the crime". If the crime carries 10 years, and a prisoner completed that time, then don't tell him that he need to do more time than the crime, at a minimum, calls for. It is not uncommon to see a prisoner going before the Parole Board year after year, only to be told that their parole is denied because of the serious nature of the crime.

My advice to my fellow



Voices From Behind The Walls (Cont.)



denied because of the serious nature of the crime. My advice to my fellow convicts, continue to challenge the courts in demanding that they honor the rules set forth in their law books. And continue to educate yourself in that your efforts will be relevant in bringing about lasting changes to our broken justice system.

By: Abdus-Salaam

"1st Lady"

It's so special to have a 1st lady, a woman that sees to her man's every needs and wants, she understands the power and wealth of her womanhood, so she spends in bringing out the best in him. When she smiles, he sees rays of the morning sun rise, her warm embrace he craves. She is his joy and reason to welcome each new day with a smile. Rise and shine, she beckons him each morning, life is good he reminds himself.

What makes my 1st lady special? She's considerate and always putting my needs above her own. She hold me down when no one else will, no divide can separate us, our love transcends time and space. She remains radiant and flawless, like a well polished diamond. My 1st lady, a gem, a priceless gem.

A 1st lady cleans, cooks, brings one's children into the world, she's forever having her man's back. When all is said and done, do you really appreciate the 1st lady in your life, the one you call your wife, your girl, or your shorty?

By: H.B. Baskerville

Follow Your Heart and Not the Heartless

I know when reading the headline of this piece that a

million visions appeared in your mind, but allow me to paint this picture for the young guys and whoever else that reads this article. As stated in the title, "Follow your heart and not the heartless" meaning, be yourself because most incarcerated young men are in need of an awakening. An awakening from everything and everyone you embrace that is constantly negative. I see a lot of young men who have had the shades pulled down over their eyes, their heart seeks light, only to find themselves surrounded by negative influence which they refer to as their team or family. The team or family they refer to, more often than not, are content with the shades pulled over their own eyes because they don't care or just plain don't know the reality of the situation.

I encourage my young brothers to stand up and be yourself, and be that light that shines bright for a change. We as young men need to stop being selfish to our families who have stood by our side unconditionally while we are in the belly of this beast. Most of all I am asking my young brothers to stop being selfish in general, and tap into the good of your heart.

I am an example of a young man who has gang-banged, sold drugs, hurt my community and myself respectively and collectively. It is sad but true and yet I salute myself...why? I've learned from my past experiences which in turn, have gravitated me to become a better man day by day. Yes! I am a work in progress. So I ask you young guys the following:

1. When you look in the mirror are you proud of who is looking back at you?
2. Are you content with who is looking back at you?

Pardon me for taking so long to break down the heartless but I want to speak and reach those who sit around you and indulge in anything they want to do from fighting, backbiting, stealing, and getting into nonsense on a magnitude which drags you into it. The heartless disregard your well-being, they don't try to talk you out of things you should let pass. The heartless are miserable people that desire your company, they will say things like "I love you"; while having no clue what love truly is. Consider this, love is a verb which is only shown through action.

In closing, I would like to say this to all especially the young men. Don't just read this article just to be reading it. I challenge you to be yourself and the best version of yourself at all times. Love yourself first, respect all, and stay positive. I ask you to follow your heart and not the heartless.

#Free The Guys,
#S.A.N.I.T.Y. Lifestyle
**By: Fateem Ibn Saqeen,
Aka "Polo"**

"Nothing Nu Under Who's Sun"

We live in this world within a world, and somehow we think it's something "NU". The way we move thru this world, like for real, "I'm that who (dude)" - Why? You prisoners, who has been locked-down for decades. And pretty much, have seen it all. Except this "nu" way of allowing "you to do you", like its all "nu" under who's sun.

We have gotten to a point, where we are not a collective in this system, no more - Is that "nu" under who's sun? The way we deal with the C/O's, as if they are our friends, that's "nu" under who's sun. The way we allow them to feed us. Yea!

"It is of no use for us to sit with our hands folded, hanging our heads like bulrushes, lamenting our wretched condition; but let us make a mighty effort and arise; and if no one will promote or respect us, let us promote and respect ourselves."

Maria Stewart, lecturer

"It is a blessing to die for a cause, because you can so easily die for nothing."

Andrew Young

Voices From Behind The Walls (Cont.)

That's "nu" under our sun. The way we do not fight for anything to better our living conditions, like it was in the past. Like we get locked-up, and things are given to us without sacrifice or struggle; Yea, that's something "nu" under who's sun.

We are a collective in this prison system. There is no difference between old and young, the law didn't distinguished in its sentencing of us. It's the same game, they profit from our families, friends, and us, young and old!

The way we all do time, will depend on how we come together as a collective to stand for something, instead of falling for anything. Until we as prisoners realize that, "Nothing Nu Under No Sun," and we are that who's sun, that I'm hoping to reach - We are in this together!

By: D.A. Adams

"Second Chance Quest"

My outlook on the prison system is broad and spacious. However, my knowledge on why this prison system is growing at such rate since 1995 is short sighted. Far too many families have been broken by this evil system and evil minded people. Man was never meant to be caged for decades and decades, to be piled upon one another in closed in environments. Surely, nothing good can come from that, psychologically damaged individuals. The prison system continues to cripple families across the country, with no true cure on the horizon. 2.2 million men and women imprisoned in the United States, the largest on earth.

Second Chance Quest's vision is simple but profound. Turn around the very system that hinders our society by changing the minds of the public from thinking all

they have to do is lock up an individual and throw away the keys and all will be well. Well, that belief system have given us the largest population of prisoners on the planet, with no end in sight. Time to change course, and implement "Alternative Sanctions" as punishment for most crimes.

To define a second chance, means to give a person another opportunity in life to redeem and make better decisions.

By: Toney

To: "Second Chance Quest Support Group"

Hats off to the wonderful work of the Second Chance Quest - Support Group and its Mentors here at Buckingham Correctional Center in Virginia. I've witnessed the emergence and development of Second Chance Quest from its beginning, now it is in full effect and is making a major impact in the lives of the men who participate in this program. My name is Albert Chavies, I've been locked down since 1973. After 9 years of hard work I've finally completed the work of writing a book entitled, "The Meaning of Life", it was finally published and released in March 2018. It is now available on Amazon.com.

From your brother, and author Al Chavies: "I'm speaking to everyone in this book, because everyone wants to know, The Meaning of Life. I'm speaking to the dope fiend and dope dealer on the corner, the prostitute on the block or in the club. As well as, the Ministers, Priests and Imams on the pulpit. I'm speaking to the politicians in Washington, D.C., I'm speaking to the gang-bangers, as well as those in society who live by the rules. I'm speaking to the students in universities and schools, as well as those

who may be looked upon as fools..."

I leave you with a few quotes from chapter 8 entitled: "The four most important things in life are": "What you know, what you intend to do, prayer, and your woman." "In the world of unbalance, the true value of the woman has been misplaced. This friction between man and woman is causing the family structure to breakdown. I'll be speaking on the children in the next chapter. Suffice to say, the child is losing his/her chance to maintain the balance they had when they were born, because their parents took it away due to their living in manner other than what the Creator intended." Peace!

By: A. Chavies



"Love yourself, appreciate yourself, see the good in you, see the God in you, and respect yourself."

*Betty Shabazz,
Educator and wife
of Malcolm X*

"I was raised to believe that excellence is the best deterrent to racism or sexism. And that's how I operate my life."

Oprah Winfrey

Parole



Adrienne Bennett, head of the state parole board

"The battles that count aren't the one's for gold medals. The struggle within yourself - the invisible, inevitable battles inside all of us - that's where it's at."

Jesse Owens



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Buckingham Correctional Center was honored on November 7, 2018 with the visit of the Chairwoman of Virginia Parole Board, the Honorable Adrienne Bennett; who were accompanied by fellow Board Member, Ms. Linda Bryant.

Ms. Bennett were the guest of a newly formed support group here at Buckingham Correctional Center call: "Peer Parole Support Group". Ms. Bennett and fellow board member Ms. Bryant were more than kind enough to answer all questions concerning parole. Second Chance Quest is honored to present to our readers their responses to the many questions posed. However, we will omit from this article the question posed and print only the responses from Ms. Bennett and Ms Bryant.

Ms. Bennett stated that the Parole Grant Rate has returned to where it was a few months ago (33 Grants in October). She stated, "In 2016 approximately 96 people made it, in 2017 330 people made it, 90 of whom were geriatric."

Ms. Bennett stated concerning some of the things the parole board is most concern with when granting parole. She stated, "I need to know you have a safety net. It does not have to be family. Halfway houses are ok." She further states, "It is helpful to have a plan, your mindset outside is what it is about. Your interview with the Examiner is a starting point, not an ending." Ms. Bennett further stated: "The Board evaluates who you are today vs. who you were then. The nature of your infraction, and are you ready to be a productive citizen. Perfection is not expected." She further states: "Each case has its own unique circumstances for consideration (you can't

compare your case to anyone else's)." Ms. Bennett also stated: "Accepting responsibility is huge."

Ms. Linda Bryant also gave a few advice on obtaining parole. She states:

"Recent infractions not helpful while under consideration for parole." She further stated: "Our goal is to find good people to release."

She continued, "There is no automatic 'no's', and no doesn't mean 'never'. The Boards first consideration is Public Safety, and whether we would feel comfort with you living in our community." Ms. Bryant asked, "What are you doing inside to improve yourself?" She States:

"Obtaining a G.E.D. is not a requirement for parole. However, the Board like to see that an effort was made." Ms. Bryant reminds the audience, "Parole is not an act of forgiveness." She went on to state: "Victim opposition is taken into consideration, but it does not make or break the Boards decision. The Board will not typically send you back to the same community."

Ms. Bryant advise to those who are granted parole: "Walkout backwards! In other words, reach back and make recommendations to the Parole Board of good candidates." Ms. Bennett agreed with her by adding, "Recommendations by parolees are very influential." Ms. Bennett points out, "The recidivism for recent parolees is 5%, while the recidivism rate for the rest of D.O.C. population remains at 22%. 12% for those with a trade." Ms. Bennett continues, "As to out-of-state parole plans, I love them! We will call the person on your plan, and they must have the right answers. Interstate compact will be initiated during reentry, which typically takes 90 days." She further states: "If you have a

violent crime, it is better to have a release plan outside the community where the crime was committed. The Board considers how your release may impact the community."

As to Geriatric Release, Ms. Bennett states: "We consider New Law Geriatric as 'Early Release'. Time served is a consideration. Sentencing Guidelines and Health are considerations as well. Life sentence for 1st degree murder or any life sentence/geriatric requires 4 votes for a grant." (The Board consists of 5 members).

Ms. Bryant added: "People with 2 Life Sentences or more have been released."

Ms. Bennett: "330 people have been paroled in 2017. 90 of which were geriatric released. There is more consideration put into cases with people eligible for Discretionary Parole and Geriatric Parole." She further states: "Pardons/Clemency, the Governor decides who gets it, the Board only investigates than report its findings to the Governor."

As to Veterans, Ms. Bennett states: "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is taken into consideration."

As to "Fishback" Ms. Bennett states: "The General Assembly has to fix the problem, different from pardon aspect, there is 300/400 claims. There is two possibilities with Fishback: Resentence or make parole eligible. Get your family to contact your State Senate, Delegate and ask them to make an issue of it. Also, offender must develop his case for pardon, not just allege a 'Fishback' violation."

Ms. Bennett: Working through 'Three Strikes' cases she states, "I was initially appalled when I discovered that the law was being misinterpreted." (She literally

Parole (Cont.)

cried over it.) She further states: "If you are a juvenile offender, the Board is 'Digging Deep' into your file when under consideration."

Ms. Bryant states: "Pending Certification means the Board is doing their 'Due Diligence' on your case." She further stated: "As to Deferrals, there is currently no path in 3 years for you to get out. You may have exceptionally poor conduct, or there may be trauma to victim(s). It would take a Super Majority for you to get a 3 year hit."

Ms. Bennett states: "If you waited for lengthy period and received a turn-down it is either a 'Technical Difficulty' or the Board spent a long time looking at your case, and that doesn't mean that you won't make it the next time."

Ms. Bennett states: "The Serious Nature of the Offense, is often used to mean many different things, and the Board is aware that it can be a vague answer. It is often used when they don't

have an option depicting exactly why you are denied. There may be 'Risk to the Community' concerns that would change next year, or a line has been crossed which the Board may feel you 'can't return from' at this time, or they feel more time needs to be served." She further spoke of the consideration given to paroling folks to family while they are living. "This Board realizes the importance of you getting home to your family while they are living, so you may put down some roots, for stability."

Ms. Bennett states: "Reconsideration, must be made when there is a mistake by the Parole Board, otherwise it just overburdens the Board. There is stacks of them waiting to be addressed." She further states: "We have a 'small budget' and a 'skeleton crew'. Do not automatically file a Reconsideration claim unless there is a major error by the Board."

In attendance: Warden Booker, Lt. LeSeuer, Lt. Call, Counselor Harris, and approximately 50 offenders.

Second Chance Quest salutes the Peer Parole Support Group for a job well done. Hats off to Calvin, Shabazz, and Nick.



"If you can't count, they can cheat you. If you can't read, they can beat you."

*Toni Morrison,
Novelist and
Noble Laureate*

Dear Members and Volunteers

Dear Members/Volunteers

Thank you for your unwaivering support of Second Chance Quest. To all volunteer writers of our newsletter, we sincerely thank you for sacrificing your time and energy in writing and sharing your most inner thoughts with us and the public. We assure you, the public is listening. Please continue to share your thoughts with us as we continue to publish your articles in our newsletter.

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As you are well aware, Second Chance Quest is a non-profit organization. We encourage your financial support. Our doors continue to be open due to your generous financial contributions. We thank those who have given and we encourage those who haven't to step up to the plate and do the right thing. I'm sure we can all agree, "it's fine time we do for us." "Us" meaning, everyone who is striving to better themselves and our society.

Kindest regards, **SCQ Board**

Get involved.



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