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# NEWSLETTER

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



within our communities. We advocate for men and women guilty of a low-level crime to perform community service in their jurisdiction instead of being locked up. We further advocate for nonviolent offenders to serve in the military to expunge their criminal records and have a real second chance at living as productive citizens.

Second Chance Quest further believes if there is to be a lasting effect on the reduction of crime and the number of people going to prison, then change makers must include prisoners and ex-prisoners in creating policies. Who better to offer these solutions to mass imprisonment than those directly impacted? It's time for our officials to take a new approach to solve this grave ill we call crime and punishment.

Second Chance Quest believes we can be effective if we approach this problem on two fronts.

1. Mentoring prisoners and providing the necessary tools to change their thinking and outlook on life.

2. Mentoring at-risk children as a means of ending the school-to-prison pipeline.

For the past several years, Second Chance Quest has been mentoring prisoners in preparation for their crime-free lives upon release into society. For three years before the Covid-19 outbreak, we have graduated over 300 men from our program in Buckingham Correctional Center in Virginia, many of whom have been paroled or pardoned by former Gov. Ralph Northam and are now living as productive members of society.

Second Chance Quest is working with the Angel Tree project to sponsor at-risk children during the holiday season.

Welcome to another edition of the Second Chance Quest (SCQ) newsletter. SCQ is a nonprofit organization founded in 2015 by several prisoners, along with the aid and support of their family members in Virginia, Maryland, and New Jersey. Second Chance Quest's mission is to reduce the national recidivism rate by educating the public and supporting prisoners and their families before, during, and after incarceration.

Currently, the prison population stands at over 2 million incarcerated men and women at an annual cost of over \$80 billion in tax funds. The United States, by far, is the largest penal colony on the planet.

We here at SCQ believe this can and must change. Far too often, the ones most affected by and who have to pay the cost of those incarcerations are the poor. Most can't afford proper legal assistance and must settle for legal aid attorneys. We at SCQ are intent on holding our government accountable for implementing reduced sentences and more significant outreach resources

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I want to take this moment to thank all those who called in during our April Facebook Takeover. We have received some excellent reviews, and I encourage you all to continue participating in our takeover in April 2023. Thank you for your continued support over the years. Second Chance Quest looks forward to the coming year as we have many exciting plans. Join us today by becoming an official member of Second Chance Quest, and together we can bring much-needed changes to our Justice system.

I'll leave you with our motto: "The ends you serve that are selfish will take you no farther than yourself, but the ends you serve that are for all in common will take you into eternity." (Marcus Garvey)

**Mr. T. Bravo**  
**President SCQ**

### **“CREATING CHANGE”**

“People must know where they are going and why. The politician should be aware that the future will remain bleak as long as the people’s consciousness remains rudimentary, primary, and opaque. We...must have very clear ideas about our peoples’ situation.” - The Wretched Of The Earth, Frantz Fanon.

Channeling the spirit in which Mr. Fanon infused his great piece of ‘combat literature’ (Damnes de la Terre), I write. I believe that one of our most pressing issues is to address and correct the operating policies whisking away our children into the criminal justice system.

There are nearly 60,000 children (Under the age of 18) snared within the tangles of incarceration. It is quite possible your (biological) children are not within tongue’s reach of such a voracious appetite, a system not afforded the breath - where there is a demand, a supply will materialize - to discriminate, at least, in terms of age. And so, you have firmly settled, an illusion of safety, in the idea that your babies will be okay. ‘My children are well-behaved.’

The alarming truth is that children are being ripped out of their family structures, society’s most promising opportunity to advance taken, and placed in juvenile detention centers - PRISONS - every day, being prepped for adulthood incarceration.

Considering that the youth are our future, what do their futures look like

when they can be altered/ruined in response to the most minute offenses? If you ask me, bleak. While this should horrify you, the fact that your baby could be sentenced and imprisoned along the same guidelines as a career criminal is heartbreaking and anti-resolution. It is necessary to take a stance against this reality, in which 13-16-year-old adolescents are tried in a court of law in the same way as an adult, often for much lesser crimes, and without adequate avenues for rehabilitation within the penitentiary system.

In The Wretched Of The Earth, Frantz Fanon wrote, “To wage war and to engage in politics are one and the same thing.” A small but significant way that we as a collective can begin to combat this is by asking your child, your neighbor’s child, your sibling’s child if they know and understand the potential consequences they may face if ever caught on the wrong side of the law. We as adults have a moral and inherent obligation to teach and inform the youth to use people’s misfortune as a catalyst to prevent their own incarceration.

We are at war. In our unawareness and lack of motivation to get politically involved, the casualty we welcome is the death of our only real hope of a brighter future - our children.

\*Three Steps To Creating Change:

1) **BECOME AWARE.** Educate yourself on who (senators, delegates, representatives, etc.) supports or opposes specific policies. Learn of

the bills and laws up to be decided on the docket.

2) **DISPLAY YOUR POWER.** Contact those senators, delegates, representatives, etc., making your approval or disapproval known. Show up at General Assemblies, **SPEAK OUT** against injustices or in favor of just laws. Organize family, friends, and community to address these issues.

3) **ACTION, VOTE...** Rally others to do the same - Create Change!!

*Prayerfully, Joshua Hairston, “AHMED”*

### **“REINTEGRATION”**

Hello, world.

What is the first thing you see in your mind when you think about someone in prison? Now, add this to that primary vision: in America, over 700,000 incarcerated people will be released each year. How does that detail change the perspective of the picture in your mind?

Does it make you angry or uncomfortable? Does it scare you or make you nervous? It shouldn’t, but if it does, it’s likely not your fault. You probably succumbed to politicians, police, or victims of crime who vilify, stigmatize, and stereotype anyone who’s been to prison. I’m not belittling or making light of anything any victim of a crime has gone through. I’m only pointing out that prisoners are broad-stroked and stereotyped based on someone’s individual experience, bias, and/or motivations. Often that image is spread for a myriad of reasons. Additionally, society tends to forget that prisoners are human beings just like them and instead turns them into pariahs before they’re even released. Contrary to popular belief, not all prisoners are bad people. The truth is that no matter how “good” or “bad” people are, crime will exist as

### **BEHIND THE WALL: RAP CONTEST EVENT**

Saturday, November 26, 2022, some of the men from Second Chance Quest, Freedom Over Everything (FOE), and The Parole Peer Support Group sponsored its second rap contest on their unit in Buckingham Correctional center in Virginia. It was a fantastic event featuring five contestants who performed in front of the men on the pod, along with a few visitors who attended the event. Five judges judged the contest. Hats off to all the contestants and judges who did a commendable job. The three top prizes went to Skoe from Norfolk, Rallo from South Boston, and B-More from Baltimore, respectively. Hats off to those warriors! The other contestant was G.T. from Newport News; we also salute his performance.

We thank the judges for their service: Harold Lee from Richmond, Wee from Richmond, Marquis from Williamsburg, Brisco from Norfolk, and Squeeze from Newport News.

The event’s sponsors came together to ease the pressures and tensions that often impact prisoners this time of the year brought on by being absent from the festivities of home.

long as poverty and a lack of equal education and opportunities exist. As a society, our focus regarding prisoners should be rehabilitation and reintegration. With such a high number of prisoners being released back into society, the real question is, how do you want them to come back? Disgruntled, unchanged, angry, resentful, unequipped, and prone to recidivism? Or prepared, changed, humble, contrite, optimistic, and afforded a real opportunity to be a productive citizen? Reintegrating a person or group of people into society is a two-lane road. I didn't say two-way street because both lanes have to go in the same direction. Incarcerated people and the communities they will come home to have to be working in unison.

For an incarcerated person, your reintegration begins as soon as your sentence does. Anyone who's ever been incarcerated knows that the prison system has no interest in rehabilitating anyone, despite the poor charade they feed the public. That means it's up to you. Don't sit around doing nothing to kill time. Work it to death, preparing for your release. Decide what you want with your life, devise a plan to get it, and take action to bring it to fruition. You are limited in prison, but utilize every resource you have. Find what you are good at and/or what you love to do (they may not be the same) and cultivate it into a skill that can earn you a living on the outside. If you commit to this, everyone you come into contact with will see, and your actions will garner support and help inside

and outside. You never know who you'll meet, who they know, and how any of those people can assist you.

In the same way, you created the life that got you in prison, you can create a different, better life post-release. Before this can happen, you must sincerely desire to better yourself. Without the desire, you'll likely become a poster child of the prison stereotype, have a proclivity for recidivism, and be worthy of the prison/ career criminal stigma.

For those in the free world, it is the same. Reintegration still starts when the sentence does. Most people have no idea how prison affects someone mentally. No matter how much hubris a person has, imprisonment's mental, physical, and emotional effects are quite often apparent during and after release. It is easy to feel lost and forgotten in an environment where nobody truly knows you, nobody really cares, and it can quickly become perilous at any moment. Do whatever you can to establish and/or keep your connection alive. Do research online, send them information, talk to people in that field if you can, and, generally, assure that individual of your support. Prison stigma affects the mind even before a prisoner is released. Strengthening your connection will help dispel that. Make him/her feel like they're an essential part of your life. Bring other people into the support system if you can. Your position in reintegration is to facilitate positivity so that he/she will have that space to mature, grow

and begin that change as best as possible from the inside. He/She will gain confidence from that. The way a person reenters society from prison will be a byproduct of the time and energy invested by family, friends, significant others, and the community. People outside those prison walls must know and understand how multifaceted reintegration is—housing, food, clothing, employment, transportation, surrounding support system, mental state, etc. Reintegration of a prisoner starts as soon as their sentence does because none of these necessities will magically appear right away the minute they're released. In the same way, an incarcerated person desires to do better, people on the outside have to be equally committed to offering assistance to them, even if it's only to feel safer and more confident about who lives in your community.

Going to prison isn't pretty in any way; however, we're all just people at the end of the day. We all have families, feelings, and social pressures, and we all make mistakes. We are flawed human beings, but when somebody is labeled a prisoner, that moniker wrongly overshadows everything else they are. They say it takes a village to raise a child. If that child had been away for any other reason than prison, that village would be there to welcome him home. If we aim to mature, advance, promote love, and elevate our society, shouldn't that same village welcome someone home from prison with all the tools to break the cycle

of what put him there in the first place? After all, I may be coming out to live right beside you.

**By: Rodney Fenner**

## **REFORM AND ABOLITION:**

Greetings to everyone! This is my first time writing for the Second Chance Quest newsletter. However, I was around to witness the beginning of Second Chance Quest when it was just an idea; when brothers stood at the fence dividing the two recreation yards at Buckingham Correctional Center brainstorming about how to manifest that idea into a working, breathing organization.

I was kind of leery about getting involved at first because of my radical, abolitionist stance. I am about the total dismantling of a failed system and not simply a reform of that system. But something happened on January 24, 2022, that made me alter my politics a bit. On that date, former Virginia Governor Ralph Northam granted me a second chance by commuting my sentence. I went from facing the very real possibility of dying in prison to now being scheduled for release in 2025. That's fifty-one years wiped off my sentence with the stroke of the governor's pen.

Sure, I could have waited for the revolution to start. And for the walls of these prisons to come tumbling down or for a comrade to liberate me from prison as was done for Assata Shakur. But revolution takes time and patience. As Dr. Huey P. Newton used to teach, "the revolution is not one act, it is a process". So what do we do in the meantime?

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**VA. ELECTIONS COMMISSIONER EXPLAINS WHY INELIGIBLE FELONS REMAINED ON VOTER ROLL BY: JACKIE DEFUSCO**

RICHMOND, Va. (WRIC)—During a lengthy presentation to lawmakers, Elections Commissioner Susan Beals explained why thousands of felons remained on Virginia's voter rolls despite losing their right to cast a ballot under state law.

The glitch is just the latest symptom of rigid, outdated technology that's now being overhauled, Beals told House and Senate Privileges and Elections Committees on Monday. Beals also explained how the Virginia Department of Elections (ELECT) plans to prevent additional problems during the two-year transition to a new voter registration system.

Beals said 1,248 felons who are not eligible to vote have cast a ballot since 2011. She said they're part of a group of 10,558 offenders who had their rights restored by the Governor upon release, then had their rights revoked once again after being convicted of another offense. Beals said programming for the rights restoration system was inflexible from the start. She said it didn't allow people taken off of the prohibited list to be added back on later.

"Unfortunately, the way the code was written, you could not unexpire somebody if they came back in and reoffended. So once you were restored, you were always going to be restored," Beals said.

Beals said they've now created an automated solution for fixing the records and sent the updated information to local registrars.

"Already our registrars have

gotten through half of them. So I believe that they will be finished by the end of this week having them canceled and off the rolls," Beals said.



Beals said the problem was identified during a review of list maintenance processes and procedures. She said this audit will help facilitate a smooth transition to a new statewide voter registration system as the state prepares to replace outdated technology that was installed 15 years ago.

"We are past time for a new system that brings in new technology and new features and new functionality," Beals said. "In 2007, we didn't have iPhones. Most of us were using BlackBerries and Game Boys were also a thing. So that gives you an idea of the technology we're talking about."

Beals said they recently awarded a contract for the project. She said their goal is for the new system to go live in February 2025.

Lawmakers pressed Beals about how the state plans to prevent additional problems in the meantime after the existing system was blamed for multiple glitches leading up to this fall's

election. Local registrars were left scrambling at the last minute multiple times after the state failed to transfer updated voter records from the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Beals said they're planning to implement a new monitoring and alert system that will flag problems faster.

"We don't have that monitoring or those alerts in place. We need to have real-time information that something is going wrong as soon as it is going wrong. The monitoring is going to be a critical element that is going to help us get through the next two years," Beals said.

Beals said the alert system was put on the back burner during previous administrations but they're prioritizing the project for the first quarter of 2023.

Beals declined to do an interview on Monday after the meeting.

Delegate Mark Sickles (D-Fairfax), who has been critical of recent errors under Governor Glenn Youngkin's administration, said in an interview after the presentation that Beals appears to "have her arms around" long-standing problems. He believes staff turnover and a loss of institutional knowledge between administrations contributed to previous glitches.

"I think she has learned a lot and the job is very difficult," Sickles said. "It's understandable that things can slip through the cracks and I think that is what happened this time."

**ISSUES CONFRONTING VIRGINIA'S PRISONS AND PRISONS**

There are many prisoners in this system who have experienced isolation and/or long term segregation. This system (not withstanding the dangers of Covid 19), warehouses people. Now, much like our people about to loose voting rights or have those attempts to vote made difficult, attempts at rehabilitation in this time of budget cuts, is at best a protracted struggle.

The ideology that restricts prisoner's continued growth and de-

velopment needs to be questioned.

We prisoners have been convicted of violating the laws of society and may even have engaged in the most reprehensible of behaviors.

In a Democratic society we are still entitled to humane treatment and to our constitutional rights.

Anyone who engaged in violent crime will often find themselves serving their time in long term segregation from the general population, with isolation time in the

hole if prison officials feel you need to be broken.

For the state of Virginia, money is its only concern. The new "crop" of human beings (namely young Black men and Black women) coming into this system at record speed is not a shock nor surprise to those who know your history.

Virginia, after all, was the first slave state. The Commonwealth sees no end to what prisoners can

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We have to encourage our people to vote for politicians who are for giving incarcerated people second chances; to send emails and make phone calls to their elected Representatives voicing their support for second chance legislation; to show up at prison justice rallies and demonstrations to give their testimony of how mass incarceration have destroyed their families and communities. Most importantly, for those of us returning home, we have a duty and obligation to help build and support organizations like Second Chance Quest.

I know these are all reformist strategies but sometimes we have to work within the existing system in order to survive, save lives and get a little breathing room while being mindful that the end goal is always abolition.

**By: Uhuru Baraka Rowe**

### **THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT OF COVID-19**

We are at yet another "crossroads" in the progress of life. We constantly travel the same roads on the interstate of life, towards exits and tolls of emotional and psychological stimulus. We journey through the unknown and uncertainties of a COVID era and are formed through experiences within our self-made cocoons of quarantine worldwide. The more we experience this new norm, the more we learn about ourselves. Each bump in the road of life, every piece of the scenery into the conversational

basis, structures us.

Within the process of change, we add to our persona the richness and in-depth nature of the trials and tribulations we face. Amid the storms, COVID-19, Racial Injustices, and Institutional quarantines... we develop and transform at a natural rate of the procession. We are within our processional spinning process on our own axis but under

a large gravitational influence, tracing the steps towards a new day.

Gradually, we move at our own "Caterpillar" rate of learning and processing our new experience without our social circles of yesterday until we become dissatisfied with the natural speed of life and push beyond the naturalness within the development of self-quarantines into a COVID-free environment.

We were denying ourselves the proper timing to become the social butterflies we are designed to be. Instead, we push ourselves into situations of unhealthiness and near-death realities. We are becoming "Moths" that feed off thoughts of what life used to be like, suppressing our beautiful stages of being fed from the nectar of life.

Enduring our butterfly

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**FROM THE ARCHIVE OF SCQ SUPPORT GROUP**

### **STUDENT ESSAY:**

*Commitment: The word commitment encompasses dedication as well as application. The word commitment far exceeds just verbally announcing one's intent, it delves deeper into the core of your being. Commitment requires a genuine change from within.*

*Change: Change can, and will only happen once we individually reach a point or place where we decide and realize that a change in our lives is necessary.*

*Discipline: In order to reach goals, and be seen as being a responsible person, discipline and self-control must be exercised. Being disciplined is a characteristic that is necessary to have in your arsenal if you plan to be successful.*

*Patience: Patience is an attribute that's essential in all things within life. Without patience you'll be faced with an uphill battle of many sleepless nights. Having patience is not an option because it applies directly to any and everything one may pursue; from receiving a raise at work, established credit, purchasing a home, etc., one has to have a level of patience in all walks of life.*

*Stability: Stability is the foundation of consistency. Without stability, one will constantly be in search of establishing oneself as a person who can be relied upon. Stability shows that one can be depended in a tight situation.*

*Tolerated: To tolerate is having the ability to endure in that which in normal circumstances one wouldn't. To tolerate ones actions that opposes your principles or beliefs displays growth and maturity.*

**By: Jay**

**5 THINGS EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR WHEN INTERVIEWING**

Employers look for many different characteristics when hiring for a position vacancy with a company. Depending on the position, those characteristics can vary. For the interviewee, this is where the real struggle can begin, what do I wear, how do I act, what if they don't like my answers? These are all questions we have asked ourselves in the past. Below are 5 qualities that employers are looking for when hiring for a position, regardless of the job.

**1. How do you present yourself?**

First impressions are important and not only for the personal side of relationships. During an interview, the first time a potential employer looks at you, they will start to decide if you are right for the position. When coming in for an interview you want to be at your best which also means your clothes and hygiene. Coming in jeans and a T-shirt doesn't exactly tell them, "I really would like this job".

**2. Are you a likable person?**

Employers want to feel like you would fit well into the company. Are you warm, friendly, and easygoing? Becoming part of a work family is very important in the cohesiveness of a company you will spend much of your time with. Willingness to be part of a work team is something a company looks for because it takes more than just

one person to keep the business running.

**3. Do you have the knowledge and skill to complete the job?**

Employers want to know that you can get the job done. They will be hiring you for a specific purpose, and if, as the employee, you cannot get it done, that will delay other aspects of the business. Employers want to see past successes in the position you are applying to; they want to know you have experience.

**5 Things Employers Look For When Hiring****4. Do you have integrity?**

Are you willing to be true to yourself and others? Will you admit honestly what your strengths and weaknesses are? Employers look for integrity in all their employees because they are willing to be honest, and true to themselves and others. Employees with integrity admit their faults along with their successes and are willing to talk about how to improve themselves. Integrity brings loyalty. Keeping the negative of the past out of a job interview will earn bonus

points. Talking bad about previous employers or coworkers will look bad on you. Keeping the positive of past jobs in the forefront is most important.

**5. Do you have a strong work ethic and enthusiasm?**

Anyone can do a job, but employers want employees who will give all they have. Are you willing to get the job done no matter what it takes? Would you rather just do the bare minimum and give yourself free time during the day? Employers look for employees who will strive to do their very best and are excited about their position. Employers want their employees to be enthusiastic about their job, not just be there for the paycheck. Employers want to see your passion.

While these are only 5 qualities employers look for when interviewing, they are not the only ones. The position will depend on how many specific qualities a potential employer might be looking for. Don't stress about it; just be yourself. Dress nice, relax and don't try to be something you are not. Employers know what they are looking for, and they know when you are not showing your true colors. Go into the interview with your head held high and confident that you can do the job.

**RESOURCES FOR PRISONERS**

Tired of buying books blindly? Hood Politics now preview books and give subscribers a complete, untainted review weekly. Three book enthusiasts will give their unbiased opinion on ten books each week submitted by various authors. Check for their 2 cents before you spend your dollars. Each week's edition will feature a different beautiful model. Never the same girl twice. Hood Politics is promised to be the urban Bible for urban literacy connoisseurs.

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## RESOURCES FOR INCARCERATED PARENTS SECOND CHANCE QUEST FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

It's no secret that familial incarceration has a vast social, emotional, and financial impact on many families across the nation. This disturbance in the family structure is the culprit that influences broken family bonds, generational incarceration & high recidivism rates. Incarceration and its impact is a national issue, but it disproportionately cripples underserved communities and black and brown folks. Sustaining and repairing connections with families by strengthening them while the loved one is serving time would disrupt the cycle of incarceration and lend to healing in our communities. According to the National Institute of Corrections, "sustaining and repairing connections with family and those identified as sources of support for justice-involved men and women has a tremendous positive impact on institutional behavior, program participation, planning for reentry."

We understand that the key to sustaining and repairing connections with families with an incarcerated loved one is strengthening them while the family is serving time. Doing so would disrupt the cycle of incarceration. By reducing families' sources of stress, providing children and adults with responsive relationships, and strengthening the core life skills we all need to adapt and thrive, we can prevent and counteract lasting harm.

SCQ's Family Support Program works closely with families with incarcerated loved ones. We currently serve 18 New Jersey families, including 40 children.

We encourage our families to maintain healthy relationships with their incarcerated loved one. We also foster relationships with the incarcerated parent and their child. We offer support based on the needs of the family. Over the years, we have developed relationships with local organizations allowing us to streamline otherwise challenging processes. Some family support services include:

- Back to school supplies and uniforms
- Food/ grocery delivery
- Holiday gifts on behalf of incarcerated parent/ loved one
- Emergency assistance
- Resources for children with incarcerated parents
- Individual and Family Counseling
- Post-release support, including housing

The Family Support Program is phase one of the more elaborate, 3-phase Family Integration Pilot Program. The Family Integration Program (FIP) leans on trauma-enforced practices to deliver services in a way as to minimize the retraumatization of family members. As we get into the latter phases of the program, the focus is more on families spending physical time together. This parenting/family time is crucial to the effectiveness of the program and the success of the individual's reintegration.

Please continue to follow and support Second Chance Quest as we do the work to help those directly impacted by the perils of incarceration.

## ISSUES CONFRONTING VIRGINIA'S PRISONS AND PRISONS continued from page 5

produce for the State. The ugly truth of the matter is year after year prisoners are "not granted parole" for the sole purpose of the "prison work force--free labor.

PAROLE was abolished in 1995 to keep the prison work force going. Thus, the younger the prisoner, the more years of work that can be gotten out of them.

So to our amazement, children are being tried in adult courts and have to serve 85% of their sentence.

### MAKE YOU OR BREAK YOU

Back in 1973 and 1974 was the beginning of my prison experience.

One of the first lessons I learned from some of the "Original OL G'S" is that prison will make you or break you. You must know it is designed to break you.

From personal experience doing isolation and segregation time early in my sentence, I learned I must focus on my purpose in life. A man or woman in prison or not is lost and will end up a victim if they

haven't looked within to discover why they are here

by preparing themselves to accomplish their aims and purpose of action.

In closing, I've concluded that the majority of prison authorities are not concerned with our mental health or future progress and being productive.

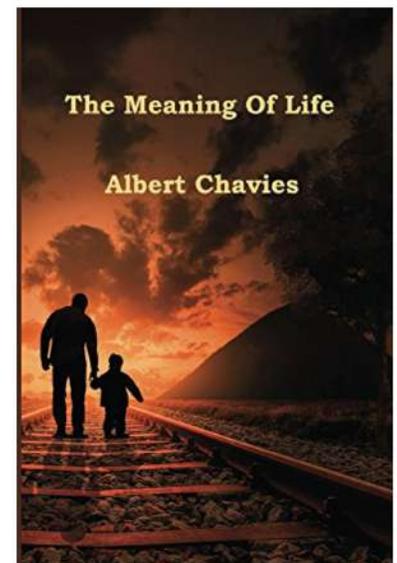
More than ever this is the time when family, prison officials or any "concerned human being" can step up concerning our grave situation.

Get together with other families, churches and other groups to meet with this new parole board, attend General Assembly sessions and other meetings around the state to oppose this system of exploitation and demand the release of your loved ones; many who have qualified for their release according to the requirements set by prison authorities.

As the old spiritual anthem we

sing--"LIFT UP YOUR VOICE"-- and be heard!

**Peace! Peace! & Love!**  
**Submitted by: Poor Bro. Amin/  
AKA-BRO. Chavies**



[www.amazon.com/Meaning-Life-Albert-Chavies-ebook/dp/B07C1DVPNQ](http://www.amazon.com/Meaning-Life-Albert-Chavies-ebook/dp/B07C1DVPNQ)

effect, we experience a change in our complex everyday living system, hugely affecting our family, peers, and community structures. Cause being, when we reach the point of metamorphosis, the process of self-transformation from an immature caterpillar into a butterfly mentally comes through the unknowns and uncertainties that push us to become victorious as a result of the hardship of nature. In return, a change occurs within us, and we naturally transform through an unnatural process (COVID-19)

**By: G. Johnson (aka, UV)**

### **SUICIDE**

Before suicide was introduced to my life, I put very little value on myself, and now I truly understand its impact on those who love me. Going through the day-to-day life of being in prison is tough, to put it mildly. We face never-ending rejections and disappointments from every direction. Under those circumstances, I felt more and more like I didn't care about my life. Feeling like I have so much time to do and the losses I've taken on continuous bases made me devalue myself and the importance of my being here. Many people from my past have abandoned me, and there's nothing I can do to help or change that, and the thought hurts deeply.

Even though I'm not actively trying to commit suicide, the feeling of "I don't care" remains. When I think of suicide, I think of bullets, rope, or pills, things of that nature. When I start thinking about it, things don't matter, and I find myself on a destructive and damaging path. I don't feel love for myself in many of my hard struggles. I'm a Christian, I love to sing, and in many ways, I know better. Yet, I have moments of depression that take away my will to do or be anything. The tunnel I've traveled ended when I was 18 years old, and now 18 years later and in prison. My accomplishments are beautiful to me, but they mean little to nothing because I did 18

years in prison, and at times that has left me feeling like my life has no purpose.

One day, I got an email telling me my 18-year-old son had attempted suicide. His home life is tough, and the loss of me has robbed him of his entire life. Besides that, I don't know why he would attempt to take his life. I want my son to know he is loved and that nothing is worth him taking his life. The struggles he faces are minor compared to my love for him. September 24th was my birthday, and my gift was my son coming to visit me. We had such a wonderful time laughing and joking together. Four days later, he made another suicide attempt. Once again, my son, my youngest, feels like life is not worth living because of his hardships. I know, above all, I want him to live! He is MY seed.

Now I'm forced to readjust my ideas of life. I have to sit back and analyze how my mother would have felt. My son doesn't realize how many people are hurt by the thought of his suicide attempts. With that, I understand that caring is subjective. Just because a person is not meeting your expectations of caring doesn't mean they don't care. I am a witness to that because my son believes I don't care that he can't measure up to my expectations, and the truth is I would give him my heart one thousand times to ensure he lives.

What he thinks to be the truth is not the case, but he is yet to understand that. What I think about people caring is only sometimes the reality of the matter. What it boils down to is I'm trying to force them to care like I want them to. They're doing the best they can, and maybe I'm the one who needs to readjust.

Thank you for your time.

**By: Calvin**

### **TO MY BLACK COMMUNITY,**

I know the sound of a mother's scream due to losing their child all too well. Though I've spent the last 26 yrs. of my life in prison for taking someone else's child away, I grew up in a project in which

those screams were all too familiar for those who lived there. I am now 47 years old and see life from a different set of lenses now. There is no justification for taking a life. We have too many mainstream entities with the eyes and ears of our youth promoting violence for profit. I hope to answer, at least partly, why the Black culture is destroying itself. It's 2022! We are still blaming our conditions on drugs, killings, poor education, economic disenfranchisement, and mass incarceration on "slavery".. of course it happened; the question should be, when are we going to rise above slavery and live as free men and women? Whenever a problem arises in my life, I've made it a habit as a man to first look at myself and see what I could do to change. After that, I do something important: remember what got me here. That's called accountability. Our communities have yet to put all of our problems on the table and be willing to accept some harsh criticism about how we got here and what we must do to get out of this continuous cycle of "black destruction."

That African saying, "It takes a village to raise a child," is needed for the Black community. Our children have no respect for their elders, so our elders are fearful of the youth today. Let's look at the conditions of the black communities by viewing things in a couple of different ways, Economical and Parental. One of our most preeminent black scholars, Dr. William E. B. Dubois, once said that "Capitalism is like having three ears of corn: You eat one, you sell one, and you save one for seed for next year planting. Dubois goes on to describe blacks as yet to practice capitalism, "black people are neither producers nor savers we are consumers." To empower our communities economically, we must invest in them. It is also economic disenfranchisement to have on every corner of our communities thriving businesses run by owners who have never lived in the community and have

no intentions of uplifting the people that do. The blacks who do live in these communities have no financial stake in these businesses, so whose to blame? We have become a culture of consumers. How does this have anything to do with the violence we face every day? Well, a business and its owners play a pivotal role in the black community as leaders and role models. When a neighborhood lacks role models, it discourages our children from believing in their future, so who or what our children tend to idolize does shape them into who they become. The violent TV shows, radio, and the foolish things they view on social media are shaping our children today. We can turn our communities around by knowing and understanding the power that's needed. We must present our children with strong men and women they can be proud of, whether a barber who owns or works in a shop or a small convenience store clerk with ambitions to be great, investing in the neighborhood. Invest in the advancement of the next generation through education, economic growth, and mentoring the youth, which offers social stability, and conflict resolution tools. When a business is thriving, the people who live in that neighborhood also thrive, but when you have owners whose only mission is to "get theirs by any means," the people and the neighborhood are at a loss. We love looking good. With our expensive designer clothes, jewelry, and cars, you would think we were all businesses and homeowners. We get all dressed up to show off to people who have nothing. When our youth witness these behaviors, what have we done? We've planted a dangerous seed that glorifies the "poor" thought process: That the fly car, clothes and jewelry didn't come from hard work and dedication from an honest legal job. That leads to the youth wanting to cut corners. There isn't an instruction manual that comes with life that says to get your education and work towards a career that you are passionate enough about that you won't hesitate to get up every morning to do. All that young boy know is to get it by any means! I

mentioned how the elders are now fearful of the youth, and respect for them has been lost to a culture that prides itself on how many bullets their gun can shoot.

I was taught early to say "yes ma'am" and "yes sir" we had neighbors who had the authority to whip my ass or snitch on me to any adult in my household who also could whip my ass. I hear now from a parent: "nobody better touch my child or say nothing to them." When a child hears this coming from their parent(s), it permits them to do anything they want throughout the neighborhood without repercussion from the parent(s) or community members. We create the problems our communities face daily, so let's stop looking to our elected officials to govern our families and communities. When we look to politicians for the answers, we get everything but a solution. Fear is a tool often used to control. In the '90s, most news stations ran segments on crime. When it was all said and done, Virginians received new legislation called Truth and Sentencing. This legislation meant that for any crime committed, the offender had to serve 85% of their sentence without the possibility of parole. Truth in Sentencing was their solution to a rise in crime over 25 years ago. Today those same news stations are broadcasting the same reports that crime is rising. It's so familiar that you would think it was a rerun! I believe that the only solution to be had with a problem involving crime and Gun Violence is to go after those who sell and manufacture guns. "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed unless it is faced"- James Baldwin

**Peace**

**Kevin (K.D) Dickerson #1154870  
Vice President / CoFounder of  
Freedom Over Everything (F.O.E)**

### **NO JUSTICE IN THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM**

Greetings and salutations to all readers; there is a reoccurring issue that I would like to address regarding incarceration. Now, of course, the general public knows

that crime and violence require punishment and retribution from a judiciary standpoint. With that, the people in the position of writing laws felt the need to place safeguards against severe punishment and excessive sentencing. So now the question must be asked, who will oversee that justice upholds when protecting the rights and guidelines of the criminally challenged? Because clearly, mass incarceration is getting out of hand, and severe punishment and excessive punishment are becoming the norm.

I will address the main issue as to why there isn't much justice in the judicial system. Parole!

I am at fifteen years and counting, on a fifty-year sentence for first-degree murder. I see a lot of things behind these walls that the general public isn't able to see. Yes, some people came in and out of prison and didn't learn their lesson. However, there are a lot of prisoners who have progressed during their incarceration to become better human beings. We should not stigmatize and label all prisoners because of the bad reputation of the few who have chosen not to progress during their time in the penitentiary. How can that outweigh the importance of those who have grown and have decided to change? It's no mystery why society mostly pays attention to the negativities coming out of the prisons. The answer is because of the political influences and hidden agendas of those in power, as it is in their best interest to publicize and focus the public's attention on recidivism as a means of keeping mass incarceration going which helps their business to thrive. Prison institutions are a very lucrative business. Think about those who have stocks in Keefe Commissary.

Virginia abolished parole in 1995, so we, with high-numbered sentences, are deemed hopeless. And yet we continue to choose to grow and discontinue our "career criminal" behavior. The unfairness of abolishing parole is prevalent but ignored by those in authority. We are in a state where the people in power are obviously against

**continued on page 10**

parole. There are “old timers” who got locked up before July 1995 and are eligible for parole. Some even exceed the requirements of parole but still get denied. There is an issue with the people on the Parole Board in itself. In the past, coming to prison, the word used to be rehabilitation and reform, but now there aren’t any avenues of hope presented to people they deem to be “no-good criminals.” I see a lot of “old timers” getting denied for reasons beyond their control, such as “severity of the crime.” But if we are focusing on reform and rehabilitation, why does the crime’s severity matter? The people in authority don’t seem to be judiciously qualified to uphold the position. Suppose the severity of the crime is the never-ending reason for denial of parole. Why are they given a parole hearing in the first place if they weren’t capable of correction, rehabilitation, and reform? Why play with a person’s hopes and deny them for the same reason for decades?

It is more profound than the Parole Board. Virginia has a history of being the motherland and heart of slavery and thrives off of warehousing and exploiting the incarcerated. The VA Coris system (the prison accounting for the Department of Corrections) has a saving account for all prisoners, and that savings account builds up interest. All prisoners must save up to \$1,000.00 in that account, which the DOC holds until they’re released. DOC places all that money into savings accounts but, guess who never gets any of that interest? The prisoners! The system prohibits us from opening a saving account, which would violate laws. Yet, as long as VA DOC can get its cut, it becomes legal.

This warehouse of people is disguised as rehabilitation, reforming, and correcting, but in truth, it is a business. We must see the truth and remember that we all make mistakes, so why do we allow these politicians to manipulate the system? To influence the public that exploiting and warehousing “Criminals” is okay? Many of us

were young and misguided when we made our life-altering decision, but to be severely punished for it and not be provided the opportunity to redeem and rectify our actions and behavior, doesn’t seem to be rehabilitating and reforming me. But what do I know? According to the judicial system, I am a “no-good” criminal who, due to my crime’s severity, cannot change.

I want to leave you all in peace and blessings and I want to thank Second Chance Quest for allowing me to articulate this to the readers. I also appreciate all the readers.

**By: J. Carr, aka Ghost**

## **INTELLIGENCE OVER EMOTIONS**

At some point, we’ve adopted the “Intelligence over Emotions” philosophy. This mantra has been articulated differently in different factions, but the essence of it remains. Though filled with great intent, it left a lot of men and women neglecting emotion or attempting to do so, leaving us to negate substance that could’ve been attained, such as motivation and much more.

We’ve grown so accustomed to shining a bright light on the negative results that emotions may be that we overlooked analyzing those emotions that can strengthen one’s intelligence. Such as finding out why one is feeling what one is feeling at that particular time. You can decipher what is making you feel that emotion and shine a light

on how to turn it into something positive and, as a result, bring one closer to knowing thyself.

Learn your emotions to learn yourself. Just do not deem them as a gateway to losing yourself. Train your emotions to attain discipline further. Whatever you do, don’t suppress and neglect them because you may bring forth deep-rooted ramifications. It’s almost like leaving a fire unattended risking destruction, probably not at that exact moment but later down the line.

Becoming the best version of yourself is hard, tedious work, and all factions for doing so should be considered and never taken for granted. Your foundation will determine how strong and durable your home will be. Emotions are a part of that foundation.

I wish all the best of luck to those who’ve taken the time to read and digest this. Know that you are not alone even when it may seem such. We all have our long paths to walk, and building stamina of the heart is crucial to every one of us, the circumstance you may find yourself in carries pros and cons within yourself. It doesn’t mean that you are weak and vulnerable.

The only way to showcase bravery is through unforgiving and relentless fear. There’s some fear of emotion, and I always recommend seeking out your emotion and dealing with it wholeheartedly.

**Thank you for your time, and God Bless.**

**By: Bang-Ru**



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*changing views*  
**SO VIEWS CAN CHANGE**

“The ends you serve that are selfish will take you no further than yourself, but the ends you serve that are for all, in common, will take you into eternity.”  
— Marcus Garvey

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Maplewood, NJ 07040

TALITHA TURNER  
SECOND CHANCE QUEST  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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### SECOND CHANCE QUEST CONTACT INFO

**Mailing Address:**  
Second Chance Quest  
P.O. Box 855,  
Maplewood, NJ 07040

**Phone:**  
(304) TRUE SCQ  
(304) 878-3727

**Email:**  
[scqemail@gmail.com](mailto:scqemail@gmail.com)

**Website:**  
[www.secondcq.org](http://www.secondcq.org)

**Social Media:**  
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