

Duane Dimick #95B1022  
Greene Correctional Facility  
P.O. Box 975  
Coxsackie, New York 12051

Mujahid Farid  
Correctional Association of New York  
2090 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd #200  
New York, New York 10027

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you in regards to the current condition of Parole and the arbitrary way the commissioners withhold parole release to those of us that have life as a maximum sentence.

I am currently serving a 20-year to life sentence for murder in the second degree; a crime I committed at the age of 17. I recently went to my second parole hearing in August, and was held for 24 more months. The reasons the parole board gave for denying my release this time were boilerplate, and ambiguous, (i.e. nature of the crime, community and official opposition and the fact that when I committed this crime I was under the influence of drugs and during my incarceration I received misbehavior reports for drug use. **Please Note:** I have not received a drug use infraction in over five years and have completed A.S.A.T.) As you can see, I was not judged on the man I have become, but on the adolescent I was 22 years ago.

The Criminal Justice system was designed to rehabilitate offenders and reintegrate them back into society when they have done so. I have completed all of my mandatory programs, those that DOCCS deem essential to rehabilitation, and have remained disciplinary free for over five years. Furthermore, I have done many programs, ones that are voluntary, to make myself a better person. I am currently enrolled in the Hudson-Link college program here at Greene, and have been doing this since January of 2013. I have over 60 credits and hold a 3.70 G.P.A. I've made the Dean's and Presidents list, always remaining in good standing academically. Also, I've completed several certificate based elective programs, such as Restorative Justice, Anger & Rage Management, Small Business, among a few others, and gone on to facilitate them to other offenders. I have been a teacher's assistant for adult basic education, and high school equivalency for 2 years and have been a Youth Assistance Program facilitator for 2 years. As you know, the YAP program is a program that councils area youth and at risk youth on the perils of criminal activity and the reality of how crime affects the individual and society as a whole, in a conscientious effort to keep these youth from following the paths that we as incarcerated men took. As you can see, I have gone to great lengths to become a better human being so that I can return to my family and society as a productive member.

In addition to my program accomplishments I have strong family support, support from the Hudson-Link program, several letters of recommendation, along with positive progress reports from program supervisors. I gave a solid, fact based release plan to the parole board commissioners, and had low scores on my COMPAS Risk Assessment Report. Yet I was still denied release due to the nature of my crime.

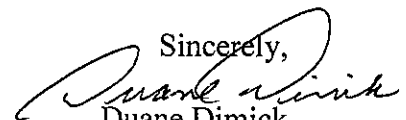
Changes must be made to the laws that govern parole, otherwise men like me, who are absolutely prepared and have earned their release will continue to be held in prison for ambiguous, arbitrary reasons. We will continue to be held for things such as the nature of our crime even though this is the one thing we cannot change. More emphasis needs to be placed on the rehabilitative efforts of the offender, instead of what they did to come to prison in the first place. We were given a sentence by the court system for the nature of our crime and the parole commissioners continue to resentence us two years at a time. Not only is this cruel to the offender and their loved ones, but also to the victims of the crime for having to relive it over and over every two years when the offender comes up for a reappearance in front of the parole board for consideration.

On top of the boilerplate reasons the commissioners give for denial, there is no indication to what the offender can do in the future to better their chances for release. When we are first admitted into the Department of Corrections we are told that there are mandatory programs we must take if we want to be released, and when we complete these and go beyond through voluntary programs, we are told "that is not good enough." But we are not told what we need to do.

In closing I would like to ask you to please look into changing the way that parole hearings are conducted and make a real effort in ending the continued mass incarceration of people who have done what they needed to do to become rehabilitated.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to changes.

Sincerely,

  
Duane Dimick  
#95B1022.