

Mr. James L. Lawson #384-220
Allen Correctional Institution
2338 North West Street
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Craig McKee-Anchor
WCPO TV9
1720 Gilbert Avenue
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April 17, 2018

Re: Response to Inquiry

Mr. McKee,

Just wanted to thank you for reaching out in response to the letter you provided and to tell you thank you for writing and seeking information as to the particulars of my prison stay, thoughts, changes, and/or remorse's, and also what differences has occurred since then! However, as always there are two sides in many instances to a story, and believe it or not, no one has ever contacted me or sought to ask me anything about this situation whatsoever!

To answer your question(s), I'm very aware of the opposition Ms. Edwards places on social media, her push to rally to keep me behind bars, however, with no disrespect to her challenge, I feel it is her absolute right to address concerns to the public of my continued stay in prison, with the exception that I have greatly changed and is committed to making a difference given that a second chance may be forthcoming so to speak. With All Due Respect & in all honesty, I first and foremost with the utmost remorse, apologize for the act which cost the life of Cheryl Durkin, during an unintended event in my past life, and therefore can understand the frustrations of Ms. Edwards point of view, knowing that I could possibly be released during an upcoming parole hearing, while at the same time, I cannot and will not hold any animosity or grudges for her advocacy against my release. I can only hope that someday she will accept my sincere apology and know "I didn't ask for any of this to happen." I had a job, a career, owned my own home, and was a single parent raising three kids, not that it would bring back Cheryl Durkin, however, there was no intent to cause the loss of any life, especially me being at fault, with so much of my own to lose, Respectively!

Yes, I've made many mistakes, many times over in my lifetime, none as severe as this, and my biggest regret, that I didn't call the police when it happened, taking matters into my own hands, which was the ultimate mistake.

Do I feel as if I've been rehabilitated, including whether I'm the same person I was in since December 21, 1999? My question in today's society, what is the meaning of rehabilitation? Prison is just a labor force, it is not designed to rehabilitate an individual, the choice is his/her, but self-motivation is what drives a person to focus on your changes, thus, termed "commitment to change" and I have taken this tool with great pride and have grasped its foundation as my stepping stone to my successful reentry into society, as currently a felon, to an ex-felon individual whom has conquered my failures to achieve a much higher position in life, which to build instead of destroying lives. So yes, in the sense of rehabilitation, I am!

In being productive while domiciled in prison, I managed to obtain many things, one being my G.E.D., I am college graduate, in the field of a Social Worker, I've completed every offered Recovery Service Program & DRC program, including participation in NA/AA weekly for the past (18) years, plus an array of community service awards, while at the same time, becoming a State Licensed Minister. So I am definitely not the same person I was when I entered into a State of Ohio Correctional Facility!

As for whether I have apologies, "it is with the utmost sincerity, that I regret what transpired in 1998, tearing a family apart, and shaming another by selfish actions, even to the point of shaking a community to look upon me a this deranged killer. Crime is not a condition of me, it was simply a mistake!

Did the Correctional System do anything to truly help me change? Yes, it did! Why? When you're faced with the possibility of serving a natural life term of imprisonment behind bars, you either fall prey to the circumstances, or you self-motivate to change your own outlook, with the chance of lessening your time, however, when DRC provides an inmate tools of usefulness, many times, it raised curiosity, "if you will" sometimes influential to those whom are committed to change, and therein begin that journal to success. I am that success! DRC has put me in a position to become a better person, and emphasis on becoming a productive member amongst society, although it was completely up to me to take hold. I've set out for purpose in my life, and going back is not an option!

What it means to be free? The ability to make differences in lives by the mistakes I've made, seeing the mistakes in kids, a hope to help develop at risk youths an outlet in seeking a positive footing whether from a single family dwelling, or just a dysfunctional family, or abusive parenting creating a safe zone with mentoring/counseling, as a individual, group, family. Hope... to stop violence!

Again, whether it is believed or not, I hold nothing but sympathy for the Cheryl Durkin's Family members and friends and/or associates, and truly apologize with sorrow for their loss.

I truly hope this answer many of your questions, I would again like to take this time to thank you for reaching out to me under these circumstances. Thank You and have a Blessed Day!

Sincerely,


James L. Lawson

CC: File

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