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# Inside Outside

## Never Give In! Never Give Up!

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## 2015 LEGAL SEMINAR

by Mr. Joseph Evans

On October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the Lifers Conference once again held a Legal Seminar. But by no means was this year's event like previous seminars. This year's event brought together a number of advocates and supporters addressing present day criminal justice and parole issues, Legislative agendas designed to remove the Governor from the Lifer parole process and information pertaining to post trial challenges that could produce individual relief from the courts.

The Lifers Conference president, Muhammad (a/k/a Anthony Fair), served as the MC for this event. The first course of business was to present a signed Proclamation stating in relevant part that the M.C.I.-H Lifers Conference endorses the efforts of Walter Lomax, Founder and Executive Director of the MD Restorative Justice Initiative as the primary representative of lifer issues before the Maryland General Assembly. The Proclamation serves among other purposes to eliminate duplicity in the MD General Assembly, reduce confusion at the legislative level and prevent the fracturing of limited resources. To have a growing number of interested parties advocating for appropriate prison and parole reform is a positive step as awareness of the issues has spread. There can be strength in numbers. However, proven leadership is also vital to a successful challenge of this magnitude. Walter Lomax brings both experience and knowledge of the issues to the legislative process in Annapolis.

There are other emerging organizations that are gaining momentum and increasing the awareness of significant issues important to those incarcerated whether they are serving a numerical term of incarceration or a parole eligible life term. The goal of the Proclamation is not intended to discourage anyone from developing proposals that can produce results. Change is needed. The Proclamation is intended to clarify the M.C.I.-H Lifers Conference's choice of leadership.

The following is the contact information for those persons who spoke at this notable event and who provided helpful information.

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As the 2016 Legislative Session approaches, more focus will be given concerning the Legislative process. Those persons sentenced to a parole eligible life term, your family, friends and supporters need to be involved! Ask any active member of the Lifers Conference what needs to be done. Better yet, get involved with the group and learn firsthand what's going on. It's your life. Its your voice. Use it. It is our responsibility to change public (mis)- perceptions and we need to take an active role to bring about change. (Editors note: Dorian Maddox was the official project manager for the Legal Seminar. Many hours and self sacrifice went into the planning, preparation and organizing. Nasir and his team did an excellent job. When you see him, an acknowledgement of appreciation goes a long way. Thank you Nasir! ☺

#### BOOK REVIEW

##### Understanding Mass Incarceration

*Submitted by Joseph Evans*

A People's Guide to the Key Civil Rights Struggle of our time.

By James Kilmore

(The New Press, 2015) 272 Pgs. \$17.95 (Paperback)

"MASS INCARCERATION" has become a term that is quickly slipping into everyday consciousness of ordinary Americans. Author James Kilmore offers an excellent introduction of the emergence of Mass Incarceration. Understanding Mass Incarceration is a useful guide for the practitioner as well as observers of the criminal justice system, to the historic phenomenon. James Kilmore who teaches at the University of Illinois at Urbana - Champaign, served six years in prison where he drafted three novels that have since been published.

Kilmore writes, "People who go to prison leave behind pieces of their lives, spouses, lovers, parents, other family members, friends, jobs, businesses etc. Because roughly 90 percent of prisoners are men, the vast majority of those left behind are women and children." This is just some of the interesting perspective that Kilgore has written about in this unique publication. Not all of the issues are resolved in this writing but he has done an excellent job of identifying the problems and contributing to the conversation for change. Understanding Mass Incarceration can be ordered from:

The New Press

120 Wall Street - 31st Floor

New York, New York 10005

[www.thenewpress.com](http://www.thenewpress.com)

(check the regulations of your facility if applicable)

Excerpts of this book review were taken from the October 2015 issue of Prison Legal News. Prison Legal News is a publication of the Human Rights Defense Center. A 1 yr. subscription to PLN is offered for \$30.00 / 12 issues.

Prison Legal News

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#### Membership Spotlight

*By Selwyn Tillett*

Dorian Maddox, the current vice president, has been a steadfast member of the Lifer's Conference from its conception. Mr. Maddox, also known as Nasir, was one of the original committee members who planted the first Crab Apple tree on the institution's grounds. He has chaired many committees. One of his most highlighted successes was when he co-chaired the 2013 M.C.I.-H National Crime Victim Awareness Week Program. During this program The Lifer's Conference was nominated for and received the Award in Excellence for Victim Outreach by the D.P.S.C.S. Nasir was the Project Manager to the 2015 Legal Seminar. He was motivated and instrumental in sharing the program True Colors with other groups. Nasir is also a facilitator in the Alternative to Violence Project, bringing much needed conflict resolution skills to participants.

Nasir should be applauded for his efforts to not only better himself but those around him. Thank you! ☺

#### SESAME STREET CREATES MUPPET

##### WITH FATHER IN JAIL.

*Submitted by Joseph Evans*

Sesame Street has a new Muppet character, Alex, whose father is incarcerated. "My Dad is in jail," he says in an online video. "I don't like to talk about it."

Alex is featured in Sesame Street's online teaching kit, "Little Children, Big Challenges," which is a series of resources for children and their parents dealing with adversity from bullying to divorce. The fuzzy blue haired Muppet is depicted as facing a wave of questions from his peers about 'carceration'. Sofia, a neighbor, explains that incarceration "is when someone breaks the law, a grown up rule, and then they got to jail or prison." Alex says of his father, "I just miss him so much ... Sometimes I just feel like I want to pound a pillow and scream as loud as I can." Jeanette Betacourt, vice president for the outreach and educational practices at Sesame Street Workshop, said the video is intended to give support and comfort to children like Alex.

"We are not looking at the cause of the incarceration of the parent, but the impact of the incarceration on the lives of the children and their caregivers," Jeanette Betacourt said. We are tackling this very difficult topic, but also acknowledge this very invisible community ... We've heard quite a bit from adults who experienced this as children and who never talked about it out of guilt or shame."

Around 2.7 million children in the United States have a parent in prison according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Source: <http://healthland.time.com>, and, [www.nydailynews.com](http://www.nydailynews.com). [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org), and, [www.usatoday.com](http://www.usatoday.com). [www.vox.com](http://www.vox.com)