

TO: Comrades, Friends & Supporters
FR: Jack Johnson
RE: OPEN LETTER OF THANKS
DATE: August 5, 2009

On Wednesday, July 29, 2009, I appeared in the Criminal Court for Baltimore City, before the Honorable Judge John Glynn. I was being represented by Mr. Gary E. Bair and Ms. Erica Suter, of the law firm of Bennett & Bair, LLC. The goal of the hearing was to convince Judge Glynn to modify the Life Sentence I was currently serving, and had been serving since April 25, 1970.

After considering a myriad of factors: I had served more than 39 years, I had reached 60 years of age, my prison record indicated that I had successfully turned my life around, and that if he failed to take action I would likely die in prison; Judge Glynn agreed that Enough was Enough, and ordered that my sentence be modified to orchestrate my eventual release from prison.

Judge Glynn recognized that:

1. In 1972, when the court imposed the original Life Sentence, Life didn't mean Life. The intent of the sentencing judges then wasn't for lifers to die old men in prison.

2. In 1972, when the sentence was imposed, the average lifer in Maryland served approximately 22 years before becoming eligible for release.

3. Recent political positioning had virtually eliminated parole as a viable option for lifers, and as a result, a new class of lifers had been created – men waiting to die in prison as old men.

4. Determining and imposing sentences is a function of the Judiciary, not the Executive branch of government. By flatly refusing to consider parole, the executive branch was usurping the constitutionally assigned power of the Judicial branch; i.e., converting paroleable sentences into non-paroleable terms of confinement.

5. By virtue of the Governor's position, paroleable life sentences are being turned into death sentences.

6. For me, and others in similar circumstances, to die old men in prison is not in the interest of justice and does not benefit society.

Judge Glynn concluded that by age 62, I will have paid my debt to society. He proceeded to suspend all but a portion of the Life sentence, with the goal of facilitating my release by January 25, 2011, when I will turn 62.

On behalf of my family and myself, I want to thank Mr. Gary E. Bair and Ms. Erica Suter for their diligence in the face of such overwhelming odds. Their dedication went above and beyond the call of duty.

I want to thank Judge John Glynn for “judging” this case on its own merits, and for taking the time to reach what he considers “the right decision.” It took tremendous courage for him to stick to his guns.

I want to give “Big Thanks” to Mr. Paul Coates, owner of Black Classic Press, for being a true friend, and for standing by me for 39 long, long years. Knowing he was there got me thru some of the rough patches.

I also want to thank each one of the many friends and supporters who refused to let this case die. Your support helped to keep my spirits high and kept hope alive. I truly couldn't have done it without you.

Finally, I want to say that the struggle isn't over. There are hundreds of lifers who have served 25 – 30 years, and with parole a thing of the past, can only look forward to serving another 25 – 30 years, with no option other than dying old men in prison.

My co-defendant, Marshall “Eddie” Conway is included in that group. I urge you to continue your support and DEMAND JUSTICE FOR EDDIE CONWAY.

Peace & Love,

Jack Johnson