

## My Letter To Congress

My Most Honorable Congressional Leaders:

I am writing you today because Americans deserve a system of justice where all individuals are treated justly under the law. But since 1986 and 1988 Anti Drug Abuse Acts have of course, the rationale for retroactivity was already embedded within our Bill of Rights - rights that guaranteed equal protection under the law; rights that promised citizens of America freedom from cruel and unusual punishment, and injustice, and rights that declared that all humans were created equally.

And yet a bill that was designed at its very core to cure the racial injustice perpetuated throughout this great nation for the past 25 years would not be applied retroactively to heal the wounds of the Black and Hispanic communities, where the prejudices were imposed 81.8% on blacks and 8.4% on Hispanic compared to 8.8% on whites. Sadly enough, Blacks comprise 13% of the U.S. Population and 14% of drug users, but 30% of all federal drug convictions. The sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine has contributed to the overall imprisonment of Blacks at six-times the rates of whites and to America's crown as the world's leader in incarcerations.

The Obama administration rightly wanted to end the racial disparity by equalizing prison sentences for dealing and using crack vs. powder cocaine - but partisan politics prevailed and the bill was passé flawed. I chose to write the book "How To Save Our Children From Crime, Drugs and Violence" because I believe wholeheartedly that we cannot save the 9 to 15 million at risk children in America unless we work together - unless we invoke the principles of peace and teach young people how to love their neighbours as they love themselves. It is imperative that we accept the reality that all children are equally important, and they should have equal opportunities, even though they don't all look the same and come from similar backgrounds. We all should want a better life for our children and grandchildren.

My commitment to save them comes from my mistakes that have caused me to live most of my life in maximum security penitentiaries. But it also comes from my desire to teach them the mistake in not learning from my mistakes.

I am the son of a black woman who had to raise me all alone. I was established excessive mandatory penalties for crack cocaine that are the most unjust ever adopted for low-level drug offenses and amounts to legalized discrimination for crack cocaine offenders compared to powder cocaine offenders, which are undeniably identical substances. Additionally, since the enactment of these unjust laws the Federal Bureau of Prisons budget increased from \$200 million in 1986 to a proposed \$6.8 billion in 2011.

These racially discriminate laws have had a particularly profound impact on African Americans like me that were sentenced to Life Without Parole for low-level crack offenses while powder cocaine offenders received less than 10 years on the average for the same offenses. This grave injustice has destroyed families and future and will continue to unless Congress passes the "Fair Sentencing Clarification Act."

The Fair Sentencing Act of 2010 (FSA) was signed into law by President Obama on August 3, 2010. The law changed the 100 to 1 disparity to 18 to 1; however, the FSA does not apply to the very people that have been discriminated against for the past 25 years.

Raised without a father or a father figure, so I turned to the streets for fatherly and brotherly love. During the last 15 years plus, I have received some of the best academic training in America and lived in the most notorious prisons in the world. I am a GED teacher and I instruct five Adult Continuing Education Classes - I am certified through the U.S. Department of Labor. I have published 6 books from prison, one have become the theme of my seminars - Leaders Breed Leaders, and for long as I live, I will never forget that in no other country on this planet is my prison story even possible.

It is a story that hasn't made me the most liked among my fellow prisoners. But it is a story that has allowed me to resurrect the lives of thousands of misguided prisoners.

When I was taken into federal custody in 1995, Congress had just voted against eliminating the 100 to 1 crack disparity, against all predictions to the contrary, 15 years later the same governing body rightly realized that decision was wrong. Despite the enticement to view the laws passage through an absolutely racial lens, it was justice for all Americans. This is not to say that it is okay today that its results ignore the defendants that it was written for. At various stages in the bill's passage, some people tried to argue in favour of the legalized discrimination. We saw partisan politics boil to the pinnacle during the House and Senate reconciliation negotiations. The House's goal was to completely eliminate the disparity, but some change is always better than no change at all.

Yet, the final version of the bill offered no relief to the victims of the discrimination.

On one end of the argument, we have heard that the federal drug enforcement resources are not being properly spent, as only 8.4% of crack cocaine prosecutions were brought against high level traffickers. On the other end we have heard about the decades of misconduct by (SOME) federal prosecutors that have hid evidence, lied to judges, juries and violated laws or ethic rules.

Judges have cautioned for decades that misconduct by U.S. Attorneys and their assistants endangers a defendant's right to a fair and just trial. Congress in 1997 passed legislation aimed at thwarting such abuses.

But the truth is, that the entire structure promotes lawlessness. The American Justice System awards get-out-of-jail-early cards to defendants that provide substantial assistance to law enforcement officials. This early release clause has nothing to do with a defendant's positive adjustment. For example: if an inmate were to inform federal agents about illegal drugs being sold in the prison, that inmate could receive a 50% sentence reduction. Rene Garcia Myles is the perfect example - in 2008 a federal judge reduced his double-Life Without Parole sentence to time served after Rene helped prosecute several corrupt prison officials and inmates that were involved in a drug ring. Rene wasn't a model inmate - in fact he had a very bad conduct record in prison - he simply cooperated with the FBI and earned immediate release after serving 19 years of his double-life sentence.

Given my accomplishments and substantial assistance to prison officials throughout this country, one would think that I should be able to earn immediate release as well. I've risked my life on numerous occasions in order to keep the peace within various prisons; this resulted in more peaceful environments for staff and inmates alike. Nevertheless, my assistance to helping hundreds of inmate earn their GED's has no match to what Rene did to earn his freedom - under the prison structure of the law.

And this helps explain, perhaps, my frustration with the unfairness in the American Justice System. As much as I've done to save the lives of thousands of inmates, not one could equate to the life of a staff member. If I were to observe a staff member being assaulted and I intervened to save his or her life, I would more than likely earn a sentence reduction. The system contains within it many contradictions - right and wrong.

Some will see this comparison as an attempt to justify or excuse what I did almost 16 years ago when I sold crack. I can promise you it is not. I do all that I do to make amends for my past involvement with crime, drugs and violence.

But injustice is an issue that I believe America cannot afford to disregard at this time. We would be making the same mistake that Congress made when it did not apply the FSA retroactively.

The fact is that people who are unchanged are released everyday for assisting the government, while those like me who have changed and are changing others apparently does not having anything coming - and we call that justice. And if we continue down this path of injustice, if we simply say, "oh well, it's just too bad," we will never be able to come together and save our children.

Children listen to criminals. We are the ones that are convincing them to commit crimes and we are the same ones that can get them to stop. But we do need to be mindful that a great deal of the injustice that exists in the Criminal Justice System today can be directly linked to the fact that legalized discrimination is nothing new.

Mandatory minimum laws were, and are still, racially biased; we still haven't corrected them, 25 years after the Anti-Drug Abuse Acts have proven to be a failure, and provided, then and now, helps explain the unconscionable sentencing gap between black and white defendants.

Legalized discrimination - where defendants are prevented from making a positive adjustment, or assisting the government in ways other than in criminal investigations. Those limitations only discourage prisoners from doing the right thing.

I would not be doing all the things that I do today if I did not believe with all my heart that I can make a difference. I know I can because I do every single day of my life.

There is one story I would like to close with. There is a 23 year old white inmate by the name of Shannon Dycus. He was sexually abused when he was 11 years old by his HIV positive father. The abuse went on for 5 years, and one day Shannon decided to tell the authorities what had been going on.

They arrested his father and he received a 6 month jail sentence and 5 years probation. Yet, many low-level crack offenders must serve the rest of their lives in prison. Is that justice?

Shannon has not fully recovered from what his father did to him. But he is trying to help other kids recover who have been sexually abused. This summer he assisted me with writing a Manifesto for Saving Abused Children - which you can find on [www.cedricdean.com](http://www.cedricdean.com). He no longer looks at himself as a victim but a survivor. Shannon is only one out of hundreds that have attended and benefited from my Leaders Breed Leaders seminars.

I do what I do because of inmates like Shannon. Seeing guys like him renew their lives make it worth my while.

What I am doing in here, I really need to be doing in society. I would ask that you support my petition for a sentence commutation that I have pending with President Obama. I think a reduction to Life of Community Service would be sufficient considering I am fully committed to saving the lives of at risk children for the rest of my natural life, anyway.

If Sammy "The Bull" Gravano can murder 19 people and receive a 5 year sentence, surely the thousands of crack offenders should benefit from a law that was designed to bring justice to them. There are many other reformed crack offenders, just like me, that deserve to be free.

I ask that you respond directly to me and not with a form letter. But one that addresses the concerns I have shared with you. This is not about politics - it's about right and wrong.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours for the cause of Love and Peace,

Cedric Dean

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