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Why People Are Wrong to Think That Pardons are Only for Rich White Connected Guys and Not Them

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Why People are Wrong to Think Pardons are Only for Rich White Connected Guys and Not Them

By Tarik Ryant

Historically, this may seem true depending on the nature and malice of a crime. However, what is trending now looks nothing like what we are accustomed to seeing unfold in earlier times. As were many things that were skewed in previous litigation hearings, with judges handing out random sentences for lesser crimes or illegal sentences, the pardon process is rather unique. The pardon process is a combination of staying out trouble and basically building a portfolio. I like to reference the cliché that you only get one chance to make a first impression, or you get out of life what you put into it. At two-plus years, with the application and interview and then the actual hearing, the process is lengthy to say the least. To say that there is no hard work involved would be a falsehood. But what I will say is “I have had the honor of going through the process twice and have gained so much insight”.

This platform is built for all citizens and all walks of life. In my experience with the pardon process, having connections and lawyers doesn't matter. What shines in the eyes of the Pardon Board is sincerity, ownership, steadfastness, and integrity. I am an African American male that has had to go through this process twice before I was recommended to the Governor for a pardon. I am not connected nor affiliated with any domestic or foreign group that could have impacted the Board's decision. All I had was a pardon coach, someone to help me express myself better. What I am in touch with is the want and passion to feel a one-thousand-pound gorilla off my back. What I deserve is the opportunity to go on an interview and not have to explain myself or relive a traumatic or toxic time in my life that no longer represents who I am – what I have earned is the right to leave the past in the past and focus on growth and achievements, and not just surviving with a felony. So, when I applied for a pardon, I applied with a million-dollar mindset. Meaning, I hoped for the best, expected the best, and I was not settling for nothing less than the best.

For me being granted a pardon is going to open upon up doors that normally I would not want to open due in part to thoughts of rejection and social inequality. However, if we do not push for what is just this will remain our reality, stuck in a room with doors we have helped to lock, so we cannot have this mindset. Since I have been granted the votes to obtain a pardon from the Governor (this happened for me just in December), my confidence level has boosted, my self esteem is through the roof, and I cannot wait to blow the doors off the hinges that were once closed to me mentally.

When you are in front of the Board asking this tall task of clemency, the Board wants to hear from you, the Board wants to feel you. They want to know if you are a risk of reoffending based off your testimony. It's erroneous to think you must be well off, white or connected to be granted a pardon. I am living proof that the process is not a unicorn, yet the journey is the reward. I was a recommended for a pardon with no lawyer and no connections. The true and only connection that counts is the one with your heart and integrity.