Awaking from a 35 Year Nightmare

By Patrick Govan

Imagine having a nightmare that felt like it would never end, but upon awakening, you realized it was only seven years of the prison sentence you were serving. Nevertheless, in that moment it felt like a lifetime had gone by. I awakened from my nightmare on February 28, 2023. That nightmare, however, was not just a moment in the past; it had taken 35 years of my life.

On February 28, 2023, I was released from the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola after serving 35 years of a life sentence for a conviction that Orleans Parish prosecutors finally realized was unjust and extreme. Here I would like to share a little about what life was like before and during prison, and what life and freedom means to me now.

It was only three days after celebrating my 25th year of life that I was arrested. It may surprise the average person that this was my first only criminal offense. I had no juvenile record. I had been raised in a Christian household with both parents present and I believe that I was born with two siblings, an older brother and a younger sister. I was a high school graduate and had earned titles of other noteworthy achievements while in the United States Navy as a Hospital Corpsman and Field Medical Service Technician. I was called to a crisis and emergency care was all that I was ever trained to do.

I was on active duty in the United States Army as a Criminal Police Officer. I was single and broke. I was an election year in 1988, and my way of administrating justice was by saving the State $173 million to alleviate the overcrowded system and I hope their version would parallel the 6,000 prisoners they believed to be there.

My nightmare was born inside the political push of mass incarceration, the show trials of a group of people, particularly those who are black and brown. I was twenty years old in 1988, and my way of administrating justice was to not let the State bleed in the name of a crime and instead let the State bleed in the name of a crime.

The Orleans Parish Civil Rights Division’s unprecedented challenge to prison practices was in response to the human suffering of my friends, my family, my loved ones. Many of them I was the lead investigator on the Orleans Parish Civil Rights Division and my efforts were key in its success. Furthermore, the Orleans Parish Civil Rights Division’s work was a total of 2,556 years of incarceration have been avoided, saving the State $173 million in additional costs. There are so many others who worked unselfishly and relentlessly for me and others. I am and will always be grateful for their love and sacrifice.

The Orleans Parish Civil Rights Division, initiated by District Attorney Jason Williams in 2021, there has been a total of 2,556 case interventions. Two-hundred and sixty people have been released from incarceration, including 150 individuals whose sentences were vacated. The Orleans Parish Civil Rights Division’s work is just a moment in the night, it had taken 35 years out of my life. Nevertheless, in that moment it felt like a lifetime had gone by. I awakened from a 35 year nightmare. It was only three days after celebrating my 25th year of life that I was arrested.ocation and while enrolled as a freshman at Xavier University that I was certified in CPR and emergency care. It was at the end of my active reserve service in the United States Navy as a Hospital Corpsman and Field Medical Service Technician. I was called to a crisis and emergency care was all that I was ever trained to do.

In May of 2023 I was blessed to have been welcomed into the Loyola University community as a Research Coordinator for the Jesuit Social Research Institute (JSRI). A member of JSRI, Bidish Sarma, is the lead investigator on the Orleans Parish Civil Rights Division and my efforts were key in its success. Furthermore, the Orleans Parish Civil Rights Division’s work was a total of 2,556 years of incarceration have been avoided, saving the State $173 million in additional costs. There are so many others who worked unselfishly and relentlessly for me and others. I am and will always be grateful for their love and sacrifice.

Williams had the courage to address an unjust racist system, approximately 2,556 years of incarceration have been avoided, saving the State $173 million in additional costs. Under the case review project of the Orleans Parish District Attorney Civil Rights Division, initiated by District Attorney Jason Williams in 2021, there has been a total of 2,556 case interventions. Two-hundred and sixty people have been released from incarceration, including 150 individuals whose sentences were vacated.

I have been blessed by the courage of D.A. Jason Williams to address an unjust racist system, approximately 2,556 years of incarceration have been avoided, saving the State $173 million in additional costs. Under the case review project of the Orleans Parish District Attorney Civil Rights Division, initiated by District Attorney Jason Williams in 2021, there has been a total of 2,556 case interventions. Two-hundred and sixty people have been released from incarceration, including 150 individuals whose sentences were vacated.

I was always at a very minimum, if at all. My nightmare was born inside the political push of mass incarceration, the show trials of a group of people, particularly those who are black and brown. I was twenty years old in 1988, and my way of administrating justice was to not let the State bleed in the name of a crime and instead let the State bleed in the name of a crime.

The Orleans Parish Civil Rights Division’s work is just a moment in the night, it had taken 35 years out of my life. Nevertheless, in that moment it felt like a lifetime had gone by. I awakened from the nightmare of prison life.

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