

## POST-CONVICTION REVIEW

### A STAKEHOLDER'S PERSPECTIVE

[I]f we are to consider making meaningful and substantial changes to the SRA, specifically, review of long determinate sentences, [we] must begin by addressing the implicit biases that have plagued the criminal justice system here in the State of Washington. Once we do that, it will take true collaboration in designing a process that offers both equity and equality.

Today, the Workgroup that this discourse represents believe that, if there can be no movement toward creating a "[n]ew board" to review long determinate sentences (i.e. 15 yrs. to life), any process through the existing Boards (ISRB or Clemency) has to be done by a diverse body of individuals that are independent (i.e. nonpartisan) of the current modus operandi yet responsible to their [intent] and purposes.

I make intent and purposes a point of emphasis because, Washington's procedural history in its application of its laws and statutes relating to the release of inmates, is wrought with discrimination and disparate treatment along racial lines. For this reason, diversity for us is "in regards to demographics as well as sectors represented." Hence, "community," public responsibility in the decision making process on the release of individuals from incarceration.

When one looks at the Indeterminate Sentencing Review Board, a picture of fairness and accountability cannot be seen. In the same light, Washington State's Clemency and Pardons Board is hampered by politics, and suffers from subjectivity. The nature in which the Board makes recommendations to the Governor at times, are untenable. For individuals who have essentially grown up in the prison system, and have made identifiable reforms in his own life, with no baseline criteria for these individuals to meet that the Board [w]ill recognize as "extraordinary," significantly impacts his or her prospect for commutation from the start.

Reform is possible! Effective and sustainable measures can be reached. [I]f all stakeholders come to the table with compassion and empathy, whatever is produced, everyone's "voice will be represented in the design." This is our moment to work with "a nested vision in which we can all support."

In the spirit of solidarity,

Kwesi.