

New York State Parole System

Thousands of people in New York are serving a sentence where parole is their only chance for a life outside of prison. The parole board is tasked with evaluating a person's readiness to be released back into society.

However, in most cases, parole is denied decades later because of the underlying crime, even when the person has proven they are rehabilitated. Two proposed bills would help give those in front of the parole board a fairer look:

Fair and Timely Parole (S.159/A.127)

This bill would shift the focus of the parole determination from relying solely on the nature of the offense to who the person is today.

This bill would require the Board of Parole to have a clearly articulated and current public safety reason for denying the incarcerated person parole.

Elder Parole (S.454/A.514)

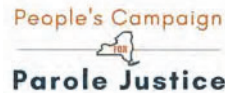
Provides incarcerated people aged fifty-five (55) and older who have served fifteen (15) or more years of their sentence an opportunity for parole release consideration.

This Bill does not guarantee release, but merely provides an opportunity for the state's oldest and sickest incarcerated people an opportunity to show the parole board why they are ready to be released.



Organizations Making a Difference

- Release Aging People in Prison
 - www.rappcampaign.com
- People's Campaign for Parole Justice
 - www.parolejusticenyc.com
- Prison Policy Initiative
 - www.prisonpolicy.org



For More Information:

Email: law-cjac@buffalo.edu

Website: <https://www.law.buffalo.edu/beyond/clinics/criminal-justice.html>

“I AM” Campaign

Featuring Anthony Dixon and Brandon Dennis



Presented By
The University at Buffalo School of Law
Criminal Justice
Advocacy Clinic



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Criminal Justice
Advocacy Clinic
School of Law

“I AM Campaign”

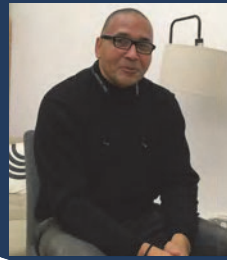
The “I AM” Campaign shares the stories of formerly incarcerated people doing great works in the community and currently incarcerated people who strive to bring their good works from correctional facilities to the greater community.

Through interviews with currently and formerly incarcerated individuals, we aim to amplify the voices of people making significant contributions to their communities inside and outside of prison.

Often, we’ve found that two people harbor the same determination to help others, but one is incarcerated and one has been released.

The stories of both incarcerated people and formally incarcerated people are examples of the dire need for a different approach to parole in New York State. Their stories help show why incarcerated and formally incarcerated people are infinitely more than the worst decisions of their life.

Stay tuned for more narratives highlighting other pairs of incredible incarcerated and formally incarcerated people.



I AM Anthony Dixon

At 21, I was convicted of homicide, robbery, and possession of a handgun, and sentenced to 30 years to life.

After serving 32 years and appearing before the parole board three times, I was granted parole. During my incarceration, I actively participated in various programs, including the Community Needs program, Lifers groups, and took a leadership role in the Protestant Church.

I created a program called Breaking Free from Criminal Thinking as well as a therapeutic anti-drug program called ASAP Life Areas. I advocated against discriminatory practices in the prison system leading to policy changes to address racial discrimination against incarcerated minorities with respect to preferred housing, job assignments and disciplinary practices.

Since my release, I’ve devoted myself to helping formerly incarcerated individuals transition back into their communities through the Parole Preparation Project and through the “Survivors of the System” support group I founded. I advocate to fix systemic issues in the criminal system. As I’ve learned, “Just because the judicial system had given up on me, didn’t mean I had to give up on myself.”



I AM Brandon Dennis

I was 22 years old when I was convicted of second-degree murder and robbery. I was sentenced to 50 years to life and will be eligible for parole in 2059.

For the past 10 years of my incarceration, I have been studying law while also dedicating much of my time to assisting kids in various capacities. Some of this work includes volunteering with the Youth Assistance program as well as co-founding the organization “Change Comes from Within.” In this organization, at-risk youth are provided with different opportunities that equip them with the tools and skills necessary for future success.

My commitment to “Change Comes from Within” extends beyond mentoring. The organization spearheaded multiple initiatives aimed at combating gun violence and have dedicated efforts to bridging the gap between individuals inside and outside of prison.

Upon release, I plan to continue engaging in advocacy work. I am committed to my efforts in supporting at-risk youth, particularly in steering them away from paths that often lead to incarceration.

A quote that inspires me is: “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.”
– Mahatma Gandhi