



TRUTH AND JUSTICE



An Open Letter to Governor-Elect Andrew Cuomo

By Jeff Deskovic

Congratulations on your impressive election victory; a victory for progressive minded citizens of New York State. I want to take this opportunity to bring to your attention the need to reinstate a program which in many ways made a big difference in my life, an exonerated former state prison inmate.

For fifteen years since George Pataki assumed office in 1995, the program under which inmates once could attend college classes and thus ultimately reenter society more capable of supporting themselves and their families has been totally abandoned by the state of New York. I believe in light of the data regarding recidivism

with respect to those former inmates who graduated from that program that the restoration of it would, by any measure, particularly the economic consequences for our state, be a win-win situation.

For starters, an inmate who enrolls is likely to be more serious about his rehabilitation. That translates into an individual far less likely to return to prison. It also means rather than spend the approximately thirty five to forty thousand dollars a year required to incarcerate him, he would instead become a productive tax paying citizen, paying income taxes, sales taxes, and property tax, as I now do.

Aside from the financial aspect, on the human side, college education is a proven crime prevention program, returning

individuals to the community who are far less likely to victimize others. Thus the transformative power of education is such that it benefits not only the recipient but the community within which he resides.

An important secondary benefit of college educating inmates; and, one that I can speak to from personal experience, is that it not only benefits the environment outside of the prison walls but within as well. I can tell you from what I personally witnessed that inmates participating in the program focused on their studies and paving the way for a more productive law-abiding future rather than getting side tracked and involved in destructive prison behaviors and violence, thus making the prison safer for the Correction Officers

and civilian employees working there as well as for the inmates.

I realize that you know only too well that your father's administration was well aware of all of the above, and I would hope that will be one of several areas in which you intend to restore people focused, economically sound progressive state government.

Yours truly,
Jeffrey M Deskovic

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