

Letter of Recommendation for Jeffrey Deskovic

March 18, 2014

Dear Criminal Justice Professional,

Last fall I was told about Mr. Jeffrey Deskovic by my Rockland Community College president, Dr. Cliff Wood. He had met Jeffrey and was told his compelling story of being wrongfully convicted of the rape and murder of a high school classmate, imprisoned, and finally after sixteen years, exonerated. Dr. Wood thought Jeffrey could be a guest speaker for my Criminal Justice program.

Before becoming chair I was a police officer in New Jersey for thirty two years. I arrested my share of criminals and never gave it a second thought. Many claimed to be innocent even when I caught them in the act. No one would claim that I was soft on criminals.

When Mr. Deskovic came to speak I did not know what to expect. I read a little about his harrowing ordeal and sympathized, but I was more interested in his message and how he would deliver it. After all we had a full amphitheater waiting to hear him speak. Jeff told me he didn't use power point and I could see that he had no written notes. I was a little concerned.

I should not have been. Jeff spoke from the heart. He detailed the crime, the investigation, his arrest, conviction, imprisonment and subsequent exoneration. His narrative lasted over an hour. There was no malice or bitterness in his words or voice. The students were mesmerized. They focused solely on him. There was no looking at cell phones or talking to classmates. I have never seen a better, more gripping, presentation.

A lot of my students want to enter the law enforcement field. I stress dealing with the public in all of my classes and doing the job correctly and ethically. We talk about wrongful conviction and the consequences for all involved. But talking about something in the abstract is far less powerful than seeing and hearing from a person that sadly has direct knowledge of its existence and impact.

An important lesson my students learned from Mr. Deskovic is that it is critical to investigate cases properly. There are no easy way outs. You must be sure that you have the right person not the easiest one to convict. I thought this lesson needed to be taught to police officers. I teach the

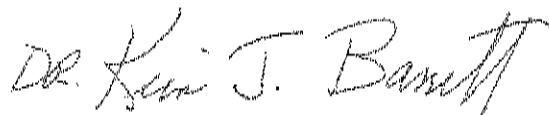
morals and ethics block of instruction to new police officers at the Bergen County Law and Public Safety Institute. I thought they needed to hear Jeff's message.

I asked Mr. Deskovic if he was interested in telling his story to my class of police recruits. He said he would love the opportunity to deliver his message to them. Jeff came to the police academy and delivered another powerful presentation. Like the college students before them the police officers were mesmerized by Jeff's harrowing story. His presentation will have a tremendous impact on our future law enforcement professionals. These one hundred officers will carry the lessons they learned from Mr. Deskovic for the next twenty five years of their careers.

Mr. Deskovic was so good that the director of the police academy asked if he could put in the paper work to the New Jersey Police Training Commission so that Jeff could speak at all future academy classes in Bergen County and be certified to teach at other academies throughout the state of New Jersey.

I asked Jeff to save some time for me because I want him to become an adjunct professor at Rockland Community College and teach a whole course on wrongful conviction. I highly recommend Mr. Jeffrey Deskovic. He has a much needed story to tell and he does so in a professional manner that grips his audience. I expect to have him back at my college and to the police academy so that our future leaders in the field of Criminal Justice know the importance of "justice for all".

Respectfully submitted,



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