

Proposed Proposition – 2020

By Abdul Olugbala Shakur and Joka Heshima Jinsai

STRATEGIC EARLY RELEASE PROGRAM

Preamble

The Prisoner cohort with the *lowest* recidivism rate, which we term the **Strategic Release Class**, is the indeterminate, or life term Prisoners over 50 years of age who have served 25 years or more of continuous confinement. The recidivism rate in this group is only .015%; it is virtually non-existent. Due to decades of imprisonment, relative maturity and development, and the increased value they place on freedom and community ties (based on their advanced age), this cohort simply does not re-offend. If we look further into this cohort and consider those long-term offenders with a proven record of service to their communities and society over the course of decades (as evidenced by their work productivity), their negligible recidivism rate drops to 0%.

The **Strategic Release Class** mentioned above have dedicated themselves to the social, economic, political/cultural development, and positive progress of their communities and society as a whole, making them not only the public safety selection, but an actual asset to us all upon release.

In stark contrast, and despite the above mentioned, the **Strategic Release Class** is *not* the focus of the Government/California Department of Corrections (CDCr) when initiating several rounds of early release programs designed to alleviate over-crowding in its facilities; in each instance, as though it's some political magic bullet, the cohort of focus for release are non-violent Prisoners, drug offenders, or determinate term offenders with 24 months or less remaining on their terms.

Understand, the non-violent drug offender, and low-based term determinate sentence offender cohort has a 60% to 70% recidivism rate (Re-offending for this cohort appears to increase in the summer months based on the findings of the Bureau of Justice Statistics).

The most recent early release program is designed to reduce the chance of rapid transmission of Corona Virus (COVID-19) during its pandemic. We can only conclude, based on the numbers from the Bureau of Justice Statistics that this cohort of Prisoners is the main focus of Prison Industrialists because of one or both:

1. It sounds less threatening to legislators and the public.
2. By intentionally focusing on the cohort of prisoners when referencing these groups to legislators and the Governor, in which the majority will re-offend, the objective is to sabotage the entire premise of early release programs.

If public safety is the primary concern of the CDCr, legislators, and the Governor in early release programs, and not just politically safe language, the primary cohort focus of early release programs should be the **Strategic Release Class**, the aged 50+ indeterminate term cohort.

To be sure, in the current crises it is this cohort of Prisoners who is at great risk of severe complications or death during the COVID-19 pandemic due to over-crowded prison conditions. Of equal importance, this cohort has the greatest number of job skills, experience, and accumulated knowledge, bringing meaningful contributions to their communities and job markets. As such, and by any measure, it is this long-term offender cohort, the **Strategic Release Class**, who should be the primary focus of ongoing early release programs.

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It has been well established, as well as documented, that the present primary demographics targeted for the Governor/CDCr early release programs are in fact the demographics which possess the highest recidivism rate, according to both state and federal statistics. We are beginning to wonder, is this a deliberate scheme initiated by both the Democratic and Republican Parties to undermine the very concept of early release for Prisoners? Totally dismissing the fact it is the poor communities, as well as society as a whole, who suffer the most as a direct result of this political error, or scam in disguise

Note: We acknowledge that many of us were much younger when we entered the Prison Industrial Slave Complex (PISC); we had no discipline, and lacked remorse for those things we actually did, but our unique class of Conscious Elder Prisoners have dedicated our service toward building our Communities, which encompasses transforming the Black Criminal/Gangster Mentality.

Close to 40 years ago I came to prison, and along with our class of Conscious Prisoners Council of Elders, I will be an asset towards building a better community for our People to live in. Due to COVID-19, of the recent release of inmates housed in county jail facilities, many are re-offending, and are returning having committed violent crime(s). Those who oppose such programs and/or legislations use these types of cases as examples of why these types of programs should not exist. In the area I am presently in, an inmate was arrested four (4) times in the last six weeks for beating his wife, as well as for an alleged rape. Now law enforcement is using this particular case as the benchmark for why such programs and/or legislations does not work.

We offer the following proposed proposition in response to the present failed concept of early release. We propose that the Government/CDCr focus on a much safer demographic for their early release programs. To eliminate the potential threat from the present early release programs, we offer the following criteria:

1. Above the age of 50.
2. No sexual related crimes.
3. Served at least 27 years in prison.
4. Are presently involved in a proven stable relationship, such as marriage, but not necessarily limited to marriage; long-term being the key factor.
5. Have strong family ties or community-based support.
6. He/she must be able to work to make a living if necessary.
7. Can provide examples of years of giving back to the communities.

[Note: With these criteria there will be no flood gate of Prisoners being released, so this argument will not apply to our proposition. It is safe to say this proposal would only impact less than 1%, if that. But their impact on the community and society as a whole will be 100%-fold. We even suggest you release the top two to three proven candidates who meet the above criteria and see what they do in their first year].

With the above criteria, the chance of re-offending becomes almost non-existent, and the community will receive a class of prisoners who have shown their ongoing commitment to building their respective communities and society as a whole. The Government can develop an independent panel consisting of three (3) people who will be responsible for reviewing those Prisoners who are seeking relief/release under these new standards, and the community should have an input with regard to who the prisoners are potentially being released. The panel decision must be based on the facts, such as the above criteria, and not on a narrative(s) provided by the CDCr.

We are presently distributing copies of this proposal throughout the Afrikan-Amerikan communities, encouraging them to become sponsors of this proposal, and if necessary, introduce it as a potential bill to be placed on the ballot for the People to vote on.

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