

From: Imaculence, Inc.
Sent: 4/14/2015 10:01:06 AM
To: Haley, Nikki
Cc:
Subject: Reentry was Easier 35 Years Ago.

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Inspiring the people with the problem to become their own Solution

Community Reentry was

Easier 35 Years Ago.

Really ?!?!

I frequently hear the excuse from ex-offenders that I am only successful because it was easier 35 years ago for people to reenter mainstream society who have a felony conviction. This sounds so logical and intelligent. It provides many ex-offenders with the rationalization they need so they can justify their tortured argument for not even trying.

Sure, it was a whole lot easier for me to reenter mainstream society than it will be for an ex-offender today. When I was released from prison with several felony convictions under my belt, employers always greeted me at my front door with a limousine to drive me to the interview. When I arrived, I was showered with champagne and caviar, and on several occasions, there was even a marching band playing a rendition of *Hail to the Chief*.

I was generally ushered into a large conference room where the entire staff would kneel and kiss my ring.

Arriving home with an escort that rivaled that of the President of the United States was a challenge because employers were generally stacked a few dozen deep waiting at my front door. All of those employers were begging me to work for them with offers that included such perks as sign-on bonuses, golf club memberships, luxury automobiles, tropical vacations, and a 1,500 square foot

private office complete with my very own café latté machine, foosball, tanning bed, personal masseuse and concierge. And, the economy was just *booming* after the Carter Administration. Mortgage Interest Rates were at 18.5%. In the spring of 1980, the prime rate reached twenty percent (20%). The 1979 - 1980 energy crisis plagued drivers for years with gasoline shortages, gas lines and gas stations running out of fuel.

The excuse that it was easier for me 35 years ago is just that - ***an excuse*** for you to quit. It has no real logic. It is now more than 35 years later and guess what? - *I am still a convicted felon*. I not only deal with the same circumstances as an ex-offender released today, but I have dealt with those circumstances for three and a half decades.

Having pointed out the irrationality of the excuse, and the fact that I am still a convicted felon, I was told, "Sure, but it is easier for you now because you have achieved success." If a person were thinking rationally, I would simply say, "*I rest my case.*" However, in some instances it appears that additional explanation is required.

I did not arrive where I am by a 35-year-long streak of luck. It was not by a single leap or bound. It was not magic. It was roughly twelve thousand, six hundred days - one day at a time, starting at zero. It was the continued achievement of one new *most significant event* superseding the previous *most significant event*.

People in general suffer from Adult Attention Deficit Disorder. We all want instant gratification. We want the position we dream of, the cars we dream of, the houses, clothing, jewelry, respect, etc., but we want it **NOW**. Many people are unwilling, and others are unequipped, to earn it the old fashioned way, *the only way*, which is first do the work, then get the reward. You want to be where I am, but are you willing to take the same, or a similar journey to get here?

I am disappointed with the media hype that the conflict in Iraq continued for so long, and that the United States maintains a presence there. It makes no difference whether you or I agree with why we are there. We are there, and we cannot change that. As General Colin Powell stated prior to the invasion, "*If you break it, you own it.*"

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It is a little unreasonable to think that the coalition forces are going to conquer a dictator, occupy an entire country, rebuild its infrastructure and implement a new government in what, a few years? The United States is going to be in Iraq in some form for the next 75 to 100 years, particularly with the expansion of ISIS. There is no instant gratification in that situation. Some might argue that the invasion was sold to the American public based partially on how quickly and easily it would transpire, which was a direct appeal to our want of instant gratification.

Some ex-offenders seem to form a demographic that has acted on their impulses for want of instant gratification. They want what I have achieved, but are unwilling to put forth the effort, face and conquer the challenges, make the changes and tolerate the sacrifices that I have made to achieve it. If they have to endure the pain that is an integral component of change, then it is easier to point the finger and say that my journey was a walk in the park, but their journey would be far, far more difficult if not impossible. *So, why bother even trying?*

As long as a person has that attitude and is willing to accept a life of mediocrity, or frequent returns to prison that are inherent thereof, they have the freedom to make that choice.

I was released from prison in August 1980. I suppose I could have said, "*It was easier for someone who was released in August 1945 - thirty-five years earlier.*" I certainly could have used that as my rationalization not to try, and my justification for sitting around sucking my thumb for the past 35 years. However, that would have provided zero toward achieving a healthy life of normalcy via legitimate agendas.

Whether a person is an ex-offender or not, achievement is not easy, *it's hard*. That has not changed in the last 35 years, or 350 years, and it will not change in the in next 35 years or any other time in the future. In some respects, I believe that the whole felony conviction label stigma is just a convenient excuse for many to quit, or not give a legitimate lifestyle an honest try. For some, if they didn't have the felony excuse, it would just be something else, a hangnail perhaps.

Success is a choice and the rewards are commensurate with the choices a person makes. There is a myriad of excuses not to try. Those who embrace the excuses have only a hand full of excuses at the end of the road. Those who embrace the challenges and refuse to negotiate the price of success arrive at rewarding destinations, but more importantly, the journey is phenomenal.

Look, I'm not criticizing, judging or lecturing. ***I get it!*** It is really hard to simply believe that a normal life is attainable after one or more felonies, or incarceration events. I thought the same thing. But, I focused on the roughly 30% that do succeed – not the 70% who recidivate.

A person is only defeated when they stop getting back up and trying. When a person quits, they lost. Alternatively, the winners realize that the game of life is simply a state of continued challenges and a ceaseless series of problem solving exercises.

The challenges facing an ex-offender today may be different than they were 25, 50, 75 or 100 years ago. And, the challenges will be different in the future. I had to exercise creativity, gain some additional education, find new friends, make sacrifices, endure pain, conquer challenges, solve problems, and embrace change. Most importantly, I had to very deliberately ***decide not to quit*** when the going got a little rough.

I chose to reenter "mainstream" society. In other words, it was me who had to change - *I changed*. I did not sit around complaining that mainstream society should change.

Too many ex-offenders want mainstream society to change so they do not have to make any adjustments. That is not going to happen - ever! Whatever your challenges are, as I have pointed out, organization and prioritization is key. Take the journey - one day at a time.

It is now 2015. I face the same challenges because I am still an ex-felon. I simply refuse to quit.

Think about this:

"We choose to go to the moon.

We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too.