

April 15, 2013

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Hello World!

I am well, however I admit that I am disappointed and disheartened. Why? I will explain. David, the 26-year old grandson of the woman I murdered wanted to do a reconciliation photo essay for his Master's thesis. It would involve me and the family. It was approved by the thesis chairman at his school and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's headquarters in Sacramento was helping David construct the proposal.

All parties believed this project would be positive and an additional vehicle toward healing.

Then came the answer from the administration here in Valley State Prison. I will allow you to read the emails yourself. They have been arranged by date and David's last name and email address have been blacked out for privacy.

As always, thanks for checking in on me.

Cordially,

Gregory Barnes Watson

PO Box 92 VSP B3-15-2U

Chowchilla CA 93610

Novel: A Thundering Wind

Journal: A Year in a Life Sentence

(Amazon.com)

**From:** David [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 28, 2013 3:45 PM  
**To:** Thornton, Terry@CDCR  
**Subject:** David [REDACTED] "Photography Essay"

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Hi Terry. Sorry for not getting this to you sooner. I have been bouncing between coasts. I did some research on restorative justice, and I would like to proceed with the topic. It is very interesting and I have been learning a lot about the benefits. Please review the modified proposal below. Thank you..

Dear Terry Thornton,

Michelle Hamilton from the Mule Creek state prison warden's office forwarded me to your department. I'm a photography student at the School of Visual Arts in New York City. My family and I are related to the Victim, Hope [REDACTED], who was murdered a little over 25 years ago. Below is a proposal your receptionist recommended to send you.

Serving Life will be the title of my photo essay. The essay will be an on going photography documentation of several inmates at the Valley State prison. One of the inmates I hope to document is Mr. Greg Watson.

Mr. Watson is responsible for murdering my Aunt Hope [REDACTED] over 25 years ago. My family and I are on the pursuit to forgive Watson for his crime. The California prison system is lacking the help to provide victims and their offender necessary ways of coping with the situation. We feel our own outreach to Mr. Watson, not only is helping my family, but is helping us to understand the nature of the crime. We have learned how to cope with our feelings by confronting Mr. Watson. We now understand that the crime was a result of a huge miscommunication involving Mr. Watson at the age of twenty five.

The essay will consist of environmental portrait photography inside the Valley State prison with your provisions. We have been in contact with Watson via U.S mail and phone about this project, and he has been more than happy to be photo documented. We also hope this will help him with his upcoming parole in the next years.

I would like to photograph, record video, and even interview inmates that could benefit from a restorative justice process. More importantly, it could help the victims. Our experience has been so profound, we have been able to slowly move on from the events involving my aunt Hope [REDACTED]. I feel restorative justice could do the same for so many others.

Ultimately, this is a powerful photography essay on forgiveness through the help of restorative justice. If you can assign me some great inmate candidates for this project, that would be helpful.

Through some research and Journalism students from New 21 UC Berkeley have been granted access throughout the prison to document the clash of the races due to overcrowding. They were also allowed bring photography and video gear into the prison. Also, CA Corrections has also been video documenting the overcrowding in the facility. Their video's can be found on You Tube. I spoke to the Mule Creek state prison warden and I've been forwarded to your department with my proposal. Mr. Watson has now been transferred to a lower security prison.

Below are some of the requests I hope you will consider.

I request to get access to as much of the prison as possible, or at least where Watson and other inmates spend their time incarcerated. I will also need to bring with me some digital camera equipment. Audio and Video recoding devices will also be helpful for my documentation.

I am requesting access to recreational areas, cafeteria, work areas, prison pods or cells, yards, chapel, library, and the exterior areas of the prison.

Could this be possible for next week beginning March 3<sup>rd</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> 2013?? I would like to begin with some architectural shots of the prison. If it would be possible, I would also like to photograph a portrait and or Video recording with audio of Mr. Watson.

As I hope to discuss this further, we can discuss all the details and provisions I must follow.

Sincerely, David [REDACTED]

On Thu, Feb 28, 2013 at 4:09 PM, Thornton, Terry@CDCR <[Terry.Thornton@cdcr.ca.gov](mailto:Terry.Thornton@cdcr.ca.gov)> wrote:

Hi David,

Thanks for submitting your revised proposal. We are reviewing it, however, it is doubtful we can get you in as early as next week. We really need more time. Do you have other dates that could work for you?

### Terry Thornton

Deputy Press Secretary

California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Office of Public and Employee Communications

p: [\(916\) 445-4950](tel:9164454950)

c: [\(916\) 716-5989](tel:9167165989)

[terry.thornton@cdcr.ca.gov](mailto:terry.thornton@cdcr.ca.gov)

**From:** David [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 28, 2013 4:14 PM  
**To:** Thornton, Terry@CDCR  
**Subject:** Re: David [REDACTED] "Photography Essay"

Hi Terry.

Early April could work too. How does that sound?

On Thu, Feb 28, 2013 at 8:39 PM, Thornton, Terry@CDCR <[Terry.Thornton@cdcr.ca.gov](mailto:Terry.Thornton@cdcr.ca.gov)> wrote:

We'll leave it up to the prison to schedule. But yes, this will give us more time to review and process your request.

On Wed, Mar 13, 2013 at 7:12 PM, David [REDACTED] wrote:  
Hi Terry!

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Any update with the prison reviewing my proposal? I hope you're well.

Thank you.

David [REDACTED]

**From:** David [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 14, 2013 7:11 PM  
**To:** Thornton, Terry@CDCR  
**Subject:** Re: David [REDACTED] "Photography Essay"

Hi Terry.

I just wanted to make sure you received my email.

**From:** "Thornton, Terry@CDCR" <Terry.Thornton@cdcr.ca.gov>  
**Date:** March 15, 2013, 8:16:44 PM EDT  
**To:** David [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: David [REDACTED] "Photography Essay"

Hi David,

I have been receiving your emails. Sorry for not responding sooner.

I heard back today from Valley State Prison. The prison is not able to accommodate your request. California law and departmental policies do allow for media access to state prisons, prisoners, staff and programs so that the public has a true and accurate depiction of how prisons, which are publicly funded, are operated. Your purpose for this project does not further the communications objectives of the department as described in state law because your request involves personal issues of healing from a past crime that involved your family member.

Please let me know if you have any questions about this.

Thank you.

**Terry Thornton**

Deputy Press Secretary  
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation  
Office of Public and Employee Communications  
p: (916) 445-4950  
c: (916) 716-5989  
[terry.thornton@cdcr.ca.gov](mailto:terry.thornton@cdcr.ca.gov)

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