

H A R L A N   R I C H A R D S

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How Much Time Is Enough?  
Prime Evil Released On Parole After  
Serving Twenty Years On a Life Sentence

Eugene DeClerk, known as "Prime Evil," was an assassin and leader of death squads during South Africa's apartheid era. He was responsible for torturing and killing dozens of black activists. It was reported in the news that he has been released on parole after serving 20 years on two life sentences because he had expressed "remorse" for his actions.

It seems that the South African people and their government are much more forgiving and enlightened than the state of Wisconsin. DeClerk didn't kill just one person, he killed dozens. He didn't act in self-defense or for some other justifiable reason, he murdered and tortured black men and women who dared to speak out and demand equality and an end to apartheid. DeClerk served less than one year for each person he reportedly killed. I guess murder in South Africa, like donuts in America, come cheaper by the dozen.

Can you imagine what would have happened if he was serving time in Wisconsin instead of South Africa? In the first place, his parole eligibility (if given the chance for parole, which would have been doubtful) would have been set decades into the future - so far that there would be no chance of him living long enough to reach parole eligibility. If he did by some miracle or act of God get released on parole, can you imagine the response of the American news media and victim rights advocates? We would see dozens of family members of victims paraded in front of TV cameras to tell about their suffering due to the loss of their loved one. And countless spiteful, hatefilled zealots would come out of the woodwork to decry the soft on crime polices that released a mass murderer after only 20 years.

But wait a minute - 20 years is a long time. Stop and think of where you were and what you were doing 20 years ago (some of you reading this blog may not have been born yet). Think of everything you have done and experienced over the last 20 years. Review your life one year at a time and think about all you have accomplished. You have lived a lifetime in those 20 years and have the memories - both good and bad - to prove it.



Now think about where you were and what you have done for the last 30 years. That's a long time. People work for 30 years and retire with a good pension. People raise families and live to see their children grow up and have children of their own. Imagine for a moment what your life would have been like if you had spent that 30 years in prison: not working for a living, not raising a family, no family get-togethers on holidays, no picnics, no celebrations, no chance to meet the love of your life, have a career, buy a house, take a vacation, or go swimming or shopping or plant a garden. Can you imagine the misery, the unhappiness, the loneliness you would have endured during those 30 years? How would you have survived it? What would keep you getting up every morning to face another round of misery? Faith in God? Hoping for a miracle that never comes? Or would you sink down into bitterness and despair the way so many Wisconsin prisoners have done?

Now I'd like you to imagine one more thing. Imagine that you are the person who has served those 30 years on a life sentence but you are not guilty of the murder for which you were convicted? How would you feel if the only reason you were convicted is because the jury believed the lies told by state witnesses? What if you made a mistake on your appeal and the court held that you procedurally defaulted on your appeal? In other words, the court agreed that you were never lawfully convicted of murder but because you didn't properly dot all the "i"s and cross all the "t"s you had to spend the rest of your life in prison? I have asked you to imagine what it would feel like because, if you are reading this blog, you most likely have not spent the last 30 years in prison for a crime for which you are not guilty and there is no way for you to know what it is like except to imagine it. But I know.

I have spent over 30 years in prison for stabbing a man in a fight who attacked me without provocation. I did not torture anyone, I did not kill dozens of black activists. I caused the death of a 235 pound man who sucker punched me, trapped me in a deadend hallway and was beating me mercilessly. Even when I pulled knife to defend myself he would not relent on his attack, making sure to keep a firm grip on me so I could not get away from him. He literally fought to the death rather than let me get away. It is so surreal that, even after 30 years, I can't believe this has happened to me. The worst part is that if I would have had a fair trial I would not have been convicted of murder. If I would have had a fair appeal, my conviction would have been reversed. I procedurally defaulted on my appeal and forever lost my chance for justice.



And finally, if not for the political agenda of Governor Scott Walker, I would have been released on parole years ago. I am still being denied release on parole because I have not "served sufficient time for punishment" and that my "release would pose an unreasonable risk to the public."

If "Prime Evil" can be released in 20 years, after torturing and killing dozens of people, do you really think releasing a guy who killed a much-larger assailant in a fight is a risk after 30 years? Or hasn't served sufficient time for punishment?

For all you skeptics and scoffers who think I'm lying, I'll give you a chance to expose me. I have the entire criminal case file from the murder conviction and appeal on a flash drive. I will send a flash drive to anyone who sends me a snail mail address and asks for a copy. You can see for yourself how an innocent man was convicted of murder based on an act of self defense.

Let's bring justice back to America and release all the prisoners like me who don't belong here.