

H A R L A N   R I C H A R D S

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Eminently Qualified

I was sitting around one day not too long ago thinking about what I was going to do when I am released on parole. If the parole agent doesn't let me live with my woman upon release, and instead makes me live in Madison (in the county where I was convicted) I was wondering what kind of job I could get.

As I thought about it, I realized I was eminently qualified - to do time in prison. The 33 years I've spent in prison have done nothing to prepare me for release as an old man (I turn 64 next month). I know everything there is to know about surviving and thriving in prison. I know how to avoid getting conduct reports, how to get a good prison job and to make my living conditions as comfortable as possible.

But when it comes to getting a job and earning a living as a senior citizen in the free world, what am I going to do? I have a crippled leg and can't stand or walk for long periods of time or do manual labor. The things I can do, such as paralegal work, clerical or office management, require computer literacy to perform. The DOC only allows me to use computers and software that are 15 years old. I won't have a clue about blue tooth, WI-FI or any of the current operating systems. How do I access the cloud? What can I do on a laptop? How do I prevent getting hacked when I am connected to the internet?

Yes, the last 33 years has ensured that I am eminently qualified for doing time in prison. But that's not the end of the story. I'm also intelligent, motivated, adaptable and creative. It doesn't matter how many hurdles are placed before me. I will succeed when I am released.

I am an artist, author and entrepreneur. I will make a living as a self-employed marketer selling myself and my unique skill set to the highest bidder. If I can operate 15 year old computers and software, I can learn state of the art systems. And once I do that on my own, I'll be able to seek employment if I so choose. But most likely, I'll be enjoying my self-employed status so much I won't want to become someone else's employee.