

Abolitionist Law Center



Cordial Greetings:

Jonas Caballero, I am writing to you in response to the letter that was sent to me dated February 15, 2022 regarding: DBI and the United Nations. I have been incarcerated for 34 years. I am 58 years old and live with an auto-immune disease known as sarcoidosis. I grew up in a working class North Philadelphian community, and I have two living sisters named Zenobia Johnson, and Wanda Bush. My father Henry Lee died in 1986 after a stroke and two heart attacks. My older brother Darryl Lee died in 2001 from causes unknown to me, and my mother Edna Lee died in 2010.

I have been incarcerated since April 4<sup>th</sup> 1988 and at that time in my life I was functionally illiterate and unable to read basic materials. I received a DBI sentence for my involvement in a murder that took place in 1987. Since being incarcerated I have engaged in a serious process of educating myself and using my education to help others. I have been the President of (2) different Lifer Organizations and the most recent being the LifeLine Association here at Coal Township. I helped to initiate an Inside/Outside program designed to educate (IHBs) incarcerated human beings with a college-based education. I am also the co-founder of a mentoring program called Dare-2-Care where we challenge our younger brothers to think in ways that reduce harm in our communities. I am the co-founder of CADBI and have been working with many outside organizations for many years of my incarceration.

Outside of the death of family this DBI sentence has been the most painful thing in my life. Living with a DBI sentence is traumatizing for many reasons. First and foremost the sentence suggests that human beings cannot change and should spend decades suffering inside of cages rather than receiving the sort of treatment needed to transform a person away from the criminal mindset. DBI sentences do not hold harm doers accountable for acts of harm; DBI sentences just hurt people who were probably deeply hurt before incarceration due to poverty and other forms of oppression caused my capitalism. The racial makeup of the prison system speaks to the racist nature of the system. Black people makeup 40% of the prison population not because we commit 40% of the crimes in the country. But you know all of these facts, so I would only be redundant repeating them to you. I have filed for commutation, and I am awaiting a Public Hearing in April. I do not need to explain the difficulties associated with being granted commutation in PA. No one should have to spend decades in prisons suffering

for acts of desperation and crimes associated with a lack of development. We should certainly develop humane ways of addressing acts of harm taking place in our communities. Prisons are designed to deliver pain to those people unfortunate enough to be trapped inside of them. I certainly believe that we should have treatment-oriented solutions to acts of harm taking place in our communities rather than just throwing people away inside of cages. Therefore laws should not exist that give people DBI sentences, especially understanding the racist nature of this legal system. Not to mention the class and gender biases, which exist in the PA judiciary.

In closing I hope that this letter helps with the struggle that you are involved in, and I wish you much success in the process. Thank you for allowing me to be included in this process, and for all the work that you are doing!

In solidarity

David Lee #AS3041

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Lee". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.