



The Investment of Investments *by Kenneth Foster Jr.*

Everyone has a calling. Sometimes people get cut down before they fulfill their mission: Malcolm X, John Lennon, Martin Luther King, Jr., Tupac, John F. Kennedy. At the same time, others achieve their goals in the face of brutal hurdles such as Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama and Gabby Gifford. For those that made it, surely, there was someone who encouraged that person or gave those help in some way. A support system which offered a foundation that a house could be built upon. I know about having that kind of foundation first hand. Without it, I would not be alive today.

For the last 21 years, I have been engaged in a struggle politically, mentally and spiritually. If you Google my name, you'll see stories, books, protests and poems outlining my fight to get off death row. Through this struggle, I was baptized in the fire of faith, compassion and support. I could only rise a new man, with new eyes, new hopes and new aspirations. My life was saved for a reason and I believe it was my calling to be a political activist to end the death penalty

The death penalty has been changed, eradicated, reestablished, debated and doubted in our time. It may continue to perpetually change. Effective activism is rooted in having knowledge of related past events, strategies for the present, and a vision for the future. The death penalty is a war without bloodshed and it's accepted that there will be victories and defeats. In this life and death war, I pledge to fight the good fight with my story as a resource.

Just as Michael Jordan said he could run the court and just as Bill Gates said he could build a computer I believe with a confidence as high as the empire state building that I can change the face of the anti-death penalty movement in America. I've worked, trained, read, written and experienced all facets of the death penalty. I was bred to do it. It's simply who I am. The campaign that led to my release from death row on August 30, 2007 was just a prelude to what can be done and accomplished. While I do have joy in my heart, it's not easy to deal with the hate and utter despair that comes with fighting the death penalty. It's probably why the task I desire has not been taken on by men who have left death row in this country.

Over the years, through multiple fields of study, I have formulated an ideology towards activism. What I seek is to find persons of substance that will give this vision room to bloom. I seek to work under an outgoing social entity that can propel my ideas and actions into motion. My vision includes:

- 1) Strategic outreach to men on the inside.
- 2) Mobilization in communities most affected by death penalty issues.
- 3) Social networking between artists, activist and athletes of like mind.
- 4) Support to struggling families of men on death row.
- 5) Bridges of reconciliation for victim's families.
- 6) Efforts to change legislation and much more.

If my campaign was successful enough to release me from death row, I know my new ideas will be successful, unprecedented and even open up more doors.

While the death penalty is my main issue, it's not the only one. From Occupy to empowering industries in Africa, these ideas rest within my mind and spirit. I envision new waves of color and inspiration for HIV/AIDS awareness through art, music and spoken word. Promoting AIDS awareness is close to my heart as I lost four family members to the AIDS epidemic including my mother. We need gang reforms that engage members in the streets to get submerged in the political process. Sure, all of the above has been done, but who will do it newer and better? Every generation must outdo the last.

Investing in me is to invest in other investments, because I'm invested in all of the above. I can't say that I've never been given a chance in life. I have. However, it took me to go through something as vicious as death row to submit myself to the greater will of the universe. Because many before me have found redemption, I know it is available for me too. And, I plan to make good on it. Hidden within these walls there are thousands of capable men and women. Some don't know what they possess yet, but for those who do, we all radiate an energy that cannot be denied. Be it ones that clawed their way out like Rubin "Hurricane" Carter or ones that still claw like Mumia Abu-Jamal, we cannot be denied. Some have moved on to other fields of life and some wait for one. And for those that are ready, like me, I would ask that you not deny me!

Have faith. And let's have a new day.
With profound respect,

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> Kenneth 'story features in a new Netflix documentary series called "I am a killer". The episode about Kenneth's case is entitled: "Killer in the eyes of the law"

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