

# Inmates

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Willie Best, a one-time District of Columbia drug dealer whose sentence was already slashed under past crack guideline changes, had an additional month taken off and is due out in 2016.

Prosecutors in 2008 said Best helped run a drug-dealing organization, shot at someone he believed had stolen from him and, after fleeing as warrants were served, was found in a stolen car with an assault rifle and other guns.

His lawyer described him as the product of a troubled, impoverished upbringing. And Best, in an interview from prison, called himself a loving father who bears no resemblance to his past self.

"It's been a long time coming. Eight years is a long time," he said. "I came in one way. I'm coming out another."

Guidelines set by the U.S. Sentencing Commission offer recommended minimum and maximum terms for federal crimes.

The independent commission voted last year to reduce ranges for drug offenses, then applied those changes to already-imprisoned convicts.

Since then, prisoners have sought relief from judges, who can reject those they consider to be public safety threats. About three-quarters of requests had been granted as of August.

The first wave is due around Nov. 1, and most of those getting early release are already in halfway houses or under home confinement. Others will be released to immigration authorities for eventual deportation.

Though the commission has repeated-

ly tinkered with the guidelines, including narrowing the disparity between crack and powder cocaine sentences that resulted in disproportionately long penalties for blacks defendants, the latest revision is its most sweeping because it covers all drug types.

The commission delayed implementation by a year to allow judges time to review requests and weed out inappropriate candidates and to arrange for defendants to be moved to halfway houses.

"Nothing to date comes close to what this shift is likely to produce over the next decade or so, starting this year," said Marc

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Mauer of the Sentencing Project, an advocacy group.

The action, along with an Obama administration clemency initiative and directives against mandatory minimum sentences, is part of a national effort to rethink punishments for a drug offender population that comprises roughly half the federal inmate count.

New bipartisan legislation in the Senate aimed at reducing spending on a prison system that sucks up nearly one-third of the



In this Sept. 16, 2015, photo, Kenneth Evans holds a composite of photographs of his son Tuan Evans, as he poses for a photograph at his home in Temple Hills, Md. Drug criminals once described by prosecutors as unrepentant repeat offenders are among those poised to benefit from new sentencing guidelines that are shrinking punishments for thousands of federal prisoners, according to an Associated Press review of court records. Tuan Evans is scheduled for early release from prison, the result of new sentencing guideline ranges that trim punishment lengths for convicted drug criminals.

Justice Department budget would give judges greater sentencing discretion and ease penalties for nonviolent criminals. House lawmakers are also expected to unveil criminal justice legislation this week.

Supporters call the commission's move, which would on average pare two years from sentences and in many cases just months, a modest dialing-back of punishments that were too harsh to begin with and wouldn't be imposed today.

Research shows "longer lengths of stay cost taxpayers a tremendous amount but don't add any additional crime-control value," said Adam Gelb, a Pew Charitable Trusts criminal justice expert.

But absent foolproof formulas, judges are grappling with balancing cost against public safety.

Though some released early will reoffend, most will not, statistically speaking, said Ohio State law professor Doug Berman.

# Cullors

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rattles around here," Gary-Smith said. "We have evidence of shootings in Portland that could rival cities with significantly more people of color."

The group discussed Black Lives Matter's disruptive tactics. Cullors said her chapters are encouraged to sit and talk with mayors,

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police union leaders and chiefs of police, but disrupting political events and holding public protests are useful actions as well.

The movement received backlash after activists interrupted a rally for presidential candidate Bernie Sanders. Cullors said Black Lives Matter lost some support from White, left-leaning progressives.

After the incident, in advance of his speech in Portland, Sanders met with activists in Portland. Hillary Clinton also had a well-publicized meeting with a different chapter. The movement has yet to endorse any presidential candidate. Cullors said there hasn't been a candidate willing to go

beyond courting and lip-service.

"The reality is that we do not have a candidate who is saying 'Black Lives Matter' and actually meaning

it," she said. "We don't have a candidate that is saying they are going to develop a Black agenda, that's going to look at poor Black communities. We don't have that candidate yet."

The backlash is part of the growing pains that often accompany a mass popular movement. The group talked about having more

influence because of the size of the movement, but noted they also dealt with more personal attacks.

Alyssa Pagan described being harassed on the Portland State University campus for her work, which has included efforts to disarm campus security officers at PSU.

Another big concern was the co-opting of the phrase "Black Lives Matter." Pagan said people regularly scream at her, "All Lives Matter." This appropriation can be seen in "White Lives Matter" and "Blue Lives Matter" variations as well as "Christian Lives Matter," which was used after the Umpqua Community College mass shooting.

During the same week of Cullors' visit, the Portland Police Association and the labor union that represents police in Portland, paid for a billboard that read "Having Enough Police Matters." The billboard is part of a campaign to pressure the city to hire more police officers, and is located

across the street from a downtown church with a "Black Lives Matter" banner.

Cullors addressed these concerns with a calm reserve. She said left-leaning politics has long been too White, too male and too middle class, effectively marginalizing Black concerns. She urged activists to work closely with their lawyers. She also made a plea to foundations to fund groups that are working on criminal justice reforms.

She acknowledged the Black Lives Matter movement and slogan is always in danger of being co-opted by outside influences. She asked the activists to focus on doing good, smart, engaged work that benefits all Black lives.

"Only in my dreams would I imagine we'd have a movement that would bring this many Black people together," she said. "The fact that this is happening with all of its contradictions is powerful and beautiful and must be celebrated."

# Court

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The appeals court said the attempt to blame the AP was akin to saying, "What you don't know can't hurt you. And, if you do know, don't shoot us. Shoot the messenger."

The lawsuit revived Tuesday was among legal actions that followed reports by the AP that revealed how city police infiltrated Muslim student groups, put informants in mosques and otherwise spied on Muslims as part of a broad effort to prevent terrorist attacks.

The reporting was honored with a Pulitzer Prize.

Plaintiff Farhaj Hassan said he was "extremely ecstatic" about the court's decision.

"I'm very happy we will get our day in court," said Hassan, a U.S. Army sergeant who served in Iraq. "Muslim-Americans were the innocent community in this matter, and lo and behold their civil rights should be

protected like everyone else."

The city called the intelligence gathering an appropriate and legal anti-terrorism tactic

The city argued that any injuries suffered by Muslims were 'self-imposed, based on subjective fears'

and said it never spied on people or businesses solely because they were Muslim.

Such a practice would be contrary to its values, a spokesman for the city's Law Department said.

"There's been no finding by the court that the NYPD did anything wrong or anything illegal," said Lawrence Byrne, the NYPD's deputy commissioner for legal matters. "It's simply a procedural opportunity for the

plaintiffs to see if they can prove their case."

A senior NYPD official testified in 2012 that the demographics unit at the heart of the

program never generated any leads or triggered a terrorism investigation, but former Mayor Michael Bloomberg, former police Commissioner

Raymond Kelly and other officials have said the surveillance helped the nation's largest police department identify and thwart terror plots.

Current police Commissioner William Bratton disbanded the unit last year and reassigned its detectives.

Officials said a review concluded the same information could be better collected through direct contact with community

group.

During oral arguments in January, the appellate panel questioned whether police had any specific leads to justify surveillance of Muslim businesses, mosques and student groups in New Jersey from 2002 to at least 2012.

The city argued that any injuries suffered by Muslims were "self-imposed, based on subjective fears" that may have led them to avoid gathering with other Muslims after the 9/11 attacks.

A city lawyer told the appeals court that the plaintiffs couldn't simply infer the intent of the program was discriminatory.

The Muslim plaintiffs — including a grade school principal and members of the Muslim Student Association at Rutgers University — wanted the lawsuit revived in part so they could learn more about the program.