Under Glenn Youngkin, Parole in Virginia Has Nearly Vanished

"What the parole of Jeffrey is certain Glenn would do: sitting on his ass and not willing to give it?"

ISABELA DIAZ · MAY 28, 2024

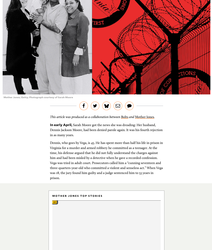


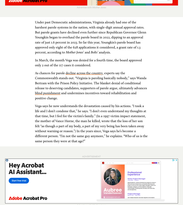
Photo illustration by Jamie Chung for Mother Jones; Photo courtesy of the Jeffrey family

MOTHER JONES TOP STORIES

This article is produced as a collaboration between Bolts and Mother Jones.

In early April, Scott Brown got the news she was dreading. Her husband, Dennis Jeffrey Brown, had been denied parole again. It was his fourth rejection in a decade.

Dennis, who goes by Tuga, is a 56-year-old man that's held for 38 years in Virginia for a murder and armed robbery he committed as a teenager. At the time, Jeffrey argued that he did not fully understand the charges against him and was coerced into a guilty plea. Since then, he has earned his GED, Tuga was tried in adult court, Prosecutors called him a "cunning, screwed-up and thus a person you are able to commit violence and murder on." When Tuga was 18, the jury found him guilty and a judge sentenced him to 50 years in prison.



Jeffrey's family in Virginia, including his wife, Scott Brown, and their son, Tuga

Tuga's 2018 parole application was denied by the parole board twelve years after he first became eligible. Since then, he has served his sentence, earned his GED, and completed a dozen other rehabilitation and positive change programs.

Tuga was the most outstanding inmate in his dormitory, Brown said. "I took a lot and I shelter-in-place," he says. "I don't even understand my daughter or my wife." Tuga's family, friends, and his wife's employer have written letters on the matter of his release. He stands in blind, wrote that the fact that he was left "to change a part of his body, a part of my very being has been taken away without warning or consent." In the years since, Tuga says he's become a different person. "I'm not the same guy anymore," he explains. "Who or is the same person they were at that age?"

Tuga's Dormitory, Wallens Ridge State Prison, Big Stone Gap, Virginia

Tuga's parole hearing was a pivotal moment in his life. Brown said, "I'm sitting in the room, I'm ready to go." But the parole board, Tuga said, kept asking questions about his crime and his family. Tuga's parole hearing lasted about an hour

shuts down after each denial from the parole board. "He picks me up and he tells me, 'Mom, I didn't have this chance when I first went to prison,'" she says. "'At least now I have a chance.'" But in Virginia, that chance is increasingly unlikely.

Sarah says each denial feels personal, like the support she and her family have given him is insufficient. "You're telling us, 'you're not good enough to get him home,'" she says.

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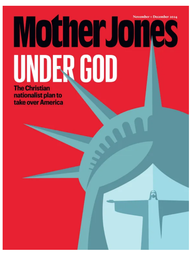

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