



Straight-A Guide Newsletter #2: Transparency

November 18, 2011

Dear Straight- A Guide Participants:

I write with wishes that each of you finds the strength necessary to climb through another holiday season in prison. Being separated from loved ones is never easy, but separations during holidays sometimes aggravates the pain. Empowering ourselves with deliberate strategies gives us one way to triumph over such complications. It is with that spirit of self-empowerment that I offer this second newsletter for participants to consider.

We all know that the Straight-A Guide begins with an attitude of 100 percent commitment. It follows with an aspiration, a clear understanding of what we're striving to achieve, incremental actions we must take, accountability logs we design to show our progress, and an awareness that leads to achievement. If we commit to such strategies, we obliterate obstacles, achieving more than others can comprehend as even being possible. When we do, we find much to appreciate, empowering ourselves along the journey.

As suggested in *Triumph!*, each of us can learn from the questionable survival strategy of the ostrich. It is said that when confronted with danger, an ostrich buries its head in the sand, mistakenly believing that if it blinds itself to danger, the danger will pass it by.

Those of us who abide by the Straight-A Guide cannot afford to bury our heads in the sand. We know the danger we're facing. Because of our commitment to awareness, we know that unemployment rates across America are at historical highs. Recidivism rates make it more likely than not that criminal convictions render us vulnerable to further complications with the law. We empower ourselves by looking at these dangers confronting us, considering them closely.

We know that we're returning to a world where information is more easily accessible than ever. Cross referencing a name with the words crime or criminal conviction into any search engine provides prospective employers, partners, lenders, landlords, or anyone else with the government's narrative of a criminal history. We would not empower ourselves by ignoring that fact. We empower ourselves by anticipating such realities and taking measures to triumph over them with a response.

Building a personal profile with daily or regular entries on the Straight-A-Guide.com website offers one strategy each of us can use in response. Rather than allowing the prosecutor's version of events to control the narrative of a man's life, the individual can offer full transparency, describing the circumstances that led to his troubles with the law. More importantly, he can show readers the deliberate steps he has taken to grow from bad experiences.

Any man can endure hardship because of bad decisions. The ways in which a man responds to that hardship, however, distinguishes his character. Through regular entries on a personal profile at Straight-A-Guide.com, a man empowers himself through his work to contribute to the narrative of his life.

In Earning Freedom and the other books that make up the literature associated with the Straight-A Guide program, the author wrote about how his 100 percent commitment to transparency empowered him to triumph over a lengthy prison term. Despite his serving a quarter century for the bad decisions of his youth, he created opportunities to advance his education, to build a quasi career, to open a strong support network, to earn resources that would lead to his success, and to live meaningfully regardless of external forces. He attributed his adjustment to a 100 percent commitment to the Straight-A Guide, emphasizing the importance of transparency. Such a strategy empowered him because it gave those who inquired about his life an opportunity to judge him for the decisions he made in response to struggle rather than the decisions that introduced struggle into his life.

We urge you to make the commitment to transparency today. Begin building your personal profile on the Straight-A Guide.com website by documenting your journey. Tap into the network we're creating that profiles men who respond to struggle with deliberate adjustment strategies; don't be an inmate who foolishly allows the government to control the narrative of his life.

With that said, we at the Straight-A Guide send our wishes for your strength through the holiday season and the New Year.

Sincerely,

Justin Paperny
Executive Director
Michael G. Santos Foundation