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Bruce Bryant, Released After 30 Years in Prison With the Help of the Perlmutter Center for Legal Justice at Cardozo Law, Visits and Thanks Cardozo Students



In an emotional visit to the Cardozo Law campus on April 26, two days after his release from prison, Bruce Bryant thanked students from The Perlmutter Forensic Science Freedom Field Clinic who helped him win clemency.

A round of applause echoed through the hallway as he arrived with Josh Dubin, the executive director of The Perlmutter Center for Legal Justice at Cardozo Law.

Bryant, whose sentence was commuted by Gov. Kathy Hochul in December 2022, praised the students for their advocacy and spoke at length about his struggle to

survive during the 30 years he was incarcerated for the murder of 11-year-old Travis Lilley, a crime he says he did not commit.

Seeing “excessive violence every day,” he retreated to the prison library, where he spent his time studying law and reading.

Nelson Mandela’s “Long Walk to Freedom” “changed my life,” he said. “That’s when I decided I wasn’t going to serve time, I was gonna have time serve me. Every bit of my time I began to utilize in the best way possible.”

Bryant, who was sentenced to 37.5 years to life in prison when he was 23, earned his associate’s and bachelor’s degrees and participated in the Voices From Within initiative while he was incarcerated.

Since June 2022, The Perlmutter Center for Legal Justice has worked to obtain clemency for Bryant, its first client.

Professor Steve Zeidman, director of the Criminal Defense Clinic at CUNY School of Law, and Elizabeth Felber of The Legal Aid Society also worked on Bryant’s case.

“I have no doubt that Bruce will rejoin society and continue to make positive contributions in criminal justice reform—just as he has while incarcerated,” Dubin said.

Derrick Hamilton, deputy director of the Perlmutter Center and a formerly incarcerated person who won his own freedom and exoneration, said he was proud of the work the clinic has done.

“There is no limit to the clinic’s ability to be a force in the criminal justice reform movement,” he said. “It’s important to provide second chances to men and women who have spent decades in prison on crimes they did not commit. Or for those who have served draconian long sentences and are no longer a threat to public safety.”

The Perlmutter Center for Legal Justice, along with others involved in Bryant’s case, will now focus on his exoneration.

