

December 27, 2021

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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

***Outpouring of Faith and Community Leaders, 234 Signatories, Across NYS Urge
Governor Hochul in a Letter to Grant Clemency to Legal Aid Society Client
Reginald Randolph and Others***

(NEW YORK, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society** announced that an outpouring of 234 faith and community leaders across New York State recently sent a [letter](#) to Governor Kathy Hochul urging that she grant clemency for Reginald “Reggie” Randolph, a client of The Legal Aid Society who is currently serving a state prison sentence of 2-4 years for [stealing NyQuil from Duane Reade](#), and a much broader granting of clemencies to other deserving New Yorkers.

Mr. Randolph is 58, disabled, and was incarcerated at Rikers Island for over 850 days before being transferred to state prison on the aforementioned charge, which did not involve an act of violence, brandishing a weapon, or making threats. Mr. Randolph is fully blind in one eye and nearly blind in the other due to cataract and glaucoma conditions. He needs vision-saving surgery, and he attended pre-operation ophthalmology appointments at a local New York City hospital while detained at Rikers Island.

Mr. Randolph is also extremely medically vulnerable, with diagnoses of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes, asthma, and a history of tuberculosis — all of which, according to medical experts, makes him highly susceptible to serious illness or death. He is also at the highest risk of COVID-19 related complications should he be so unfortunate to contract the virus.

He had used a walking device since March 2021 following a fall in the shower due to his failing vision, however, that device was reportedly taken from him after his transfer to state prison. Mr. Randolph struggles with serious mental illness which has exacerbated his daily trauma, anxiety and feelings of worthlessness while in jail.

Lastly, Mr. Randolph has already been approved by local supportive housing and community treatment programs which are ready to take him the moment he is released.

The letter states:

“We ask that you attend to our immediate request and commute Reginald Randolph’s sentence which would, we hope, mark your intention to address the paucity of granted clemencies by granting many more including this one. New York’s criminal legal system has degraded Reginald Randolph and reduced him to sub-human existence

for a minor offense through his excessive and cruel punishment. We strongly urge you to use the powers of the Governor's office that you have been given to show mercy to Mr. Randolph at this crucial juncture in his life."

Some notable signatories include Bishop Dr. Ray Rivera of the Latino Pastoral Action Center C.H.C.C.M. Council, Bronx, The Reverend Peter Cook of The New York State Council of Churches, New York State Senator Alessandra Biaggi, Marc Greenberg, Executive Director of Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing, Eric Waters of the Coming Home Leadership Team, Joanne Page, President/CEO of the Fortune Society, Rabbi Hilly Haber of the Central Synagogue, The Reverend Dr. Liz Theoharis, Director, Kairos Center for Religions, Rights & Social Justice, CoChair, Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, Imam Mika'il DeVeaux, Acting Imam, Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood, Inc., Harlem and The Reverend Dr. Nigil Pearce, Senior Pastor, Grace Congregational Church of Harlem.

Jeffrey Berman, Legal Aid Society mental health attorney and counsel for Mr. Randolph, stated: "The outpouring of support for Mr. Randolph by faith and community leaders throughout New York is extraordinarily uplifting. Mr. Randolph has suffered immeasurably at Rikers Island and now in state prison. Clearly our criminal legal system is broken with such harmful treatment of a fellow human being who is almost fully blind, lives with mental illness and jailed for stealing cough medicine. The almost 900 days Reggie has lived in jail cells for this charge has diminished his sense of self-esteem and caused him to see himself as unworthy of anything. With that said, I visited Reggie in state prison last week. He cried when he saw me, stating it was the first time anyone had ever visited him in prison; and he is deeply touched by the outpouring of kindness and support on his behalf. Reggie is doing his best to keep a positive outlook and is praying that he will be released soon to community supportive housing and programming that are eager to embrace him now."

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 140 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. www.legalaidnyc.org