

Paul Heer Helps Pro Bono Client Gain Freedom From a Life Sentence Through Landmark Commutation from Governor Jay Inslee

Pro Bono
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Foster Garvey Newsroom

Contact
Paul Heer

[Paul Heer](#), an attorney in the firm’s Investment Management group, helped a pro bono client (“E.Y.”), gain freedom from a life sentence. On December 11, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee adopted the unanimous recommendation of the Clemency and Pardons Board and commuted the life sentence of our client, a historic exercise of the Governor’s executive clemency power.

E.Y. was 10-years-old when he was indoctrinated into an L.A. gang as a “junior mascot.” He was 13-years-old the first time he was shot in a gang-related shooting. In 1992, while still a teenager, E.Y. lent his associates his car, which was then used in the murder of two men during an internal gang conflict. Our client was not present during the shootings, but after an initial deadlocked jury, a second jury determined that his awareness and aid were enough to convict him.

Since the age of 18, E.Y. has served 29 years. During his incarceration, he demonstrated extraordinary maturation, consistent with prevailing U.S. Supreme Court jurisprudence recognizing developments in brain science and a young offender’s capacity for reform.

Our client’s remorse and accountability fueled extraordinary educational achievements, which he used to lift up others. He is credited as being the catalyst for the nationally recognized University Beyond Bars, Washington’s first prison college program. He was also an instructor and master certified trainer for Roots of Success, a national sustainability program, where the Executive Director described him as “the most serious, mature and effective instructor” among more than 2,000 instructors across the nation.

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After three years of intensive work and advocacy, a robust community of support formed around E.Y.'s extraordinary transformation. Paul's novel approach through the clemency process has been recognized as instrumental in achieving this historic outcome. Paul's work product, process and approach have been adopted by local organizations as a standard and, as a result, more than 100 pro bono attorneys in Washington have been provided with Paul's materials to guide their pro bono representation.

E.Y. is a powerful symbol of hope, of what can be achieved amidst even the most difficult life circumstances. He looks forward to living a lawful and productive life with his family. Soon after his release, he will continue his transformative work through full-time employment with the Freedom Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting incarcerated individuals and those recently released with restorative programming.

Foster Garvey is proud to have represented clients who have received pardons and commutations through our pro bono efforts, who then have gone on to live lawful and productive lives in our communities. We look forward to continuing our longstanding support of the [Seattle Clemency Project](#), which has now matched over 152 pro bono attorneys with reformed clients.

Paul Heer, Associate in Foster Garvey's Investment Management group, serves as a Board Member and President-elect of the Seattle Clemency Project. He also currently serves as Co-Chair of Foster Garvey's Opportunity and Progress Council, the firm's diversity, equity and inclusion initiative.