TRENDING

When this Student Couldn't Pay for Tuition, these Prison Inmates Raised $32K to Help Him

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For the past 8 years, students from the Palma School in Salinas, California participate in a book club at a very unusual location, i.e. the Soledad State Prison.

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The founders of the book club named Exercises in Empathy, Mia Mirassou and Jim Micheletti said that students go into the prison afraid; however, they leave with a new perception about the inmates.

Micheletti noted that they go inside thinking 'monster' and come out thinking 'a man, a human being'. The students realize these people did bad stuff; however, there are no throwaway people there.

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Book Club in Prison: Where Discussions Go Beyond Protagonists & Plots

One former inmate, Jason Bryant, who was part of the book club said that it was amazing to have these young people come here with them and see them for what they truly are, i.e. people.

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At the age of 20, Bryant was sentenced to 26 years to life in prison due to involvement in a rubbery in 1999 that resulted in a death from shooting.

In prison, Bryant looked for ways to be of service.

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He was part of the book club when he read Miracle on the River Kwai, a book by Ernest Gordon. He writes about prisoners of war who created a culture of sacrifice and referred to it as *mucking* for each other.

Inspired by the book, together with his co-defendant Ted Gray, they decided to *muck* for a young person. They made a plan to collect money from other prisoners and help him get a scholarship funding.

The base payment for prisoners in California is 8 cents per hour. People with industry job make $1 per an hour or $100 per month. Still, this didn't stop the 800 prisoners from raising $32K for the young man in a period of 3 years.

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They made the money by sweeping floors, making furniture, and clerking.

All Inmates Show Amazing Kindness: Helping a Young Man Get Education

Bryant explains that prisoners were drawn to this idea of helping this young man and were giving up a part of their monthly pay for him.

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Micheletti and Mirassou knew exactly who should get the scholarship.

Prior to his sophomore year at Palma, the father of Sy Green underwent a heart transplant.

His mom had an accident and lost her vision. Both of his parents lost their jobs. Green said how it was a major financial burden, considering the numerous medical bills.

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Still, he was shocked when he was told that prisoners whom he had never met raised money for his tuition for a private school. He says he was mind-blown and full of gratitude.

When he was 19, he enrolled college and graduated from Palma School. His plans are to pay their good deed forward. He appreciates their amazing effort a lot and says he'll honour it and carry the legacy on.

Where Is Bryant Today?

The governor of California, Gavin Newsom, granted him with clemency and a second chance for a normal life after 20 years inside a prison cell. His plans were using his freedom and mentoring students like Green.

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Today, he's the director of CROP's Restorative Programs; this non-profit works to lower rates of recidivism through training, stable housing, and career development.

Bryant explained that he doesn't know about redemption, but he says that prisoners like him who've transformed their lives have a goal to add value in any way they can.

Sources:

GOOD NEWS NETWORK

CBS NEWS

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