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Cancel Culture

Scott Ritter

38–48 minutes

I think it goes without saying that the United States is undergoing a crisis of democracy. As a nation, we are deeply divided along partisan political lines, so much so that what once passed for legitimate political debate and discourse has been diminished to the point that any dissent is characterized as a threat against democracy. Once, fact-based debates took place to ascertain the truth of a matter. Now, opposing parties embrace their own unique "fact sets" which are derived more from political belief than reality, and anyone holding a different opinion is derided and condemned as a practitioner of "disinformation."

It truly is a sad state of affairs.

I have, for more than 20 years running, been involved in trying,

within the span of my competency, to inject fact-based reason into the public discourse about the critical issues of our time. From Iraqi weapons of mass destruction to the Iranian nuclear program, from arms control to relations between the US and Russia, I have always sought to be on the right side of history, meaning that when my record is examined years later, my positions will be both morally and factually correct.

As things stand, I am comfortable with the knowledge that history is, and will continue to be, treating me kindly.

Scott Ritter will discuss this article and answer audience questions Friday night on Ask the Inspector.

This being said, the journey on the path of historical righteousness is not an easy one, especially if one has embraced a fact-based narrative which is fundamentally at odds with the mainstream position.

When I accurately noted that the case for war against Iraq was fraudulent, and that the weapons of mass destruction claimed to be in Iraqi possession had long ago been destroyed and accounted for by the UN weapons inspections teams that I helped lead, I was chastised as an apologist for Saddam Hussein, and accused of being on the Iraqi payroll.

When I challenged the assertion that Iran was pursuing a nuclear weapons program, arguing instead that their nuclear infrastructure was in fact intended to be used solely for the permitted purposes pertaining to power generation and medical research, I was accused of being antisemitic (since my views clashed with those of Israel), and on the payroll of Iran.

When I criticized US arms control policy, especially the withdrawal of the US from foundational arms control treaties

involving missile defense and intermediate-range missiles, I was accused of being a paid Russian agent and as such disloyal to my own country.

This same charge of somehow being under the control of Russia continues today as I criticize the US policy toward Russia, and in particular the US-driven provocations that led to the current conflict in Ukraine.

None of these accusations were or are true, and if left to their own devices, the American public has shown a proclivity to gravitate toward fact-based truth, which meant that at the end of the day my voice would normally be given a fair hearing.

This, of course, is the last thing that those in power want. Since they are unable to prevail in a battle of ideas, the establishment instead has embraced the politics of personal destruction, seeking to discredit me as a person, rather than challenge me on the facts.

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The FBI carried out a concerted effort to prevent me from making a documentary movie, *In Shifting Sands*, about the flawed case for war being promulgated by the US government. They threatened me with arrest, they engaged in acts of physical intimidation, and—when this didn't work—they played a role in manufacturing a case designed to destroy my personal character in the eyes of the general public.

The 2001 incidents, which I will discuss later, were a warning shot across the bow for me to begin towing the line. When I refused to do so, releasing my documentary film and actively speaking out against the US case for war with Iraq, the FBI then arranged to have the information about the 2001 incidents leaked to the press in an effort to destroy my credibility on the

eve of a February 2003 trip I was planning to take to Iraq, together with a high-profile international delegation, that was designed to prevent a war between the US and the government of Saddam Hussein.

It nearly worked.

My trip was cancelled.

War was not averted.

Once a regular on mainstream television, I was deemed “radioactive” by the media establishment, and blacklisted.

Once a regular on the speaking circuit, I was deemed to be “toxic,” and banned from university campuses.

Peace groups that once sought me out for the credibility I brought to the cause went silent.

I don’t need to name names—those involved know fully well who they are, what they did, and why they did it.

It was a long, difficult struggle to survive economically during these times, given the major role played by my media appearances and speaking engagements in generating income. You see, it is not enough to silence someone—you must destroy them, and the establishment did everything in their power to accomplish both.

They failed.

Then came 2009.

I was arrested, charged with sex offenses involving a minor, found guilty at trial, and incarcerated for a period of just under three years.

I was paroled in 2014 and released from parole in 2017.

Despite the fact that I pled innocent at trial, and maintained my

innocence ever since, the media focuses on the conviction, and my status as a convicted sex offender. Wikipedia and Google are not kind in this regard.

It has been a struggle recovering from what I maintain is a horrible miscarriage of justice.

Fortunately, there are enough people in the United States and around the world who recognize that not all is well in the nation of Denmark when it comes to the charges leveled against me, and I have been able to rebuild a career based upon writing and speaking truth to power.

But it is not easy.

I recently was approached by a mainstream peace action organization from a neighboring state to do a series of talks on Ukraine and US-Russian relations. These events would also serve as an opportunity to sell my most recent books—*Scorpion King*, released in 2020 about America's addiction to nuclear weapons, and *Disarmament in the Time of Perestroika*, released in 2022 and which covers my time as a weapons inspector in the former Soviet Union implementing the INF treaty.

Two venues were offered on consecutive days. The first event, scheduled for November 18, advertised that they had to find a new venue due to "high demand"—presumably, a lot of people wanted to hear me speak.

Based upon this offer, I purchased books in quantities sufficient to meet the expected demand, to the tune of several thousands of dollars. Now, if the event proved to be a success, I would be able to sell these books and turn a modest profit—not a bad thing since, as a writer, selling books is a critical source of income.

Then earlier this week I received the following email from the organizer of the November 18 event:

> Dear Mr. Ritter:
>
> I regret to have to write to say that knowledge of your conviction and jailing for a sex offense involving a police office posing as a child has led me and other organizers of your Nov. 18 speaking engagement in [xxxxx] to feel that we must withdraw our invitation and cancel the event.
>
> We are sorry that this needs to be so.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> [xxxxx]

I immediately fired off a response:

> Dear [xxxxx],
>
> This is indeed unfortunate, especially since I have procured books sufficient to the planned event, at significant cost to myself.
>
> I'm highly disappointed that you failed to carry out sufficient due diligence prior to extending the invitation.
>
> I'm even more disappointed that you failed to communicate with me prior to making your decision.
>
> Had you done so, you might have learned that I pled innocent to the charges because I was, and am, innocent of the charges, and that I continue to appeal what was an unjust conviction in an effort to get it overturned.
>
> You may have arrived at the same decision, but at least you would have done so in a manner which showed fidelity to the very concepts of truth and integrity organizations such as yours purports to adhere to.

> Needless to say, I am disappointed in your lack of courage in confronting the important issues of the day. I was prosecuted in an effort to silence me. Thanks to you, for the citizens of [xxxxx], the prosecution has won. The cause of truth-based discussion, a cornerstone of free speech, has lost.
>
> Shame on you.
>
> Scott Ritter

Anyone who has followed my work in recent years knows that I am extremely reticent about discussing my conviction. There is an old saying, “When you’re explaining, you’re losing,” and when it comes to my conviction, if I have to explain anything it is probably because the audience is already predisposed to believe the official narrative, and as such I am simply wasting my time.

I also continue to appeal my conviction and am a strong believer that a legal argument should be made before a court of law, and not the court of public opinion.

I recently discussed the conviction during a podcast, *Ask the Inspector*, hosted by my good friend, Jeff Norman. When asked about the case, I oftentimes simply refer the interested party to “Episode 11, 25:24” as if quoting scripture.

Because, in a way, the answer I provided 25 minutes and 24 seconds into Episode 11 of the *Ask the Inspector* podcast is the Gospel according to Scott when it comes to this issue.

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However, in typical Marine fashion, the Gospel according to Scott is sprinkled with more than a little strong language which some might find offensive. Likewise, as in the case of any Gnostic Gospel (i.e., anything that deviates from the mainstream

narrative), Episode 11, 25:24 may not be accessible to a mainstream audience unfamiliar with the work.

One day, when all is said and done, I will more than likely put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard) and write the story surrounding my convictions. I would prefer to do this after having secured a court victory overturning the conviction. Regardless of the outcome of my appeal (which is ongoing), my experiences with the US system of justice are eye-opening, and as such should be told—especially if there is a miscarriage of justice and the conviction remains.

Now is not the time for such a work.

However, out of respect for those who either are unfamiliar with the Gospel according to Scott, or perhaps find the argument made therein incomplete and unconvincing, I have decided to offer an expanded version in the hopes that those who seek to engage me as a speaker or writer in the future might find it of use in countering the existing public narrative about my conviction.

Court records will show that there was an online incident that occurred between myself and a police officer posing as an adult female in an adults-only chat room on February 9, 2009.

The specifics of this incident are, frankly speaking, nobody's business—no crime was committed. If you feel you need to satisfy your prurient desires in the personal affairs of others, do so on your own time.

Once the "female" identified himself as a police officer, I informed him that no crime had been committed. Regardless, I was informed by the officer that he would be filing charges in approximately one weeks' time.

I prudently sought legal advice.

One of the first things I told my lawyer was that I was innocent of any wrongdoing, and that rather than wait for the police to come to my house and seize my computer, I was willing to turn my computer over to the police department in question for forensic examination.

Lawyers being lawyers, I was told this was an imprudent step, because anything the police found on my computer could be used against me during any legal proceedings. I, however, insisted that there was nothing on my computer that could place me in legal jeopardy, and that we should seek to nip this incident in the bud.

My lawyer insisted that we first have my computer examined by outside experts to make sure we weren't handing the prosecution any evidence that could be used against me. At great expense (i.e., in excess of $10,000), my lawyer hired two former National Security Agency technicians who made copies of my hard drive and subjected it to a thorough evaluation using the most advanced computer forensic tools.

They came back with a report that indicated there was no evidence of any criminal wrongdoing on my computer.

A week came and went, without any summons from the police in Pennsylvania. Two weeks. A month. Two months. Finally, my lawyer took it upon himself to reach out to the Pennsylvania District Attorney and impress upon him the need to bring this matter to a close.

The Assistant District Attorney indicated that there was no case before him that dealt with an incident as described by my lawyer. My lawyer then provided the Assistant District Attorney with my name. Nothing.

Court records show that the day after my lawyer met with the Assistant District Attorney, the DA's office sent a request to the Pennsylvania police department to have the "Ritter file" sent to them. They began their prosecution the moment they received the file.

"Let sleeping dogs lie" obviously isn't a concept taught in law school.

There also can be no doubt as to the cause-effect relationship between learning my name, and the decision to go forward with a prosecution.

At first, the prosecution tried the age-old tactic of intimidation, filing a charging sheet listing a dozen or so criminal violations, which if I was found guilty could lead to a prison sentence of 40 years.

Next, they offered to drop all the charges but one, which they expected me to plead guilty to. According to my lawyer, I would avoid prison and receive a parole-only sentence.

I told my lawyer that I had committed no crime, and as such I would never plead guilty to any charge.

We were going to trial.

When I refused to accept the plea agreement, the prosecution then executed their "Plan B."

In 2001 I had two separate encounters with New York police. After an investigation, the charges were dismissed, and the records of the case were sealed in accordance with applicable New York law.

To emphasize—I was never tried or convicted of any crime, and by dismissing the case and sealing the record, the New York court made the charges a legal nullity.

There the matter should have rested.

The arresting officer of the New York police department in question retired prior to the case against me being dismissed. He went on to work security at a local college. In December 2002, in the leadup to the Iraq War, I was invited by this college to give a presentation on Iraq. The retired police officer oversaw the security detail. He was visibly angry at my presence, and my presentation, his face literally turning red as I spoke.

In February 2003, a local newspaper published a story about my 2001 encounters, and the fact that the case had been dismissed and the file sealed. When confronted by my lawyer as to how information about a sealed record could be obtained by a reporter, the Chief of Police said that while no one in his department would violate their legal obligations not to discuss matters pertaining to a sealed record, the department had no control over police officers who had retired.

The cop working the security beat at the college I spoke at was the only officer to have retired in that time.

We had our leak.

As an aside, the FBI was pressured by the Attorney General of the United States to open an investigation of the 2001 incidents. They appealed to the New York Supreme Court, *ex parte* (i.e., done in secret, without the knowledge of the other party involved) to have the record unsealed (this unsealing was in violation of New York law, but because nothing came of it, it went unchallenged.) After a thorough review, the FBI declined to press charges, noting that there was no evidence of a crime having been committed.

This wasn’t good enough for the Pennsylvania police and prosecution. They reached out to the retired New York cop and

crafted their own *ex parte* submission to a New York judge to have the 2001 sealed record unsealed.

In making their case to a New York judge about the need to gain access to the sealed record, the Pennsylvania prosecutor argued that the failure to obtain the sealed record would "severely handicap the Commonwealth's case by allowing the defense to present a defense that the Commonwealth could not rebut or refute."

One must remember that the sealed records dated back to 2001 and involved incidents for which I was never put on trial for. The charges had been dismissed, made a legal nullity, as if the incident had never happened.

And now the Pennsylvania prosecutor was making the case that without access to these records from 2001, he would be unable to prosecute a matter pertaining to a separate incident that had transpired eight years later.

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In short, recognizing that he would be unable to successfully prosecute me for the 2009 incident (because no crime had occurred), the prosecutor was seeking evidence from a sealed record that would enable him to manufacture a "crime" that would be prosecutable in a Pennsylvania court.

The New York court unsealed the file, and the prosecution sought to enter it in as evidence citing rules permitting evidence of "prior bad acts" to be admitted in trial—in effect, I was going to be convicted on the basis of evidence of allegations from incidents that took place eight years prior, had nothing to do with what transpired in Pennsylvania, and the underlying charges derived from the evidence had been dismissed, and the evidence sealed.

My legal team challenged this, rightfully noting that the New York laws governing the sealing of records did not allow the files in question to be unsealed, let alone released to the Pennsylvania authorities.

At this juncture, my legal team was confronted with a quandary. After I reviewed the materials that had been turned over to Pennsylvania, I informed my lawyers that the record had been cherry-picked, with only that material which suggested a crime had been committed turned over, while all the exculpatory evidence (and keep in mind, the case had been dismissed for a reason!) excluded.

I provided my lawyers with examples of the exculpatory evidence which, if we presented at trial, would have severely undermined the prosecution's case, making the cherry-picked unsealed records useless.

Our problem was this—if we didn't challenge the admissibility of the evidence, and allowed it in, we would ruin any basis of appeal with no certainty of outcome (i.e., jury trials are a fickle thing.)

We had a rock-solid case for the cherry-picked evidence to be excluded at trial (i.e., the unlawful unsealing), and as such we all agreed that we should pursue that path, focusing on fighting the 2009 charges, as opposed to relitigating the 2001 matter.

Once we committed down this path, we were prohibited from raising any aspect of the 2001 matter in my defense, since to do so would in effect break the code of silence surrounding the sealing statute.

The Pennsylvania judge ruled against us, declaring that she "would not usurp the power and authority of a New York Court with respect to the interpretation of a New York statute." In short,

even though we had argued that the order unsealing the 2001 records violated New York law, the Pennsylvania court left interpretation of a New York law up to the New York court system.

“As such,” the Pennsylvania judge ruled, “we will not overturn a New York Court’s decision with respect to its own law…to the extent the defendant argues that the…request for unsealing the records were improperly granted, he must challenge the propriety of the New York Court’s decision in the New York Court system. We will give full faith and credit to the Albany County Court’s June 29, 2010 order.”

Now my legal team was faced with the prospects of waging two simultaneous legal battles—the Pennsylvania trial, and a New York appeal of the decision unsealing the 2001 records. Having committed to the New York appeal, we were powerless to challenge the cherry-picked documents the prosecution sought to use at trial.

The malfeasance of the Pennsylvania prosecutor was put on further display when, on the eve of the trial, he presented the judge with a letter from the retired New York cop (yes, the same one who had served as the source of the information leaked to the media in 2003) where the cop claimed to have just remembered a “confession” he alleged I had made to him back in 2001.

My case is still under appeal, so I am prohibited from discussing any exculpatory evidence, if it existed, that could have been used to refute the retired cops’ manufactured “memory.”

Common sense would dictate, however, if such a confession had been made, the 2001 incidents would not have been dismissed, but rather fully prosecuted in accordance with the

law. Instead, the matter was dismissed, simply because no crime had been committed, and as such no confession was ever offered.

The judge allowed the retired cop's "memory" to be introduced at trial.

Because of the New York appeal, which was ongoing during the trial, we could not offer any evidence, if in fact it existed, to refute the retired cop's testimony. I, of course, denied the cop's "memory" when I testified in my defense. But there is a difference between competing testimony ("he said-he said") and document-based evidence, if it existed.

While the judge was fine with introducing nine-year-old "memories" at trial, she was not inclined to allow any evidence which could be used to show that no crime had been committed in 2009. I was charged with an online offense—a computer-based crime. Yet at no time did the prosecution seek to take control of my computer and subject it to any forensic examination.

My legal team had done just that. Beyond the initial forensic examination conducted by the former NSA technicians, we took on the services of a former federal agent who had helped set up the system used to prosecute perpetrators of internet crimes against children. His consulting business had been used by law enforcement agencies, federal and state, in the United States, and from around the world, to successfully prosecute persons charged with online sexual exploitation of children.

When we first reached out to this individual, he declined to help. When asked by my lawyers for his reasoning, he said straight up that "where there is smoke, there's fire," and that he would find something incriminating on my computer which would have

to be shared with law enforcement authorities.

My lawyers immediately became nervous and advised me not to engage the services of this individual.

I insisted, noting I had committed no crime, and as such there could be no evidence waiting to be uncovered.

We submitted the computer hard drive to this individual.

The former federal agent returned a report which started by declaring that in his 25 years of doing this work, this is the first time he had written a report like the one he was submitting. Normally, when examining the computers of persons accused of internet crimes against children, there would be evidence of an underlying interest in minors on the part of the accused. Here, the former federal agent declared, there was absolutely no indicia of interest on the part of the accused (myself) in minors—no evidence of chats with minors, and zero evidence of child pornography.

Nothing.

Moreover, the former federal officer questioned the actions of the police officer involved in the 2009 incident, noting that he had never in his 25 years seen such an investigation. The officer in question had violated every established procedure and rule governing such investigations, and that, in the opinion of the former federal agent, there was insufficient evidence to charge me with a crime.

In fact, the former federal officer indicated that he could find no compelling legal justification, based upon the evidence, for charging me with any crime.

We proposed to have the former federal agent testify on my behalf regarding his forensic investigation, and as an expert

witness about the viability of the police investigation.

The prosecution objected to both, and the judge concurred.

Or, restating, regarding the prosecution of an internet-based crime, the prosecution was refusing to allow the computer used to perpetrate the alleged crimes to be introduced at trial.

This is the equivalent of a prosecutor, in trying a murder case, refusing to allow the murder weapon to be introduced as evidence.

Or allowing a coroner to testify about the condition of a victim's body in relation to the alleged criminal actions that led to the victim's death.

The trial was a sham, with the 2001 material constituting more than 70% of the case, and the only witness against me being the retired New York cop, who testified that he was only able to recall specific details after reviewing the unsealed files prior to trial (i.e., that his memory was contaminated by illegally obtained evidence.)

I was found guilty at trial and scheduled for sentencing. While awaiting my sentencing date, however, my New York appeal was decided—the New York Appellate Court unanimously ruled in my favor, declaring that the records had been unlawfully unsealed.

At sentencing, my lawyer presented the judge with this decision and, noting that the judge had promised not to usurp the decision of a New York court regarding New York law, requesting that my conviction be overturned, and a new trial convened which would be tied solely based on the 2009 incident.

The judge refused.

I was sentenced to 5 ½ years in a state prison.

My lawyer filed an appeal, but now I ran into the reality of the US legal system—without money, there can be no justice.

While awaiting my initial appeal, I was visited by my lawyer, who presented me with a bill for more than $250,000.

I, of course, had no source of income, having used all of my life's savings to scrape together the $80,000 I used to pay my legal team through trial.

There was nothing left.

And with no money, there is no defense. My lawyer indicated that he would not be able to pursue my appeal until the bill had been paid. He did recommend another lawyer, who would do my appeal for the tidy sum of $5,000.

While my wife called around to friends and family to help raise the money, I was left in a situation where I was going to have to potentially take over my appeal on a pro se basis.

But trying to defend yourself while incarcerated is a mission impossible.

In the end, the money was raised, and an appellate lawyer hired. But you get what you pay for. My new lawyers' initial filing to the Pennsylvania Superior Court was so bad that my original lawyers felt compelled to step in and take over. But the damage was done—I ultimately lost my appeal.

I was frustrated by the entire process. I believed that the best challenge lay in framing the appeal from the perspective of the "Full Faith and Credit" clause of the US Constitution (Article IV, section 1), which held that full faith and credit shall be given in one state to the final judicial decisions of another.

In short, since the New York court system found the unsealing to be unlawful, so, too, should the Pennsylvania court system.

My legal team failed to frame my argument in those terms, and as such the Pennsylvania court ruled against my claims, declaring that at the time my trial took place, the records in question had been deemed properly unsealed, and as such admissible at trial.

The fact that a New York appellate court had unanimously declared that the records had been illegally unsealed, and should never have been released, was, in the opinion of the Pennsylvania court, irrelevant.

After I lost my Pennsylvania appeal, I was abandoned by my lawyers. I still had the ability to file a petition for Habeaus Corpus relief in Federal Court, but I would have to do so on my own.

Appeals take time, and while I worked my way through the Pennsylvania court system, I was also serving my sentence in a state prison.

There is a certain pecking order among inmates. First and foremost, there is gang affiliation. Crips, Bloods, Latin Kings, Skinheads, and the Mexican Cartel all had strength in numbers.

Middle-aged white guys did not.

In prison, murder, robbery, and drug dealing were considered legitimate crimes.

Child sexual exploitation was not.

I was told from day one by prison authorities to keep a low profile and discuss my case with no one.

Failure to do so, the prison guards warned, would place my life

in danger at the hands of inmates who viewed child abusers as the lowest form of life.

The fist problem I confronted was the fact that everyone knew about my case—my trial had been international news and had dominated the Pennsylvania media. My face had been broadcast on television and published in newspapers.

There was no way I was going to remain anonymous.

The second issue was I had nothing to hide. I was innocent of any wrongdoing, and I would be damned if I was going to behave as if I had committed the crimes charged.

There are no secrets in prison. My decision not to hide put me in immediate contact with inmates who wanted to beat me into a pulp. Everyone denies criminal wrongdoing, and in prison everyone claims to be innocent of the crimes that got them incarcerated.

Prison etiquette gave most inmates a pass when it came to being judged by their peers about guilt or innocence—that was between the individual and the courts. But if you were a sex offender, and you were trying to make a claim of innocence, you had better have the paperwork to back that claim up.

I was immediately challenged by some of the gangs who oversaw the “treatment” of sex offenders, especially someone like myself who refused to hide, but rather went to the “yard” where I lifted weights, ran around the track, and played basketball and handball.

The gangs run the basketball courts and the handball courts. If they don’t want you on the court, you won’t get on the court.

And they didn’t want sex offenders on the courts.

I allowed my paperwork to be passed around, where it was

reviewed by the gang leadership. It was eventually returned to me, along with the comment, “You got screwed.”

You’re damn right I did.

The next problem I faced was the changing nature of the inmate population. The prison I was sent to was a level 2 prison, meaning the inmates were either first-time offenders convicted of non-violent crimes, or long-term inmates, many serving life sentences for murder, who had, because of a sustained record of good conduct, earned their way into the more permissive environs of a low-level security prison.

Within a month of my arrival, however, Pennsylvania began instituting a program known as “Therapeutic Community,” or TC, for persons serving sentences relating to drug or alcohol abuse. Many substance abusers had committed serious violent crimes and were classified as level 3 or level 4 inmates who should be housed in medium-security prisons. In order to get to the TC program, however, Pennsylvania lowered the classification of many level 3 and 4 inmates to level 2.

The prison population doubled in less than six months’ time as younger, more violent inmates arrived from medium security prisons around the state. These new inmates felt the need to make a name for themselves in their new home. One of the ways to establish your reputation was to beat up anyone convicted of a sex crime.

Every inmate in Pennsylvania knew who I was, and where I had been sent. These new TC inmates were all gunning for my head from the moment they arrived.

I had two things gong for me. First, the “old heads” in the prison had reviewed my paperwork and agreed with my declaration of innocence.

Second, I had established myself as someone skilled with using the prison legal research resources. When word went around that I was doing my own appeal, inmates began approaching me for assistance. Some I could help—I was able to get the court to recalculate the sentencing of one inmate, allowing him to go home a year early. I was able to get the courts to run another inmate's sentence concurrently instead of consecutively, saving him fives years of imprisonment in a federal prison. And I was able to get another inmate a new trial by filing a new appeal based on a Supreme Court ruling about the legality of accessing cellphone data without a warrant.

In prison, it is a violation of rules for one inmate to help another with legal assistance. These rules were designed to prevent a black-market business where jailhouse lawyers charged inmates for legal help, or for the dissemination of paperwork that could be used by inmates to target another inmate (common among gangs.)

I never charged anyone for legal assistance, and I had no gang affiliation. As a result, the prison management not only turned a blind-eye to my helping others out—they actively encouraged it. Prisoners would sign up at the guard station to visit me in my bunk space to discuss their cases. I was also asked to help inmates prepare for their parole hearings.

My legal assistance engendered a tremendous amount of goodwill among the inmate population, and when newly arrived inmates began bragging about how they were going to "take out" Ritter, they were quickly told to stand down.

While this may have helped keep me from getting jumped in the shower, bathroom, at the chow hall, or in the yard, it didn't give me a total pass, especially on the basketball court.

In prison, respect is earned, not given, and if I wanted to earn the respect of these young inmates, I had to do it on the court. Basketball games were very violent affairs, with elbows and fists flying, head butts, and kicks abounding. People were often taken from the court in a stretcher to the infirmary. It was—literally—blood in, blood out.

I was a 50-plus-year-old white guy playing basketball with a bunch of black and Hispanic men in their 20's and 30's, many of whom were violent offenders, and most of whom were gang-affiliated. It wasn't easy, but eventually I earned the right to be on the court as an equal.

I had been sentenced to 5 ½ years in prison. I was, however, eligible for parole after 18 months. But before you can be considered for parole, you must graduate from various "treatment" programs tailored toward your offense. As a sex offender, I would have to complete sex offender treatment.

One of the prerequisites needed to even get into the treatment program was the requirement that you sign a statement accepting responsibility for your crime and declaring that you are guilty of the crimes charged.

I, of course, refused to plead guilty to a crime I didn't commit.

The prison authorities told me that I could not be paroled unless I completed sex offender treatment, and that I wouldn't be allowed into treatment without pleading guilty.

I was sent to the office of the prison psychologist, who oversaw all the treatment programs. He told me that if I didn't attend treatment, then I would be transferred to a higher-security prison—basically threatening me with inmate-on-inmate violence for non-compliance.

I put my paperwork on his desk. “I’m guilty of every action documented in this record,” I said. “I’m willing to be judged in treatment on anything and everything in this file. I deny nothing. But I committed no crime.”

The head shrink decided that if I was willing to openly discuss my case, and not try to shy away from responsibility, I could attend treatment.

Upon graduation, everyone in my class, including the prison counselor, agreed that I had not committed the crimes I was charged with. The counselor said as much in his final evaluation.

My first go at parole failed, namely because the prosecutor and judge availed themselves of the right to block my parole on my first attempt, citing the fact that I had never pled guilty to my crimes, and as such was unrepentant and a threat to society.

On my second try, this option wasn’t available. Instead, I had the full support of the prison guards, prison staff, and the warden, even though I had not pled guilty, which from the perspective of the prison system, is a cardinal sin.

The extent to which this belief in my innocence extended into the prison system, I was actively recruited by the prison staff to participate in a program where inmates would go out to high schools and speak with students. According to the prison, I was supposed to be on a “no contact” list, meaning I could not have any contact with minors. The prison staff was willing to waive that order to get me into the program.

Unfortunately for the parole staff, I was paroled my second time around, based largely upon the support I received from the prison guards and staff. The parole authorities were furious, questioning the decision to parole me because I refused to

plead guilty to my charged crimes. They were overruled, and I was paroled to New York in September 2014, one month shy of three years of incarcerated time.

The system of justice in America is not designed to allow for the smooth reintegration into society.

The Pennsylvania prosecutor went out of his way to destroy my life, both by incarcerating me on manufactured charges, seeking to undermine and destroy both me and my family, and by having me designated as a “sexually violent predator,” which would make it impossible to function in society.

Many persons so designated end up committing suicide because of their inability to reintegrate into society due to the harassment such a designation brings.

Unfortunately for the Pennsylvania prosecution, my family and most of my friends stuck with me during the period of my incarceration, offering emotional and material support that allowed us to remain in our home and lead normal lives. This was not easy—my wife had to work three jobs in order to make ends meet.

But we survived.

Every state is responsible for setting its own sex offender level for persons convicted of sexual offenses. By labeling me a sexually violent predator, Pennsylvania was hoping to make me a lifetime Level 3 offender—the highest possible—which would mean I literally could not go anywhere or do anything without first having the authorities warn everyone about how dangerous I was to society.

The New York prosecutors who cooperated with Pennsylvania to have my 2001 records illegally unsealed sought to have me

receive a Level 3 designation in New York.

I fought them.

I had no legal support, since I had no money, and no lawyer works for free. Instead, I represented myself, and prepared a motion in limine that sought to exclude from the hearing about my offender status any and all reference to anything derived from the unlawfully unsealed 2001 records.

The New York prosecution relied on Pennsylvania's argument that the files had been lawfully unsealed at the time of trial, and as such were now part of the public record, and could not be excluded from the hearing.

The court decided with me, finding that the 2001 records should never have been unsealed, and that the unsealing directive was unlawful at the time it was issued, and as such any use of material derived directly or indirectly from these unlawfully unsealed records were excluded on the grounds that it represented the fruit of the poison vine.

I prevailed at the hearing and walked away with a Level 1 status—the lowest possible, and a New York court decision which basically said the entire Pennsylvania proceedings were unlawful.

Normally, sex offenders subjected to registration seek to hide from society.

I don't. I'm here. This is me.

I'm innocent.

I continue to appeal the Pennsylvania conviction to this day.

There is more—much more—to the story of my ongoing struggle to overturn my conviction and clear my name. Someday I will

put the whole experience down in writing, if for no other reason than to document the absolute travesty that is the American justice system.

But for now, this abbreviated version will have to suffice.

For anyone who seeks to cancel me from participating in public discourse based upon what you think you know about my case, take the time to read this. I wrote it for you, as a courtesy.

If, after doing so, you remain concerned about inviting me—don't.

I'll take my message directly to the people, bypassing any obstacles created by your shallow-minded ignorance.

To the people who were planning on attending the November 18 event, this message is for you: find another organizer, someone with the courage to do proper due diligence and make the right call. Someone with the courage to give you access to an important and credible voice regarding the issues of our time, and not be distracted by rumor, innuendo and falsehoods.

Don't allow these moral and intellectual cowards to silence me based upon what Wikipedia or Google has reported about my case.

You can rest assured that nothing I provided here appears anywhere on the internet.

Knowledge is power.

Take what I've provided here and empower yourself to form your own opinion.

Don't facilitate censorship by participating or condoning the current cancel culture that has infected American society.

And if, after reading this, you still have a problem with me

personally, we can settle it on the basketball court.

Prison rules.

Scott Ritter will speak at the Community Church of Boston on November 19 at 6:00 PM.

INFO

Ask the Inspector **streams live on YouTube every Friday night at 8 PM ET and Tuesdays at 3 PM ET.**

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