

## A LETTER FROM: Derek Jay (DJ) Garlington

This letter is to express my strong request for clemency for my Dad, **Dr. Ernest Garlington**. Without even knowing anything about clemency, my Dad is determined to do what he does best — make things better wherever he is planted. Despite his own challenges, he has sought to help others and improve the situation. Although I have needed him, I am in awe with what he has done while incarcerated.

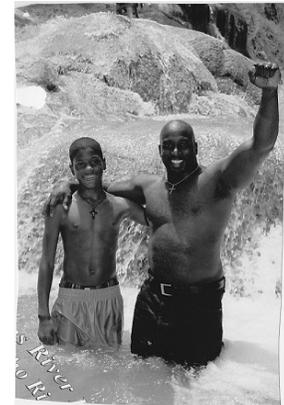
I don't remember when my Dad wasn't in my life. He raised me and supported me when my biological father removed himself from my life. I remember calling my biological father "Daddy" and calling Ernie "Dad," and loving them both. My biological father tried to force me to choose between them, but "Dad" encouraged me to have a positive relationship with my biological father, even when he became hostile and rejecting, and attempted to terminate his parental rights, which was very painful for me. Through it all, "Dad" was reassuring and supportive, and because of his choice to love another man's child, I had an awesome childhood.

My friends looked up to my Dad and he always made time to take us places, such as amusement parks, sporting events, concerts, laser tag, go-carting and the movies. When I



was little, he would put me on his shoulders, especially when I couldn't see at a sporting event or when we went to a haunted house for Halloween. He taught me not to be afraid of dogs and heights by guiding me in petting dogs and standing behind me when I climbed the ladder to our roof.

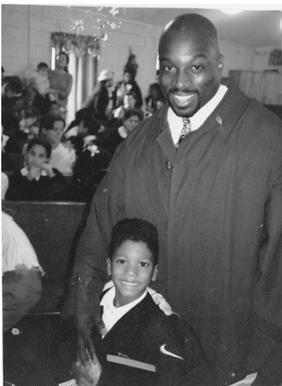
Although he was a little embarrassed among all the young children, he even stood in line with me when I wanted to wait for the midnight sale of



Harry Potter books. A good father builds inner strength and character in his son.

That is what my Dad did with me. He was and is a strong male role model who has shaped my character and taught me the responsibilities that come with being a man.

Due to his incarceration, my Dad wasn't there when I moved into my college dorm at age 15. If he had been there, he would have carried my belongings up the flights of stairs with me. He would have connected with the other students and made my transition easier, the way he always did. I admit now that I was overwhelmed and intimidated when I started college. Although I was prepared academically, it was a challenge to fit in socially. I was used to spending a lot of time with my Dad and close friends in Connecticut. At times, being teased and called a "brainiac" irritated me. I never told anyone my age but they would inevitably find out from professors or someone else. I missed my Dad and his encouraging and protective influence. Before I went to college, we used to talk daily, especially when he made my breakfast every morning and drove me to school. When he picked me up, we would talk about my day. When I was homeschooled, he would drive and pick me up from the classes I took at Tunxis Community College.



I took all of this for granted, including how patient my Dad was when I took my time getting ready for school in the morning or complained about chores. I often called him from school because I forgot something and he would turn around and come back to bring it to me.

The last three plus years without him have been hard. There are times when I cry alone because I miss him so much. I try to use good judgment to make him proud, and I recognize the couple of times I was reckless, like when I got a speeding ticket; it was because I hurt so bad. I am 19 now and have maintained a GPA between 3.6 and 4.0 all four years of college. I will graduate in May with a BA in Broadcast Journalism. Even while in prison, my Dad has guided me. Visiting and talking to him gave me the drive and determination to be a leader in college. I emulated him, made good friends and took initiative in campus activities and community service. I worked hard to show him that I could take the foundation that he gave me and stay strong. I dedicate my accomplishments to my Dad and pray that he will be home to watch me walk across the stage on May 13.



I have faith that my Dad's return home will be a major factor in my future. He will once again be able to support me in my goals and aspirations. My Dad won't miss anything that I ask him to attend and will likely show up even if I don't ask. I need to be able to share my screenplay with him and have him see animation on the computer. When I talk to him or mail parts to him, there is frustration to us both because he can't really fully comprehend my work without seeing it on screen. I want his feedback and I want and need his physical presence in my life.

Sincerely,

Derek Jay Garlington

