

Court is in session

Clinton deserves punishments to fit his offenses



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Imagine for a minute that Congress will have no power over the fate of our nation's president. Imagine that the Supreme Court will not have the final word, nor will anyone whose office is currently located in Washington, D.C.

I have taken control of the entire government. I AM the chief justice, I AM Congress, and I have the final say over whether or not William Jefferson Clinton will remain in command of the United States.

I have absolute power.

Barring any hypothetical truths contained in the aforementioned statements laid out heretofore in this document, the presidential impeachment hearing will now come to order.

BANG!!

"Mr. Clinton, is it true that you lied under oath as a defendant in the case of Jones v. Clinton regarding your sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky?"

"Uh, yes sir, Your Honor."

"I see. Well, I hereby sentence you to do 50 push-ups on the CBS Evening News to convey to America your deep sense of regret and apologetic attitude toward this unfortunate blunder. Is this understood, Mr. Clinton?"

"Uh, yes sir, Your Honor."

"Very well. Mr. Clinton, is it also true that you lied under oath to the grand jury about your sexual relationship with Ms. Lewinsky?"

"Uh, yes sir, Your Honor. Unfortunately, I made the same mistake there, too. It seemed like the

right thing to do because I didn't want to get caught so I ..."

"OK, don't blubber all over my floor. You must be one dumb son of a gun, but what's done is done. For this offense, I hereby sentence you to sing 'My Little Buttercup' on national television during halftime of next year's Super Bowl while standing on one leg and juggling two purple bowling pins. Will this be acceptable, Mr. Clinton?"

"Uh, yes sir, Your Honor, Sir! Bowling is one of my secret passions and I do enjoy a good solo now and then. It keeps me feeling young and lets me release my inner demons on the proposition of handling the business of America while ..."

"Enough!! We're not done yet. Can we please proceed, Mr. Clinton?"

"Uh, yes sir, Your Judgship, Sir. I'm sorry, Mr. Your Honor, Sir."

"Thank you. Now where was I. Oh, yes - here we are. Mr. Clinton, is it true that you lied under oath during your civil deposition when you said you could not recall being alone with Ms. Lewinsky and that you - Oh, this is nice - quote 'minimized the number of gifts the two of you had exchanged'?"

"Oh, boy. Do I really have to answer that Mr., uh, I mean, Your Greatness, Sir?"

"I'll be asking the questions, is that understood? Answer or I'll be forced to release you into the immediate custody of the Hell's Outlaws biker gang!!"

"In that case, I most certainly did lie about those things, Your Honor! And may I add that that is one fine looking black garment you are sporting on this lovely afternoon ..."

"SILENCE! Flattery will get you nowhere in this court, young man! Now in addition to your already light sentence, I am going to tack on three years of flipping burgers at a McDonald's in Iowa whatsoever lies farthest from any known civilization. Are we clear on that?"

"Crystal."

"Beautiful. I may just get home sometime this year after all. Now..."

"Excuse me, Your Honor, Sir. But

if it please the court, may I use the restroom now?"

"NO! Absolutely not! And don't interrupt me when I'm talking to you! There are no bathrooms here, so you'll just have to wait until you get to Iowa!"

"Now, as I was saying, you are also charged with lying - here we go again - under oath in - yes, this just keeps getting better and better! - the same civil case about conversations you had with Ms. Lewinsky about her involvement in the Jones case. Bob, am I reading this right? Geez - Sir, how do you plead?"

"Most enthusiastically guilty, Your Honor! Thought that was pretty clever, myself!"

"Well, the hits just keep on comin'! For this one - and it kills me to do this - I'm sentencing you to perform the Truffle Shuffle in only your boxers during the singing of 'Take Me Out to the Ballgame' at every Cubs home game during the next baseball season. Is that understood?"

"Yeah, just one problem. Is it in our nation's best interest for me to do it in my underwear in front of..."

"Well, now that you mention it - YES! Absolutely! Anymore brilliant questions?"

"Uh - uh - no."

"No, WHAT!!!"

"No Sir, Your Honor, Sir!"

"That's better. Now, you are also charged with ... lying to the court ... obstructing justice ... tampering with witnesses ... Oh, this is good ... inability to carry out your constitutional duties ... Mr. Clinton! May I ask if there is any federal crime you haven't committed in the last eight months?"

"Uh, yes sir. To my knowledge, I never held up a bank."

"Hallelujah! What about lying ... is there anything you haven't lied about in the past eight months?"

"Nope, I pretty much lied whenever possible. It was neat. It felt like I was a secret agent or someone trying my country or myself. I couldn't stop. It's kind of

like when you eat one Dorito and you just keep eating..."

"OK! I get the picture. Now, for the remainder of the alleged offenses, which this court will go out on a limb and assume you are guilty of; I am going to have to terminate your reign as president of the United States and remand you to the immediate custody of the National Rifle Association for subsequent target practice to be carried out in which you, Mr. Clinton, will be the target.

"Geez, get up on the wrong side of the bed, there, Judge? Wife make you sleep on the couch again? In fact, aren't you the guy who just lost a fight with my dog, because you look like crap! Yeah, maybe you're the one who needs some punishment, pal! I'll show you what target practice is ..."

"Guards! Get this man out of my sight! Let the record show that Mr. Clinton, and Mr. Gore as well, no longer hold any power whatsoever in this fine country. We shall enter a temporary phase in which a lame goose president will hold

office until that time when the current baseball season is over.

"On that date, Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa will take office as our new leaders. Whoever has the most home runs will be inaugurated as president and the runner-up as vice-president. This court is hereby adjourned!"

"YOUR HONOR, THIS COURT WILL NOW RESUME FOR A SPECIAL SESSION IN THE CASE OF THE UNITED STATES V. ORENTHAL JAMES SIMPSON..."

That's it! I can't take this anymore!

I wonder if I can still get a tee time.



ROBB BLUM/DN

Get out of jail free

Community based correctional programs best prepare inmates for outside world



TIM SULLIVAN is a third-year law student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

I spent nearly 13 years of my life working in Nebraska state mental institutions, prisons and a federal prison in Colorado. I've come to the conclusion that half the inmates in prison don't need to be there.

That's right. Your eyes did not deceive you.

In case you still don't believe what you read, I'll say it again - half the inmates in prison don't need to be there.

I should qualify my assertions, however.

First of all, I am not saying that half the inmates in prison today do not deserve to be punished for the crimes they have committed against society. What I am saying is that half the inmates in prison today are housed in institutions that exceed the level of security necessary for public protection.

The vast majority of inmates are

housed in secure facilities classified as maximum, medium or minimum security. Community custody is the lowest level of security.

What happens when we incarcerate someone in these types of facilities?

We take people whose morals and values are somewhat less than what society has established as the "norm," and we put them in prison environments where morals and values are likely somewhat lower than theirs. Then we put these people back out on the streets expecting them to function in society with a moral and value system at least equal to or greater than the "norm."

Logic dictates the result. We churn out people worse than they were when they went in. We send them out into the world angry, bitter, without skills, nearly penniless and without hope or meaning in their lives.

Then, we expect them to be "rehabilitated."

I challenge anyone to find that word in the mission statement of the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services. You won't.

Community custody facilities allow inmates to work on supervised work details that serve state agencies. They are permitted to hold jobs with private employers in the community and attend institutions of higher education. Inmates are allowed to go to church, shopping, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, Narcotics

Anonymous meetings and on furlough with their families.

Community-based correctional programming best serves the public by imposing higher morals and values on inmates housed within their walls than the ones imposed on those who live in more secure facilities. By doing so, inmates are better prepared to function within the "norm."

Self-esteem is bolstered through community programming. Inmates get a sense of pride and accomplishment from being able to do meaningful work while serving their sentence. They reestablish ties with their families.

These inmates are less likely to leave angry, bitter and hopeless.

Before you go off branding me a "bleeding-heart liberal" or some other such endearing term, consider that I have seen the system from the inside.

I first started work in the system as a security specialist/psychiatric technician at the Lincoln Regional Center. I worked in what was then called the Security Unit. It's now called Forensic Mental Health Services.

That's where they house those found not guilty (or not responsible) by reason of insanity. Some are emergency police commitments considered a danger to themselves or others, violent schizophrenics, mentally disordered sex offenders, etc.

That was 1982. At that time, the drugs and methods used to treat

severe mental disorders such as schizophrenia were not nearly as effective as they are today.

As a result, violent and self-destructive behavior on the part of patients in that unit occurred with much greater frequency than it does today.

I went on from there to work as a correctional officer at the Diagnostic & Evaluation Center - the Nebraska Department of Corrections' "fish tank."

A "fish tank," to borrow a prison lingo phrase, is where the Department of Corrections houses all new and returning inmates for about 90 days, while they classify them and decide at which institution they will be housed.

From there, I went to work at the Lincoln Correctional Center, where I was promoted to corporal and worked central control - the yard and segregation (the hole). I was promoted again to Unit Supervisor I and worked on a combination general population/mental health unit.

After that, I transferred to work release as a Unit Supervisor I. Then I was reclassified to sergeant and again to lieutenant when I began supervising all three shifts of the custody staff (correctional officers). I also went into the officer-of-the-day rotation, meaning I served as acting superintendent nights and weekends for eight weeks or so.

I taught self-defense, self-contained breathing apparatus and com-

munity corrections classes for the staff training academy.

I left there and went to work as a correctional officer at the Florence Correctional Complex in Florence, Colo. For those of you unfamiliar with Florence, that's where the new "supermax," or, to coin another phrase, the new "Alcatraz," is.

Suffice it to say that I have seen a lot of inmates (and staff) come and go. I saw a lot.

My experience at Florence was enough for me. I quit corrections altogether and returned to school full-time at UNL. I raced through the undergraduate part of my education in three years (I was a political science major) and then entered into law school.

I worked as an on-call at the Regional Center again while I did my undergraduate program, mostly in the Security Unit (Forensic Mental Health Services, for you attention-to-detail fanatics).

So go ahead and brand me a bleeding-heart liberal or anything else your little heart desires.

We simply need to re-evaluate whether we want to waste billions of dollars housing inmates in secure facilities that cost far more than community-based facilities. Consider that these expensive-to-operate facilities are not only unnecessary for half the inmates in them, but they make the inmates worse when they come out as well.