

Cellblocks To Mountaintops
Video Episode 6B: The Rehearsal
Transcript

TEXT CARD:

Despite a federal judge's ruling ordering the state of Oregon to hold a release hearing for Sterling (otherwise known as a Miller Hearing) no such hearing is scheduled.

However, the ruling does prompt the state to schedule a prison term hearing for Sterling so his lawyers can argue for a reduced sentence.

Mieke de Vrind
Criminal Justice Reform Clinic Staff Lawyer:
Have You met Ryan over video?

Chloe Williams
2nd year Law Student: Oh, yeah.

Mieke de Vrind: This is Chloe.

Professor Aliza Kaplan: Chloe. Amazing law student.

Chloe Williams: Nice to meet you.

Ryan O'Connor
Sterling's lawyer: Thanks for helping Sterling.

Chloe Williams: Oh, yeah. It's a pleasure.

Professor Aliza Kaplan: So, Ryan, the reason we wanted to check in is we want to get a better sense of what we think the hearing will look like.

Ryan O'Connor: You got it

Aliza Kaplan: Ryan asked the Criminal Justice Reform Clinic to join him in representing Sterling for this prison term hearing. Our role is to prepare the briefing that will go to the board and do an interview with Sterling, where we can sort of walk him through his story and his rehabilitation and his transformation and all of the amazing things that he's done while incarcerated.

Sterling Cunio: This is Sterling.

Mieke de Vrind: Hey, Sterling, how's it going?

Chloe Williams: Hi, Sterling. It's Chloe.

Professor Aliza Kaplan: Hi, Sterling. It's Aliza.

Sterling Cunio: Hey, it's everybody.

Chloe Williams: You got the whole team.

Sterling Cunio: I'm telling you, lucky me, lucky me.

Chloe Williams: So I'm going to be jumping around...

Chloe Williams: We've had four phone calls with Sterling, and we intend to have about three more. A prison term hearing is to determine the amount of time that an individual has to serve until they are either released or they're eligible for parole.

Chloe Williams: I want to go back to the beginning of your incarceration.

Chloe Williams: Sterling was convicted of aggravated murder two counts, when he was a juvenile. At that time, he had received two consecutive life sentences without the possibility of parole. In 2012, *Miller v Alabama* came out and made it unconstitutional to sentence juveniles to life without the possibility of parole, so that made Sterling eligible for parole.

Mieke de Vrind: And then we have a series of family photos.

Sterling Cunio: Is it little me?

Mieke de Vrind: I think it's a little you. Yeah.

Chloe Williams: Little you with the little Afro.

Sterling Cunio: That's that's me. Yeah.

Mieke de Vrind: If we really grapple with what our justice system is designed to do, is it to punish or is it to rehabilitate? If we want our justice system to rehabilitate, then Sterling is is the personification of rehabilitation. As a teenager, he committed a horrendous crime, which he acknowledges and he can take responsibility for and accountability for. And since then, his impact on the community, both inside and outside, is known by everyone. This is somebody that we need in the community.

Chloe Williams: Bye Sterling. I'll talk to you on Friday.

Mieke de Vrind: Talk to you Friday.

Sterling Cunio: Thank you. Y'all be safe. Be well. Think positive.