

William R. Underwood

Bio

William R. Underwood is an American citizen who was born in the bowels of poverty, swallowed into street gang culture, catapulted himself into a successful career as a prominent music business promoter, manager and publisher, and survived 33 years in some of the harshest maximum-security United States prisons.

What originally was a way out of poverty when he was a teenager, and for so many others, eventually became a one-way ticket to prison that halted his music business career and life. In 1988, Underwood was arrested for a drug crime and later sentenced to life without the possibility of parole. Prior to his arrest, he had never been convicted of a felony. Despite the hopelessness of his life sentence, Underwood transformed his life while in prison and devoted his time and focus to his children, grandchildren and supporting the rehabilitation of others in his environment.

On January 15, 2021 (Martin Luther King, Jr's birthday), after 33 years of incarceration, William R. Underwood, received a **compassionate release** from federal prison. As noted by the Honorable Judge Stein, “In 33 years of incarceration, Underwood has not received a single disciplinary infraction, which in this Court’s experience is most extraordinary. In addition, a resounding chorus of letters of support attests to his character and integrity. Underwood presents strong evidence that he has been fully rehabilitated.”

Today, William R. Underwood is a Senior Fellow with The Sentencing Project’s Campaign to End Life Imprisonment where he advocates to create sustainable sentencing reform and second chances for economically marginalized communities. He is also a consultant, public speaker, advisor, entrepreneur and advocate at the Underwood Legacy Fund. There he advocates for Artist's Rights to ensure that Digital Service Providers (DSPs) create a more diverse, inclusive, viable and equitable music licensing landscape for songwriters, producers, composers, lyricists, and music publishers. During his incarceration, Underwood, had to personally litigate to maintain his publishing rights in order to provide for his family and himself. To learn more, go to www.UnderwoodLegacyFund.com.

