



Terrance (left) and Sagan on their wedding day

**The Fair Sentencing Act of 2010 reduced the disparity in sentencing for crack cocaine and powder cocaine offenses from 100:1 to 18:1. But true justice won't come until the ratio is 1:1. Until then, thousands of people, more than 80 percent of them Black, remain behind bars serving harsh and unfair sentences. Now, legislation before Congress, the EQUAL Act, would finally end the disparity once and for all, bringing the ratio down to 1:1. For Terrance and Sagan Stanton and their children, the fight for this reform is very personal.**

As Terrance Stanton explains it now, when he was growing up, “I didn’t know that it was not normal to have the police regularly show up because your parent’s arguments turned physical.” It’s only been with the passage of time and maturity that Terrance, now 34, is seeing his childhood and teenage years for what they really were.

Born and raised in Georgia, Terrance was the youngest of three children. Family life was chaotic, fueled by his father’s physical abuse to Terrance’s mother, which stopped only when his father



went to prison. Once he was released and returned home, though, the violence picked right back up. Finally, when Terrance was nine, his parents split. Although he and his two siblings felt some relief, money was extremely tight and the stress level skyrocketed.

In his teens, Terrance made the fateful decision to turn to selling drugs. And in 2013, at age 26, it all caught up with him. He was arrested and convicted of dealing crack cocaine and powder cocaine. Chiefly because of the quantity of crack cocaine involved, Terrance was sentenced to life, which in 2015 was reduced to 30 years. His release date is 2039.

*Terrance, she told them, like so many others, deserves the justice that the EQUAL Act would finally bring.*

In the nine years Terrance has been locked up, his life has changed dramatically – especially when it comes to his attitude and self-appraisal. Despite the prison walls and his harsh sentence, he’s doing all he can to prove that he is not the same person he once was, a desperate young man making extremely bad decisions. He’s gotten his GED, facilitates anti-drug classes, has obtained his paralegal certificate, and he participates in all the programming available to him, while practicing Islam. He is a strong father, even behind bars, to his four children, Jaiden (16), Terrance, Jr. (15), Laila (11), and Sangi (10).

Terrance also has spent countless hours in the law library, where he’s learned how to make sense of his harsh sentence – or to understand that it doesn’t make sense. The current 18:1 disparity in sentencing law between sentences for powder cocaine and crack cocaine offenses has meant decades lost for Terrance and his family. He is doing all he can to advocate from the inside for himself and others who have been unfairly sentenced because of the disparity.

The pandemic has been especially rough on Terrance; he has sickle cell trait and is immunocompromised. He has contracted COVID once, and still has symptoms six months later.





Fortunately, Terrance has an amazing ally on the outside, his wife Sagan. The two met when they were kids and began dating at 16. Once given the life sentence, Terrance decided to separate from his childhood sweetheart, not sure if he could uphold a relationship while incarcerated. But as time went on, the two couldn't stay away from each other and they reunited. Terrance and Sagan married in November of 2019.

In July of 2021, Sagan made the trek from Georgia to Washington, D.C., to lobby for passage of the EQUAL Act, legislation that would eliminate the crack and powder cocaine disparity that landed Terrance his outsized sentence. There, Sagan connected with family members with loved ones serving sentences like Terrance's. With other families, she met with legislators on Capitol Hill to share her story and show them how the disparity is not just some abstract concept; it affects real people in very real and unfair ways. She talked about their children and how they long for their father.

And she told them all about Terrance – his background, his spiral into trouble, and his hard and profound work on self-rehabilitation. Terrance, she told them, like so many others, deserves the justice that the EQUAL Act would finally bring.

“My husband and I are going to continue to keep showing our objection to draconian sentences for non-violent drug offenders and fight for full and complete freedom, justice, and equality until these policies are repealed. Second chances are deserved for those who reverse their way of thinking and display ethical behavior. Terrance's record shows that he is civilized, not a threat to the community, and he has learned his lesson. Being corrected is what correctional facilities are for. Now it's time to correct an unfair law and give Terrance a second chance.”





**The Facts:**

**Name:** Terrance Stanton

**Sentence:** life, reduced in 2015 to 30 years

**Offense:** conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute, and to distribute controlled substances; distribution of cocaine; use of communication facility

**Priors:** sale of cocaine within 1000 ft. of a public park; possession of cocaine with intent to distribute; possession with intent to distribute crack

**Year sentenced:** 2013

**Age at sentencing:** 26

**Projected release date:** 2039



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