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HAVE A SERIOUSLY INJURED CLIENT? 

Criminal Law

Video series showcases success stories after incarceration: Goldlist

By AdvocateDaily.com Staff



Toronto criminal lawyer [Jordana Goldlist](#) has launched a video project to demonstrate how people who have been behind bars can reintegrate into society if given the opportunity and the tools.

"Each of these individuals was a criminal and has a criminal record, but that's not who they are," she tells [AdvocateDaily.com](#).

Goldlist hopes by highlighting the success stories of "phenomenal people with criminal records" who are intelligent, hardworking and trustworthy, perhaps their past won't be a deterrent to getting a job.

"I think the term 'criminal' is often used by society to brand people and list the characteristics that must be associated with them. I believe we shouldn't be doing that across the board."

Goldlist, principal of [JHG Criminal Law](#), launched the video project to give ex-cons the opportunity tell their own stories about what they faced and how they reinvented themselves, despite a justice system designed "to keep people stuck."

She based her project on #transformationtuesday, a health campaign that shows the benefits of exercise. In Goldlist's project, the videos illustrate how people [reconstructed](#) their lives after getting out of [jail](#).

She has posted six videos so far on Instagram and others will be added in the coming weeks and months.

"There are people who are negatively impacted by a system that is meant to protect society," Goldlist says.

"I started showcasing people who have struggled to become successful, or are in the process of extricating themselves from a system that has certain components that I believe are designed to keep people down," she says.

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Goldlist says there are those who do fit the label of being incorrigible, a risk to society and won't change their lives, but she believes many others are simply trapped.

"I think we have to look at the type of people we are putting in jail, and the basis for incarcerating them," she says. "Why are we putting people with serious mental health or drug-addiction issues in jail if they're not causing harm to others?"

Recidivism statistics in Ontario are higher for those who were incarcerated compared to those under community supervision. The causes for recidivism include a lack of job prospects and positive social leisure activities, as well as addiction issues, Goldlist explains.

"From talking to people who were trapped for years, in fact decades, I found there are certain restraints the criminal justice system places on them that become big hurdles when trying to escape the cycle," she says.

Goldlist says stringent bail conditions, or probation in general, have become roadblocks to rehabilitation and reintegration. She calls probation an expensive and self-serving system that doesn't help clients, while parole offers "great value" in reintegrating convicts into society.

"I haven't found anyone who has benefited from being on probation and I don't believe probation in itself has prevented anyone from committing another criminal offence," she says. She cites a client whose probation file wasn't allowed to be transferred to Alberta from Ontario despite his family being there and a job waiting for him.

Goldlist hopes showing and sharing videos of people explaining how they made mistakes and "paid their dues," will change attitudes and will urge the public to allow outliers to re-enter society.

"This is the struggle," she says.

Pardons are available but only after specified time periods, depending on the severity of the crime, Goldlist says.

"This is a huge roadblock," she says.

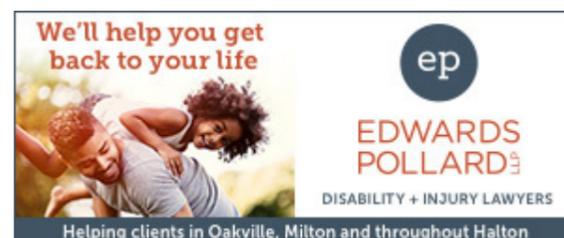
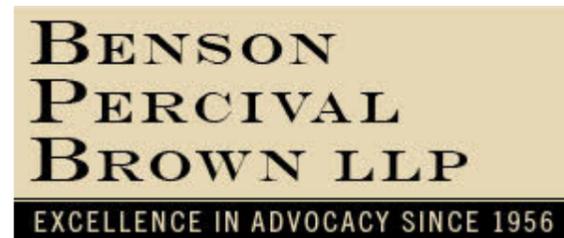
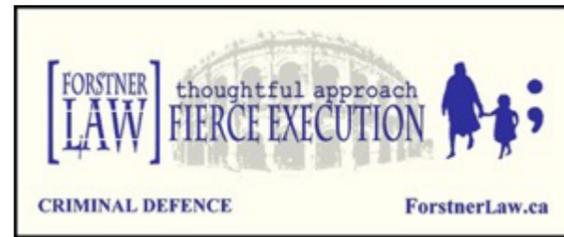
"I don't think there's one solution to this, but I wanted to showcase the people who have struggled to become successful and how amazing they are, and that we should stop writing someone off because of their criminal record," she says.

Goldlist made one of the videos while the others were supplied. A social media manager trims the videos to the minute-limit for Instagram posts. Three submissions were from Americans who reached out to her, she says.

"I've been motivated by the work I've done here," she says.

"It's amazing to me how thankful these men are for the opportunity to showcase their stories. The fact that someone who is part of the system wants to show another side of these phenomenal individuals gives them a voice they might not otherwise have."

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