

After 12 years of pleading his innocence, Meek Mill is finally free and on tour

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Meek Mill performs alongside Future for the Legendary Nights tour that kicked off in Tinley Park, Illinois on August 31, 2019 at the Hollywood Casino Amphitheater. (Edgar Ramos | HOY)

Robert Rihmeek Williams, also known as the Philadelphia rapper Meek Mill, was entangled in a system that traps people of color for over a decade. After years of pleading for a new trial, Mill is free and taking on the challenge of being a champion for changing the laws, policies, and practices that perpetuate those types of injustices in America that currently holds 4.5 million people on probation or parole — which is twice the incarcerated population— including those in state and federal prisons.

On August 27th, 2019, Mill pleaded guilty to possession of a firearm in exchange for having all other charges against him dropped, including drug possession and the charge that he pointed a gun at an officer during his 2007 arrest.

Common Pleas Court Judge, Genece Brinkley, consistently lambasted and reprimanded Mill for minor infractions throughout his probation. On November 2017, Brinkley sentenced Mill to two-to-four years in state prison over probation violations involving riding a dirt bike in New York that were later dropped in the court of New York.

“I gave you break after break, and you basically just thumbed your nose at this court,” Judge Brinkley stated.

According to Mill’s lawyer, Joe Tacopina, Judge Brinkley went against the recommendations of the district attorney and Mill’s probation officer, who insisted that “no incarceration for technical violations” and accused Brinkley of “taking an inappropriate personal interest in (Mill) that goes above and beyond her role as a judge.”

Judge Brinkley has denied requests for a new trial even after the cop who testified against Meek in 2008 has since resigned from the Philadelphia Police Department prior to being formally dismissed.

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The decision was a turning point for Mill’s case sparking a national debate on criminal justice reform. Celebrities like Jay-Z voiced their thoughts on the unjust system targeted towards keeping people of color in a legal limbo of despair, he expressed in his social media.

Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner issued a statement on Mill’s case being dropped saying that the rapper “was unfairly treated in a case that exemplifies the destruction caused by excessive supervision, instances of corruption, and unfair processes in our criminal courts.” The Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office is the largest prosecutor’s office in Pennsylvania, and one of the largest in the nation.

Mill, now 32, has spent a total of four thousand, five hundred and ninety-six days in the system.

In the year since his release, Mill has partnered with Jay-Z as founding members of REFORM Alliance in hopes to reduce the number of people needlessly trapped in the revolving door of probation and parole. The group hopes that others can avoid being placed in his situation and is currently pushing for legislation that would reform Pennsylvania’s probation and parole system.

On Aug. 30, the NFL and Roc Nation announced that Mill will headline a free concert Sept. 5 at the NFL Kickoff Experience in Chicago as part of Jay-Z’s new deal with the NFL.

Free from all legal woes of the past, Mill kicked off his Legendary Nights tour in Tinley Park, Illinois with Future, YG, Megan thee Stallion and DJ Mustard at the Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre on August 31, 2019. In the same weekend during the Made in America festival, a street was named after Mill in the rapper’s hometown of Philadelphia.