



**million**  
ONE JAIL AT A TIME.  
*story*

## REFORM TOOLKIT

S2 E6

# Comedian Felonious Munk Stands Up for Reform

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A PODCAST BY

Lantigua  
Williams  
& Co.

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PEABODY  
NOMINEE



# WHAT

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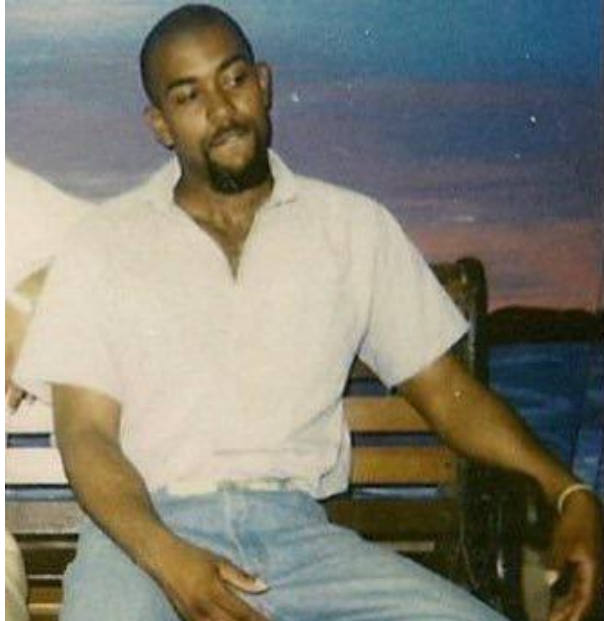


**Many people with Criminal  
Records Lose Their Civil Rights**

# PROBLEM

**“6.1 million Americans could not vote in the Nov. 2018 election because of laws that disenfranchise citizens convicted of felony offenses.”**

-The Sentencing Project



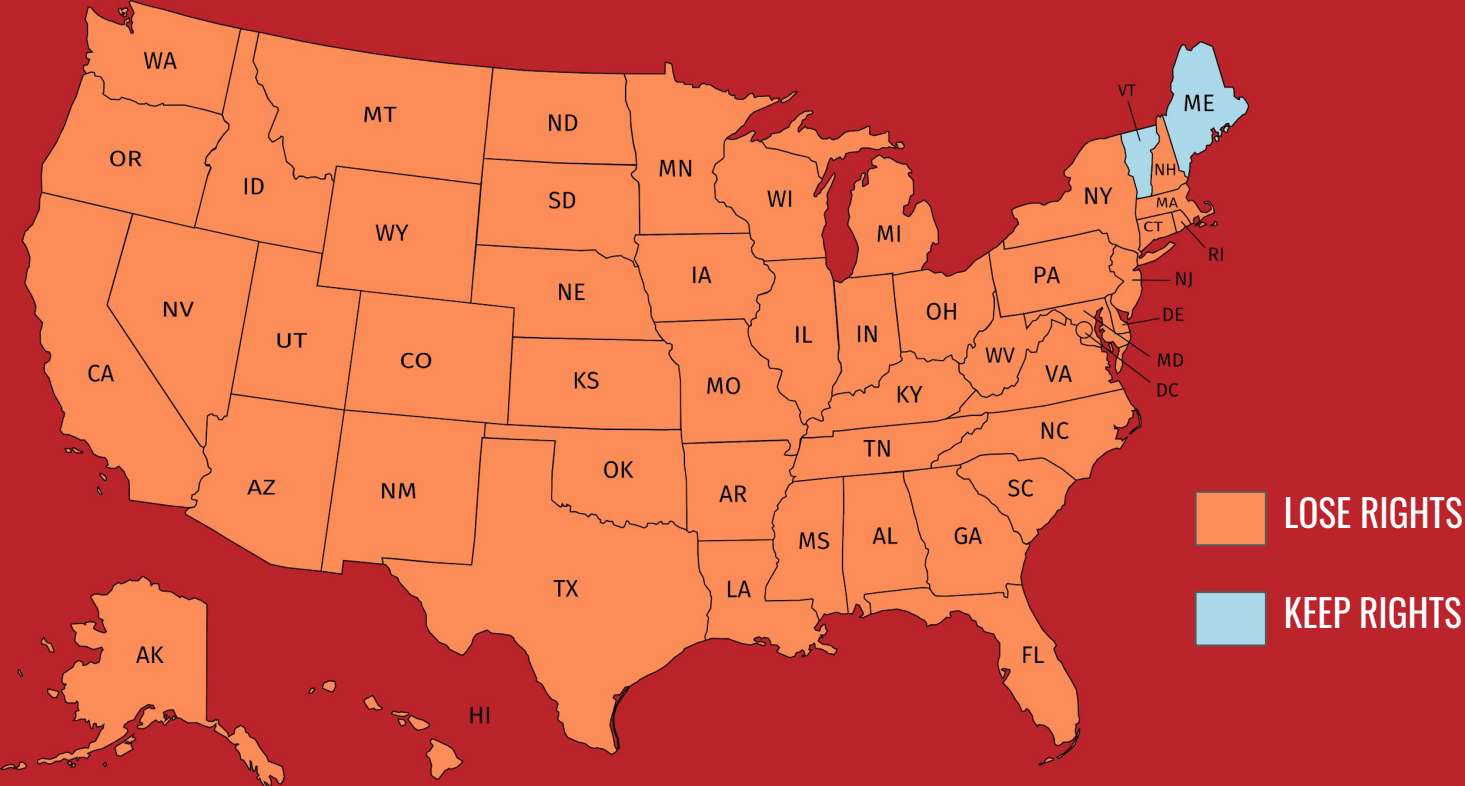
When someone is convicted of a crime, they can lose their most basic civil rights. This often happens when someone is convicted of a felony and sent to prison, but it can happen for other types of crimes as well and effects continue well after someone completes their sentence.

Comedian Felonious Munk was one of those people. After he was convicted of stealing a car, Munk served six years in prison in Virginia. During his time behind bars and after his release, he was not allowed to vote, run for public office, or serve on a jury.

If Munk was convicted in another state, however, these rights may never have been taken away in the first place. Criminal disenfranchisement laws vary widely from state to state, and there is no requirement in the U.S. Constitution to take away someone’s civil rights when they are convicted of a crime.

*Felonious Munk. Image provided by Felonious Munk.*

# WHERE CAN YOU LOSE THE RIGHT TO VOTE?



IN 48 STATES (PLUS DC)



# SOLUTION

**“When I got my rights restored it was a big, huge deal to me, because I had written myself off at least in that area.”**

- Felonious Munk



All but two states take away a person’s right to vote when they are in prison. In some states, these rights are restored automatically after someone is released from prison or completes their parole or probation. But in other states, you must submit an application or appeal to the government in order to regain your rights.

Eleven states bar people convicted of certain crimes (such as murder or election fraud) from regaining their civil rights.

Comedian Felonious Munk was eventually able to restore his rights through Virginia’s online application process. [Virginia has been trying to make the restoration process easier for individuals](#) by removing waiting periods and the requirement that all court fees and fines be paid before someone’s rights are restored.

*Felonious Munk on The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore.*

# HOW

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**To Restore Civil Rights After a  
Conviction**

# RESTORATION

**“63% of Americans agree that people convicted of felonies should not be permanently barred from voting.”**

- [HuffPost/YouGov Poll](#)



- 1) The first step to restoring civil rights is determining which rights (if any) have been taken away due to a conviction. Resources like the [Restoration of Rights Project](#) can help in understanding the laws in each state, but rules vary widely depending on the type of crime someone is convicted of and when and where that crime occurred. Contact local legislators' offices for more individualized information.
- 2) Determine where applications to restore rights should be submitted. Many states require formal appeals to the governor. Other states require applications to the Board of Pardons and Parole or equivalent office. Groups like the [RRP](#) and the [ACLU](#) can point you in the right direction.
- 3) Make a formal application. This might be online (as in Virginia), by mail, or in person.

*Felonious Munk.*



# RESOURCES

To learn more about criminal disenfranchisement and how to restore civil rights, check out:

- [Criminal Disenfranchisement Laws Across the United States](#)
- [Felony Disenfranchisement: A Primer](#)
- [Restoration of Rights Project](#)
- [Jurisdictions Should Embrace Voting Rights for All Americans](#)
- [The ACLU's Breaking Barriers to the Ballot Box: Felon Disenfranchisement Toolkit](#)

## 70 Million Team

**Editor:** Jen Chien

**Managing Editor:** Casey Miller

**Ep. 6 Reporter:** Juleyka Lantigua-Williams

**Host:** Mitzi Miller

**Sound Designer:** Luis M. Gil

**Associate Producers:** Adizah Eghan and Cher Vincent

**Marketing Lead:** Kate Krosschell

**Staff Writer:** Nissa Rhee

**Design Director:** Kenia D. Serrette

**Fact Checker:** Sarah McClure

**Intern:** Emma Forbes

**Creator/Executive Producer:** Juleyka Lantigua-Williams

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