Brandon Drewry

Brandon Boone Drewry died on August 28, 2025 at the age of 63. He had been in prison in Maine for over twenty years. His death has left me with the question: "how does one measure the value of a human life?"

At the time of his death, Brandon had no known family and virtually no friends. He grew up in Florida, where he worked as a taxi driver after dropping out of college. In 2004 Brandon emigrated to Portland, Maine, where he got work as a sternman on a lobster boat and was staying in a homeless shelter. Three days after his arrival he was arrested and charged with a crime he did not commit. He was convicted at trial in 2006—despite DNA evidence excluding him from the crime scene – and was sentenced to thirty years in prison. The myriad problems with his case are detailed in Stan Moody's 2024 book *Bayside Justice: the State of Maine vs. Brandon Boone Drewry*.

Brandon was born with HHT, a genetic condition which caused chronic internal and external bleeding throughout his life. His bleeding, combined with some erratic behavior on his part, caused his court-appointed lawyers to keep their distance from him during the trial, leaving the jurors to conclude that even his lawyers had no use for him. This phenomenon doubtless also contributed to his excessive sentence.

Brandon's HHT led to many other health problems, including anemia, cirrhosis of the liver, and congestive heart failure. Because he was incarcerated, he had to advocate fiercely for himself to obtain even the most basic medical care. He also spent much of his time pushing through through bureaucratic and legal hurdles to clear his name, and he was a prolific writer on current events and the realities of the criminal legal system. He once told me " . . . if I could not write I'd be dead." He shared a number of his writings with me, but I had no idea of their extent. When the prison called to tell me that Brandon had died, they also told me that they had some 24 boxes of his writings.

In early 2024, the Innocence Project of New York accepted his case, and he worked closely with their legal team for the remainder of his life. Together, they filed a petition for medical clemency in 2025, which was denied without a hearing. In anticipation of filing an exoneration petition, the Project also submitted a request to the prosecutor for access to the DNA evidence adduced at trial, a request which remained unanswered at the

time of Brandon's death. The presence of the Innocent Project gave Brandon hope of release in his recent days—making his death all the sadder.

In behalf of the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition, Carolyn Mor connected me with Brandon in 2012. We corresponded regularly thereafter by letter and telephone until shortly before his death. Although Brandon tended to be highly argumentative and endlessly critical of those around him, sometimes including me, we were also able to develop a meaningful bond.

In many ways Brandon was his own worst enemy. His contentious and abusive personality left him with virtually no friends or allies. But as I got to know him over the years, I was increasingly hopeful that his ultimate release would provide him some opportunity to redeem his life. His loss of that opportunity has left me profoundly sad.

Woodley Osborne
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