

Over 1,000 felons to have records expunged and get fresh start with Prop 47

By [Yvette Caslin](#) | October 15, 2016 9:47 AM EST

<http://rollingout.com/2016/10/15/1000-felons-records-expunged-get-fresh-start-prop-47/#1>



Public defenders from L.A., San Bernardino, Riverside counties (Photo courtesy: Steven Williams Foundation)

According to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Proposition 47, the ballot initiative passed by California voters on Nov. 4, 2014, reduces certain drug possession felonies to misdemeanors. It also requires misdemeanor sentencing for petty theft, receiving stolen property and forging/writing bad checks when the amount involved is \$950 or less.

On Oct. 8, 2016, over a thousand felons showed up to The Way World Outreach Church led by Pastor Marco Garcia and the Steven Williams Foundation for the Prop 47 Expungement Rally.

“Deputy Chief Thomas Sone along with three counties — San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Riverside — of public defenders came together to help over 1,000 felons receive Prop 47 expungements, a first-time ever event. Assistant pastors Robert Cuencas and Janet Casas of the Way World Outreach Church ministered to all the anxious recipients in addition to organizing the event,” offers Williams in a statement to the press.

Williams, a celebrity photographer and publicist, gave a moving testimony on his struggles and overcoming the stigma of being an ex- felon. “My testimony is that by God’s saving grace, I have gone ‘from the walls of prison to the halls of UCLA.’ During my incarceration, I gave my life to Christ and made a lifesaving decision to walk in the light. Despite my many successes, sadly, my last employer let me go because of the mistake I made in 1988. Thank God I learned of California’s Prop 47, which gives felons a fresh start. It has helped me and now I want to help others.”

In short, what does Proposition 47 do? Proposition 47 added and amended various statutory provisions to implement the following three changes to felony sentencing laws:

- Drug Possession Offenses: Changes certain theft and drug possession offenses from felonies to misdemeanors, except for persons with certain prior convictions.
- Petty theft, forging or bad check, receipt of stolen property, Shoplifting, commercial burglary
- Resentencing: Authorizes defendants currently serving sentences for felony offenses that would have qualified as misdemeanors under the proposition to petition courts for resentencing under the new misdemeanor provisions.

Eligible inmates must file a petition or application to the court that sentenced them by Nov. 4, 2017 (i.e., within three years of the effective date of the initiative).

Others offered testimonies during the rally. Kim Carter, CEO of Time For Change and a recipient of the CNN Heroes Award, has a nonprofit that provides assistance for mothers to regain their children and offers housing. Olympian Andrew Reyes is a native of Liberia. He comes from a family of 18 and had to overcome a number of odds. Pastor Robert Saucedo gave an altar call and brought many to Christ. Pastor Dejuana Robinson of the Upper Room Church in Adelanto, California ministered in song. And, celebrity stylist Scott Julion encouraged many.

This event was made a success with over 150 volunteers, The Way World Outreach Church, The Steven Williams Foundation, INSITE and ASAP organizations. It is believed to be the largest Prop 47 Rally in San Bernardino, California, and the first time ever that the counties collaborated for this cause.



Regina Cameron and Kim Carter (CNN Hero) Time For Change (Photo courtesy: Steven Williams Foundation)