Death row rapist may have earned early release by patenting new manhole cover design

In China, prisoners can earn sentence reductions for "important technical innovations"

by Alex Linder — May 16, 2019 in News
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About two decades ago, Sun Xiaoguo was sentenced to death for rape, however, until recently, he has been living it up in Kunming, apparently thanks to his well-connected parents and a patent.

Sun, a native of the Yunnan capital, was first convicted in the gang rape of two young women in 1994. According to information from a Southern Weekly investigative report from the time which has recently re-emerged into the spotlight, he managed to avoid severe punishment with the help of his parents.

His mother was a police officer in charge of criminal investigation in Kunming while his stepfather was the deputy director of a district police station. The report found that they arranged for Sun’s age to be changed from 19 to 17 years old, thus ensuring that he would be charged as a minor. The court gave him a three-year sentence which was served at home rather than in prison.

During this time, Sun continued to commit crimes including rape. In one incident in 1997 documented by the Southern Weekly, Sun and his accomplices trapped two underaged girls in a private room in a nightclub before tearing off their clothes, burning them with cigarette butts, pricking their nipples with toothpicks, beating them, and urinating on their faces. After the girls passed out, the gang sent them to the hospital.

For this crime and a number of other rapes he was found to have been involved in, Sun was sentenced to death in 1998 by an intermediate court in Kunming. He appealed that sentence, however, the Yunnan supreme court upheld the decision.
released on good behavior.

A recent report from the Red Star News contends that Sun’s release may have actually been sped up through an unusual and exploitable Chinese government policy which offers sentence reductions for prisoners who make “important technical innovations.” While in prison, Sun had patented an “anti-theft manhole cover.” The submission was sent to the patent office by his mom.

Upon his release, Sun changed his name to Li and started a number of businesses. He became known as “Big Boss Li,” running several nightclubs in Kunming. In April, he was picked up by local police during a crackdown on gang activity. The news of his arrest sparked questions about how he got out of prison in the first place.

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