

Luke Speaks On Going To Jail

Statement from Luther Campbell in response to story headlined "Rapper Luther Campbell jailed in Miami-Dade." Miami Herald, February 18, 2009

MONEY IN QUESTION FOR MOTHER OF THE CHILD'S ATTORNEY FEES
NOT CHILD SUPPORT

The story in yesterday's Miami Herald gives a false impression about my arrest on Tuesday. The arrest had nothing to do with "allegedly owing" over ten thousand dollars in a child support case. I have acknowledged that I am the father of the child in question and I am fully up to date on his child support.

Rather, I was arrested because I had not paid the lawyer's fees of this child's mother. This is a matter of ongoing legal dispute. In December of 2009, the court sided with me in regard to my not paying the legal fees.

This past Tuesday I was at the courthouse on other business. When the sheriff learned of my presence on the premises, he had me arrested although the Florida constitution states that a person cannot be jailed for consumer debt. I was released from jail only after I paid the lawyer's fees of the child's mother.

This is not the end of this matter. Because this writ was originally vacated I intend to fight the legal decision requiring me to make that payment of attorney's fees and the sheriff's decision to arrest me. If the court has now decided to lock people up for not paying attorney's fees then just about everybody is going to jail.

But there's a larger problem here: It's one in which African-American fathers are routinely demonized as "deadbeat dads" by the legal system. It's more accurate to call me a "denied

dad." I wanted the right to visit my child. I wanted shared parental rights. The child's mother opposed my wishes. The court ruled in her favor.

In fact, you don't have to be a black man to face this kind of bias. In a book entitled "A Promise to Ourselves: A Journey Through Divorce and Fatherhood," the actor Alec Baldwin describes the terrible custody battle he's had with his ex-wife. Unfortunately, vindictive mothers all too often use their children as pawns in a war against fathers. In the black community, we often refer to these disputes as "baby mama drama." It's a cute name for a problem that is no laughing matter.

Moreover, I spend at least two (2) hours of every day that I am in Miami working with at risk kids in inner city neighborhoods. I not only work with them, but also, I work with their parents – mothers and fathers – who are having a hard time raising their children while dealing with the potholes in society today. Running from the responsibilities of taking care of my very own son is the last thing I would do.