

My experience as a prisoner in a the land of the free started at 13 as a troubled teen. When I was introduced into an institution at what it felt was probably one of my lowest moments. Being a product of a broken home unsure of where I was wanted and where I belonged, hung over from a night of joy riding and drinking I was subjected to an intake were I was asked a few questions. I received a brief physical then directed to a small shower were I was ordered to strip. This first strip was a shock and I could not believe what was asked of me by this large intimidating man. This could not be real. I asked what happens if I don't, "I want to call someone" I asked. Instead I was informed of how if I did not comply I would be peppered sprayed, my clothes would be removed, and I would be restrained. I went through the strip search clothes off, hands up, lift, turn around, squat and cough. I was 13 and this was one of many times I was sexually demoralized. I am 32 now and I can't count the times I have been through this process, and nothing was found. While incarcerated as a juvenile I was put into a detention center with a number of teens in the same unit all for different crimes like stealing, robbing, shooting, killing, drugs, raping, and even your fellow joy riders.

The situation was tense and immediately I was pushed up on by staff and other prisoners who wanted to test me verbally both gauging my response for different motives. We were all ran through a orientation process and put on a point system were we earned the status of freshman, junior, or senior. Through our behaviors displayed during the day: I lined up for trips to the cafeteria, performance in school, and overall attitude. Everyone received the same level education and physical education was part of it where we were put through circuit training. Then we were corralled into group showers to clean up while observed by staff. They would tell us to "Soap up then hit the wall until it's your turn, rotate!, rotate!, rotate!" There were sometimes fights in the showers and everyday in the institution due to the circumstances and overall morale projected, and I was always tense. Needless to say when the staff had to intervene they always made an example out of people. People were slammed, restrained by feet and hands, and sometimes chained to a mental bunk, sometimes thrown in a laundry cart and wheeled off to C.T.U. "Closed Treatment Unit." Shots were even administrated to the really spirited ones at first, then one day it was no longer seen. Eventually I received an institutionalized order, "insto" for short. I was sent to a place where they clapped when I got there they stuck me in 23 hour lock down single cell for 2 weeks. Then slowly they you work your way out of that status as you did in detention. That was the previous holding unit. This one was C.U. "Closed Unit." Here I attended groups and high school care classes. Everyone learned the same material I also did one-on-ones with a councilor who seemed uninterested and would call us punks. He also had another job A.P.D. his name was Mr. Mistrell and I didn't learn much from him except what a size 10 1/2 cowboy boot felt like on my head after I was restrained for not keeping my hands by my side while they grilled me so close one was spitting in my face yelling at me, and how "he was the real player in this bitch." Until it was my turn to answer a question were one move of my hand

got me tackled to the floor and screamed at "Do you know what size this boot is of course not you too stupid to know a 10 1/2 even when it's looking you in the face."

During the stay in C.U. we were taught to appreciate the time we have out of our single cell as little amount as it was. I was moved to a less restricted unit called a cottage after 6 months and subjected to a large amount treatment that is recovery based and focuses on behavioral and emotional trauma. This was actually the most productive part of juvenile and it did become useful years later once it was needed even though that kind of psychology is not intended for the undeveloped mind. Needless to say at this time I also earned my G.E.D. and learned some much needed social skills.

As an adult my incarceration as an adolescent prepared me for what was to come, nothing new intake screenings, physical, same old strip search with a new twist. No more squat and cough now it was bend over and spread them. I am noting the details of this because I think it's important to understand how the treatment got progressively worse. As far as I know nothing positive has ever come from treating people bad and will usually result in a negative change. During your stay in a pre-trial all offenders are treated the same for the most part. Despite the obvious differences in offense and basic differences as an individual. While incarcerated as prisoner supposedly assumed innocent until proven guilty. I was subjected to society's worst cases; other inmate's behaviors that were learned as a product of generational trauma, neglect, abuse, guilt, shame, and regret. Throw all these things in one room and I am sure you can guess what kind of impact they will have on each other. My experience is, these facilities breed worse behaviors. False codes are taught and people are subjected to the evolution of negativity. When I look around in these walls and contemplate on the problem, the answer is always the same, drugs and pain, not all bad people, well not most of them anyway. These prisons are filled with people who have deep issues dealing with some kind of emotional pain or drug abuse. About 90% of all prisons I have been in are filled with inmates who have committed a drug related crime. I wouldn't be surprised if all crime was not drug related in some form or fashion. I also would like to note I live Alaska were bail is never reasonable and a third party is always requested. In most of these facilities I have been in they are understaffed and some staff just don't care. Why should they? They don't get paid to care. The P.O.'s are always overloaded and in some institutions you have no idea where you are headed when you get transferred or the outcome of your classification.

Transfer never makes contact with your family or your positive support group easy. To be honest prison makes any contact difficult at \$5 a phone call for everywhere but local and were your family is located is never even considered when transferred. In a big state like Alaska that can mean hundreds of miles to drive for a visit. It is my opinion that prisons tear families apart. Not to say that the original bad choices that resulted in the incarceration should not being addressed correctly. The Department of Corrections is not correcting anything they are only temporarily removing the problem from the community, while the problem will continue to get worse. The proof is the screaming in your face. It is noted in every jail house write up every

petition to revoke probation, every new offense committed by a previous incarcerated prisoner. I have sat in these cells and thought deeply about the problem. Greed always comes to mind. I have also thought about the solution. Love always comes to mind also. The facility I am in right now is a small facility where there are opportunities for class and staff are reasonable. People are actually trying to change. That is not always the case but when it is, I would say it has to do with the options that are available. Inside these prisons people are degraded, sexually demoralized, trained to be co-dependent and subjected to society's worst behaviors. The outcome is a population of human beings that become victim of the own bad choices and a man made disorder. It's called being institutionalized. You cannot have one without the other,(the bad choice or the disorder) but it's also obvious one will not fix the other. That being said with all due respect I think it is time we try something else.