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03/07/2010

Voices Through the Walls

RE: What inmates Need in Order to Make it on the Outside.

What an incarcerated needs in order to make it on the outside, can be resolved in different ways, and in fact must be resolved in different ways.

1. What type of incarcerated person is being assessed to make it on the outside, i.e. a first time convicted person; second time; third time; career criminal; habitual criminal.

The things that each type needs to make it on the outside, will be vastly different from one to the next. However, certain steps will cross over, and that is to make it outside, "must" have a successful start on the inside.

Starting on the inside is two (2) fold. 1. Addressing those issues not addressed in the incarcerated persons life e.g. education, vocational skills, tools, ability etc., drug addiction, alcohol, and real personal counselling. Because most incarcerated persons have hidden issues, that without being addressed is an easy road back into criminal activity.

2. Starting on the inside also means starting with a designed re-entry program like

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2. Starting on the inside also means starting with a designed re-entry program, that starts in the County Jail where feasible, yet certainly a re-entry program that starts at the moment the incarcerated person hits the prison facility.

This program outlines those items that the incarcerated will address, to move towards their release from incarceration.

That, this re-entry program must be all comprehensive, so that it can cover three (3) years of this person's life after release from incarceration. And where applicable includes immediate family members that the incarcerated person will be returning to live with.

This type of program will have different levels of success, for the first, and second time incarcerated person. Because this program can be like basic training for them, instructing them in new ways for success in life.

This type of program will be beneficial to society as a whole, because those first and second time offenders, given the benefit of this program, whose return to prison can now be classified differently e.g., needing a longer period of incarceration for the purpose of adjustment, because they've exhibited a propensity for criminal behavior after benefitting from an intense program.

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Naturally, a more intense program will be needed for those convicted for, a third and fourth time, because a program will be needed, to help them over habitual habits that; have become addictions to them possibly in a manner that they are unaware of.

And will need instructors whom won't limit themselves, and therefore won't limit those in whom their seeking to help reform their lives for a better way of living. And most importantly a better way of thinking about themselves, and others. Because the more they "value" themselves, the more they will value the next person.

And hopefully from such a program a pay it forward idea can be utilized, where those whom successfully complete the program, can be utilized to help another do the same; so that a positive network support group is developed. Because success will need like minded individuals involved top to bottom, and bottom to the top.

And I truly believe that such a program can be achieved, because this Country does care about its people, and this is the steps to be taken to reduce crime and violence in America.

Cordially

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Voices Through the Wall

I, Curtis L. Downing, am presently incarcerated in the Nevada Department of Corrections system, in Indian Springs Nevada.

That, I have been incarcerated in just about every male facility in this state, minus honor camps. That, what I present to Voices Through the Walls is all "first hand experience."

In this missive I'll address the subject of Education. It would seem that the message the Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC), sends to its incarcerated residents is once you have your high school diploma, that's all you'll get. (This includes a G.E.D.). NDOC offers no programs that further an incarcerated persons ability to be, educated in, or with skills, knowledge, tools to re-enter society.

This especially since the politicians have long since made Pell grants, unavailable to those whom are incarcerated. There hasn't been an educational push for those incarcerated, despite the statistically proven fact that, the more education an incarcerated offender receives, the "less" likely they are to return to prison.

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This meaning that education to an Associate Degree and up, allows those previously incarcerated the opportunity to compete in, an ever increasing technological world.

To even seek education by way or correspondence isn't encouraged, in fact its made to be a very difficult process. None of the colleges in the State of Nevada offer correspondence courses, to those whom are incarcerated, and I had to contact the then Director Jackie Crawford, to be approved for correspondence studies to Ohio University.

This as none of the administrative staff at the facility would, provide me with the approval to take the correspondence studies. Then once I was approved by the Director, finding a proctor was almost next to impossible. In fact I was forced to drop several courses because, I couldn't obtain a proctor, and I was doing very well in the psychology course.

In order for the educational system to be fixed behind prison walls, society has to decide just what type of previously incarcerated person, they want living next door to them. The politicians don't really care because, they're going to live in a area, community where, most X-offenders cannot afford to live. Yet, pretty soon those types of communities will become targets

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for the criminal whom cannot, compete in the job market due to the lack of education, knowledge, skills, tools, ability to obtain employment.

They can't obtain employment because even some of those with "college educations", are competing for the same type of employment, only available to those with a high school diploma, General Education Diploma, or none of the above.

Its without question that the lack of education is a cause that is, part of a cause leading to incarceration. Yet, it seems today in the State of Nevada the message is "we'd rather incarcerate your children, than to educate your children." This is made clear by the budget cuts they are willing to make to education, and not to the Department of Corrections.

Without education reform in the Nevada Department Corrections, then it is more likely than not, that those with no education, or nothing more than a high school diploma; or a G.E.D. will continue to return to prison.

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