

It's what you make of it and reflects your values...

I'm thirty-five years old and currently incarcerated. This is my first time being in prison, and frankly I am a little astonished by what I see here. Prison; and those that advocate them, espouse the idea of reforming bad behaviors, fixing addictions, and in working towards preventing recidivism. Yet there are more rules being placed that prevent prisoners from doing those very goals! Higher education was removed years ago, right at the moment when the nation woke up; their realization that to earn a living in the U.S. requires a college degree. Married families are considered the ideal and most stable unit in our country, yet more and more states remove or prohibit conjugal visits and contact visits; two things essential to maintain networks of support and stable homes among poverty stricken and crime stricken areas. Finally, there is the growth of our prison infrastructure creating scenarios where inmates can only survive by acting like children, or worse: lashing out violently. How is our nation improving when we are creating less empowered, less educated, and less responsible citizens?



We as inmates are locked up and judged by the nation, yet we are not enfranchised... So we feel unwelcome, creating our antagonism and renegade behavior. We spend increasing amounts of hours doing less and less as programs for self improvement decline; as parole fails those who do try to fix their lives we choose to not participate at all. More of our Appeals for justice go unheard, or worse, acknowledged as valid but will not be victorious in court because of the disincentive to repair judicial errors. We overwhelmingly take pleas because we know that we stand very little chance of winning trials, both innocent and guilty alike realize this. The few, like myself, who had resources and believed in the system fought and still lost, though only lost when those resources dried up. Now I realize like the rest of the other inmates why people take deals despite being innocent: there is no justice when the system is adversarial. The courts today; mirroring the public sentiment, feel that a few innocent persons wrongfully imprisoned are tolerable, for the sake of jailing the guilty. We live in a culture of fear here in the U.S. We are afraid to trust each other, to give a chance to a felon, to understand why so many people are imprisoned. We



would rather make things harder for people, so that we can reinforce the stereotypes that allow us to hate: "Approved classes of persons." We've become intolerant of our freedoms, of our rights and the responsibility to safeguard them, and of the idea of personal growth.

Frankly, we have become a nation of overgrown children, spoiled and unwilling to do the work necessary to fix our republic. Our prisons, our convicts, and our laws reflect this. The incarcerated can only react to the way they are treated, to the laws in effect, to the opportunities closed off to them. Would someone really be correct in blaming a dog who was beaten and abused for biting back?

We are on the path to tyranny, to serfdom and state approved slavery. Each day we make more things that were not illegal, crimes. Each day we track more and more our daily lives in an attempt to control everything that used to be normal. Each day we see laws passed lowering the threshold required to convict someone. Ask yourself: Why are there less and less illegal aliens coming to our borders? It is because our values ceased to be American values. It is because our dream ceased to be the American dream. Until we change our method of



thinking; from both the inside and outside of prison, we will continue on this path of serfdom. We will continue to see our nation decline. Until we change fundamentally our politicians, we will not find true reform. They will not do what is necessary to move us forward. To paraphrase James Howard Kunstler; we don't always get the politicians we need, but we always get the politicians we deserve.

Our prisons, reflect our nations values, and those reflect on us. They show us to be a small, fearful, unforgiving and close minded country... terrified at its' own shadow, and at the repercussions from all the problems it has created. Is it any wonder why we've become one of the most loathed nations on earth?

Restore the values, rights, and qualities of the American people; and you will see prison populations diminish, crime decrease, jobs return, and our nation unified, safe, and hopeful for the future.

If we fail to do that, we will see that just like the ancient Romans, our citizens will welcome the barbarians at our doorstep with open arms.. because their laws have become more just than our own... their freedoms greater than ours, their futures brighter.