

Opinion: Views & commentary from around the community

Matthew Hattley

Q&A 4



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If you could send one suggestion to Governor Cuomo about improving the rehabilitation chances of prisoners in NYS prisons, what would it be?

The one suggestion that I would pose to Governor Cuomo would be to allow actual corporations (Target, Walmart, Google, IBM etc.) to operate within the NYS prison system — financially independent from the state government — and create a partnership that would provide said corporations adequate space to properly train us in any capacity they deem necessary, for the purpose of providing us gainful employment opportunities upon our release. This would allow us to increase our marketable skills while the recidivism rate would decrease. This is what genuine rehabilitation should be based on. It would provide us the opportunity to become part of the working class.

What are your feelings about the death penalty? Can the death penalty be fairly litigated and applied?

I personally oppose the death penalty. No branch of government should have the power to take another human life simply because said person committed a crime against humanity, regardless of how heinous the act. Especially when you take into consideration the high level of corruption and/or racism comprising said government. There is simply too much room for error — and death is permanent. Plus when any branch of government is permitted to perform such an act, there is no longer any differentiation between them and the condemned. No human is perfect; compassion is needed, not barbarism. However, other prisoners believe the death penalty should only be applied in cases of extremely heinous crimes where there is no possibility of reasonable doubt. An example is Timothy McVeigh. He bombed a federal building, killing a number of people, and admitted it. He even seemed proud of it. He did not seek forgiveness or mercy. There was no mistake or bad decision making on his part. If a person does not seek forgiveness or mercy and admits to his/her extremely heinous crime then why spare him/her from the death penalty?

What do you miss the most from the outside world?

I honestly miss far too many things to list them all, but I will mention a few: the daily interaction with my family and community; the option of travelling freely around my neighborhood, state, country and possibly the world; the ability to sleep on a comfortable mattress, as opposed to a plastic covered piece of foam; sexual intercourse with a woman; the option to operate a motor vehicle; privacy when required; the ability to do things for myself, as opposed to depending on others; the scenery in general (trees, houses, people, the mall, parks, beaches, etc.) and the ability to sit down at an actual kitchen/dining room table to enjoy a home cooked meal. I basically miss all of the things that most people take for granted.

What would you like to do the most if you were free?

Aside from working and becoming a productive member of my community, I would like to actually be there for my grandchildren, becoming a valid part of their lives. To have the opportunity to help them with their homework, take them shopping, go to the park, and simply spend some quality time with them. Especially since I was not there for my own children — I was incarcerated for the majority of their lives. Only recently, in the past few years, have I experienced the joy and responsibility associated with being a father... it's a wonderful feeling! Although I still have much to learn, my younger daughter will consent to such (smile!). I would also like to get involved in a serious relationship with a compatible woman. I am tired of being alone. I am finally ready to settle down and start living a normal life.

With this year's Presidential election the fiercest contest in years, perhaps ever, with mounting levels of dislike and hatred on both sides, has any of this emotion penetrated behind the walls?

Absolutely not. Yes, most people will voice their own opinion, and in some cases actually give you something that supports it. But, overall, the atmosphere in here has not changed or shifted as a result of the election. In all honesty, not every staff member participates in the election — the Democratic process is no longer taken seriously. Plus most people are simply tired of being let down from one corrupt politician to the next. The political culture has changed over the past twenty years. Most politicians are no longer concerned about the people who elected them or those of their own community, but more about enriching themselves... it's all about the money.

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