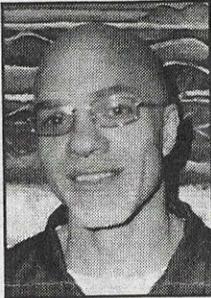


Inside The Box

By Matthew Hattley

Ours Is A Broken Prison System



Matthew Hattley

I realize that when I critique the prison system, the average person reading my words believes I am doing so merely because I am incarcerated. Allow me to prove you wrong.

According to the article "Captives Outside Prison Walls" by Errol Louis [Daily News, 5/29/14], he stated: "As ex-NYPD Commissioner Bernie Kerik once told me, the three years he spent in prison (for tax fraud

and making false statements) were like 'dying with your eyes open.' A man who walks through the prison gates and back into society is, in many ways, reenacting the biblical tale of Lazarus, raised from the dead and exiting the tomb."

Those words — "dying with your eyes open" — are from an ex-top cop who society respected, trusted and viewed as a strong man. Yet if a mere three years could make him feel like "dying with his eyes open," just imagine what it is like to do ten, twenty or even thirty-plus years under such conditions. Not a pretty picture, is it?

This is why the current laws surrounding the prison system MUST be restructured — immediately! We Americans are quick to point a finger at other countries and comment on how harshly they treat their own citizens, yet we refuse to openly accept, admit or even acknowledge the injustice that is actually happening right here at home. How much longer will we deny and/or hide the truth about the broken prison system?

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It should completely transform the corrections and criminal justice system."

They further state: "The incarceration industry has grown into a billion dollar industry, with corrections being among the most expensive budget in many states, increasingly outpacing what they spend on higher education," and "When a typical bureaucracy does its job this badly, it wastes money, time and paper. The corrections bureaucracy, in failing to correct the large majority of inmates in its charge, not only wastes money, but also wastes lives, families and entire cities." [visit: www.gingrichproductions.com]

Then we have to deal with legislators like LaValle and Thiele, who have a strong desire to "increase from twenty-four months to sixty months the time for which reconsideration for parole for a violent felony offense shall be determined." Is the initial 15-25 years — which we received from the sentencing judge — not adequate enough?

Why would anyone consciously yearn for an opportunity to give a person who is eligible for parole an additional five years? That's a sentence in itself. Plus the current two years is already too harsh. This is all simply a reflection towards those who break the law, an unprofessional way to view the situation.

For those who honestly believe that a person who just completed 15-25 years of incarceration is "not enough," I personally challenge you to do just 90 days in this environment with the general population — not protective custody. Doing "time" is not as easy as many would like you to believe. The high suicide rate alone speaks volumes.

I guarantee you this: The majority who could physically experience this would view us (incarcerated individuals) in a different light — a more humane one. It takes a very strong and determined person to endure twenty-five years in here while maintaining their sanity and moral foundation in the process.

Even Newt Gingrich and Van Jones weighed in on the broken prison issue. They discuss their opinions in "Prison System is Failing America" [CNN covered the story on May 21, 2014]. Here are several of their quotes: (1) "The current system is broken beyond repair. It's a human, social and financial disaster. We need a radical strategy of replacement of these huge bureaucracies that lack any meaningful oversight." (2) "We need to rethink prisons, parole and probation for the 21st century." and (3) "Technology should revolutionize more than just the prisons' rehabilitation programs.

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Why does society continue to support a system where the primary objective is to administer vengeance on its own citizens? When we commit a crime, we should be offered some sort of rehabilitation — not a series of punishments for decades on end! Under these circumstances, there is no differentiation between the person who committed the crime and those administering their punishment.

If an individual is unable to develop positively — to where they are able to function productively in society after ten-plus years of incarceration — then it's obvious that the broken system failed society and New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) is simply misappropriating several billion dollars annually. At what point is a rehabilitated person forgiven for his/her transgression(s)?

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