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"Voices Through the Wall"
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Prison Writings

A great philosopher said once, "Prisons are a reflection of society." With all the hype about criminals and prisons, people in society do not realize how they are affected by what goes on inside a prison. As a person currently incarcerated, I will share with you my experience of being confronted with a department of the "State" that is supposed to be responsible for a lawbreakers "correction."

When a person commits a crime, it is slated as a crime against society. That is why a criminal indictment always has the heading (caption), the name of the perpetrator versus The People of whatever State in which the crime occurred--for example: John Doe vs. The People of the State of New York. At the same time, when a person commits a crime against "The People of the State," that they are in, that person becomes a possession of that State. What does that mean? It means that "The State" is responsible for that person's violation. The people (citizens) of that State becomes responsible for the violating citizen.

"The State" as an apparatus, is responsible for the social, political, cultural, and economic stability of "The People" (citizens) of its territories, which is why it has "departments" to deal

with every aspect of the above responsibilities. Now what exactly is the "Department of Corrections" responsible for? By New York State Law, the D.O.C. is responsible for "care, custody, control, and 'correction'" of every inmate in its possession. However, does it really live up to that responsibility--moreover, do the emissaries of the "department" live up to their responsibilities? From my experience, twenty years of being incarcerated, and having traveled through eleven maximum-security prisons within the "department," I am in a good position to tell you what I have witnessed. First, there is a mass media misrepresentation of prisons—"real prisons," that is--the misrepresentation of prisons being a "Holiday Inn" or Country Club. I made the distinction of "real prisons" because that is where the majority of violating citizens go to be punished, degraded, and violated by agents of the "department." Another reason for the distinction of "real prisons" is because there do exist certain "special facilities," to where a certain class of violating citizens are sent. The violators whose crimes affect more people than all the "street" crimes put together! Those violators are referred to as "white collar" criminals and they are usually sent to those "special facilities" that the mass media represents as "Holiday Inns."

Now going back to the "real prisons," which I have been exploring for over twenty years now. It has not been a walk in the park. For the 2.3 million people currently incarcerated in the U.S. penal system, there is a story that is not being told, a story that agents of "The State" are not being sensitive of, or even concerned with. I am talking about people (citizens) currently incarcerated whose lives have become a product of the prison industrial complex. I am talking about people—men, women, and children (juveniles) whose personal life stories have been buried in the quagmire of political bureaucracy. I am talking about people currently incarcerated

who have become rejected products of the same "State" that was suppose to be responsible for their "care, custody, control, and 'correction'."

Consequently, as I traveled through eleven of the sixteen maximum-security facilities within New York State, I witnessed populations of damaged people. In a profound psychological way, the prisons I have traveled through are institutions of hurt, pain, trauma, neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, post-traumatic-stress-syndrome, abandonment, addiction, and a host of other malfunctions. Those are the kinds of people I've been experiencing in all the prisons I have lived in for periods of time; people with all those malfunctions. Moreover, the agents of "The State" are no good example for the people they are charged with looking over. If you were able to overhear a group of correctional officers in their element, you would not believe your ears. Of course, there is always an exception to the rule, but for the most part, there is an overwhelming sense of ignorance, callousness, and disregard for people currently incarcerated, who really have issues.

The agents of The State may say that they have problems also, but that is a problem in itself: they should not be charged with the responsibility of "correcting" people with serious problems, if they have problems themselves. The job of "Correcting" people currently incarcerated is a job that should be charged to professional agents of the "State"--professional agents who are trained in dealing with people currently incarcerated that deviated from the norms of society--the same society that they were once a part of, and ultimately affected by. After all, the "State" apparatus is responsible for the social well being of its citizens

Submitted by,

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