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Are we Justified in using Prisons?

I Came to prison at a young age. At that time in my life it was my belief that I deserved to be in prison. Infact it was my belief back then that I did not deserve to live because of the harm my actions had Caused to other people.

Because I was so young I held a lot of misconceptions about what prison was actually for. I thought and was lead to believe by my Judge, Lawyer and family, that I would Come to prison and be given the opportunity and Chance to change my life and make it better. A chance to become a better person.

I Came to prison wanting that Chance more then anything else in the World. I knew I had made a lot of bad Choices in my past. Most I had been lead to by the Circumstances of my life, other people and the environment in which I had found myself a part of before I Came to prison. So to me I looked at Coming to prison as a chance to change who I had become and better the way inWhich I Veiwed the World around me.

I had never been given such a Chance before. I had never been arrested before the Crimes that brought me to prison and I was determined

to take the Chance I was being given and become a Productive Citizen. Coming to prison, I was taken to the prisons Super Maximum Security facility. Where they housed their deathrow inmates. And it was there within my first year that I began to lose my misconceptions about what prison really was. I had not been brought to prison to get help as I had been lead to believe. The prison did not really care if I learned from my mistakes and made myself a better person. All the prison cared about was that I did not Cause them any problems.

I found myself in a warehouse.

Where there were no programs or the Chance to learn higher education. I found Myself in a place where it was prefured by the Staff if you were doped up on Medication to keep everything Calm.

I Survived that first year by being allergic to every Medication they tried to place me on and was taken out of their Super max facility to their regular Maximum Security.

There I found out they had no programs or higher education for their Maximum Security inmates either. The only thing they had was Highschool education and they only had that because they were forced by the State to give

all of their inmates a highschool education.

Given that opportunity I reentered highschool and got my diploma all the while listening to the prison guards complaining that the last thing they needed was smart inmates. Once I finished highschool I had no way to continue my education. The prison's Maximum Security facility had no other programs or educational opportunities. Nore did they have any real library. I turned to books to learn. Reading anything and everything I could. Only the library where I was housed consisted of a box of books (maybe fifty) that was given to each section once, maybe twice a year.

And the books in the box usually contained a couple bibles, a couple self help then the rest were all fiction.

As the years passed I began to grow frustrated with my inability to continue my education. I could find no good books that I had not read 3-4 times already. And while I have family, they were all barely getting by and none could afford to buy me books or pay for any correspondence educational courses. I reached out to any place I could to continue to learn but I never had any luck. I had no resources. I knew no one that did or could help me. And I had no way to get addresses

for places I did not already know who might be able to help me.

I never lost my yearning to learn. I knew from the beginning that only I could help myself and since I could not rely on outside stimuli, I began to think for myself, teach myself. I knew coming to prison, that drugs were the main cause of my lack of consciousness/awareness. The day I was arrested was the last time I ever used drugs. Without being under the influence I knew I would never have been as uncaring with my actions as I had been. So I had resolved there and then to never use again.

Not using gave me a clairity I had never had before. It was like I was thinking for myself for the first time in my life. It helped that I was so young when I quit. I had only started becouse someone I Loved and looked up to pressured me into it. But the six months or so that I had used, destroyed and twisted my whole life.

Having quit, I began to work on how I thought about myself and others, putting value to both. I began to read one book after another. Trying to find books worth reading. Then in 2001 still unable to find any way to continue my education, but yearning to do something productive with my life, I began to write my own books.

I realized quickly that it was not easy to write books. They required resources and research, both things that I had no access or privy to. So I let my imagination take over and began to write fantasy Novels.

Years have passed Since I Completed my first manuscripts. Becouse this prison allows no access to any Sort of technology, all my manuscripts are Still hand written. And I've had no opportunity to get any of Seen or published.

After being in prison So long, with no Way to learn a Career. In a place where the only job's pay $12 a month and there are only enough jobs for every 1/15 people. I have Come to realize that prisons are

not meant to rehabilitate their inmates. Every thing they do is meant to make money for their institutions or to save money.

Each prison makes a certain amount of money each year per inmate. If they can parole someone and that person comes back within that some year - the prison gets paid twice for that person. I have watched the parole boards carefully over the years seeing, who they release, how long they give inmates to see them and the types of offenses they come down hard on. And one of the main patterns I have seen is the prison releases people who are likely to come right back, the quickest. The inmates who do programs or education, they keep

the longest periods of time. If they can keep the prisons full, not only do they have jobs but they can also tell the public that they need more money. If they can keep their maximum security facilities full, they can tell the public they need more money for their severe threat offenders.

For 18 years I have been kept in Maximum Security - Not becouse I am an unmanagable inmate - I dont have any violent disciplinary offenses in my whole prison stay. And while I am conscidered a Lifer, I have the possibility of parole, though I have never seen the parole board yet. The administration keeps me in Maximum Security only becouse they can get away with it. When asked they

make excusses about the Severity of my Crime. Yet there are hundreds of lifers without the possibility of parole in less Secure facilities So there is no validity to their excusses. The fact is - I am kept in maximum Security because I Come from a low income family and have noone who will make them let me out of maximum So I Can get in College and Start a Career that will help me when I parole.

Each year I Watch as the prisons extort money from the public, government, it's inmates and the inmates families. About twice a year prison administrations will plea to the public their need for more money. Then imply threats of early release of inmates if they dont get it. I have Seen

the prison do 'repairs' to doors, outlets or simply paint. Then charge the State extravagant amounts of money for it. I have watched as the prison slowly monopolizes all it's industries. They own their own Commissary. Buying food and hygiene at super cheap bulk rates, then charge inmates 10 to 20 times what they bought it at. The prisons own their own businesses, giving jobs to inmates and paying them so cheaply that children in sweat shops get paid more. The truth is, they have turned prisons into Acceptable Slavery Camps. They own all the inmates bank accounts and get their intrest. They charge inmates extravagantly for any disciplinary offense. But since most inmates dont have jobs, the only money they get comes from their families and friends. So

in essense it is not the inmate they are abusing. It's the inmates families, regular everyday work hard people. Most of whom have never offended in their lives, who are being taken advantage of because they love and care about their family and friends and dont want to see them suffer more then they already have to.

Maybe my opinion doesn't count for much. I have made my mistakes and I have no problem paying for them in a reasonable way. But we are living in a world that is constantly becoming better. We as a people are evolving, becoming more conscious, conscientious and civil with each passing year. As we grow, so to must the way we look at things like justice, fairness and true

Civility. The phrase 'Justice is blind' does not have a place in our future. We Can only Care for one another, when we actually Care.

I have wanted Nothing more in my life then to fix the mistakes I made as a Child growing up. I dont have those opportunities. Maybe most of us inmates in prison Never will. Without education, programs or Chances to better our lives while in prison - Most inmates will leave prison no better then when they Came in, and in Most Cases they will leave worse off then before.

I've heard it said by people who oppose rehabilitation, that giving money to better inmates educations is Just a Waste of time and money. That inmates deserve

to reap what they have sown.

To me that just shows how far we are as a nation from becoming what we will be in the future. A nation is only the sum of the bonds created by it's citizens and America is and always will be the best of nations. Not because of who we are as a world power, But because of who we are as a people. Civility and consciousness of others and their plights are what have built America so great. It is those things that will guide us towards evolving who we are as humans.

Justice is not about punishing those who have made the wrong choices in life. Its about helping those who have been wronged and fixing those who have

made those wrongs. That way they dont make the same mistakes again. Creating even more victums. For that, the focus on rehabilitation has to be front and center.

Prison as it is now, is just a revolving door. Sure it helps a few inmates and even keeps a couple from reoffending. But the number of reoffenders should show in itself the error in the current prison system. Prisons were invented a very long time ago, in a much more barbarous age. It worked for people back then because for the majority, they were not as consciously mature as we are now as a civilization.

People could say - it worked for them then and it works for us now - the problem with that is we are growing more civil as

a Society. In the last Couple hundred years we have Changed the world with our thoughts and actions on what is acceptable and what is Civil. Progress takes time yet we have moved mountains in Short Spans of time. We did not do so by relying upon things we were use to, we did so because we all knew and felt what was right.

Keeping inmates in prisons, with no focus on rehabilitation, wrongs not only the inmates but the Society in which they are released into. Prisons are not the answer. Yet each year we waste billions of dollars to keep the prisons running even though they have proven not to work. Causing Suffering to both inmates and Civilians. when we have

a Civil and Constitutional duty to protect both.

I dont believe it will be any one thing that will change our Society for the better. I believe it will come as the realization of what Civility really is grows in each one of us. It is our beliefs and how we see the world that shapes our Society for the better. I can only hope as an inmate, who's been trying for 18 years to better myself, that the opportunities come soon. And if not ~~$~~ in my time, then in time to help others. who like me, want nothing more then to have that one chance we've never had, to do something productive and beneficial with our lives.

That chance will never come while

Our justice System is being used with the Sole purpose of punishing those who have made the wrong Choices in their lives. Our Country is no longer ignorant to Civil rights and All inmates deserve to be treated as human beings, dispite their mistakes. It is our Job as a Society to take Care of our Sick and Wounded in Civilized ways. we may not be able to See Some of these wounds that affect most inmates, but they are there all the Same. It is what brings about these wounds that we must find and fix. The Causes are all around us. Bad environments, decaying morals and family values, bad parenting... ect. they affect people in different ways.

One of our problems is that none of us

tively know how these issues effect us and it's our own fault that we dont. For hundreds of years now we have been sending offenders to prisons. More and more each year, dispite our citizens and government putting more and more money into the prison systems with the purpose of fixing it. Yet dispite all the things we have done, we fail to look to the causes of the offenses. We ignore the causes, and focus on the behavior, locking up the offenders, most of who are broke on the inside. Once locked up, we expect the prisons to fix the offender and keep them from the rest of society until they are fixed for their release.

But how can a prison fix a problem they them-selves dont even understand and are not realky equiped to fix? Prisons themselves dont look

for the Causes that brought an inmate to their prison. They focus on what they are paid to do. Keep people Calm and in prison, until their release. For the Majority inmates dont talk to prison officials becouse everyone of us know and Can feel when Someone is honestly trying to help them. There is a big diffesence between wanting to help others and Just doing a Job. And the people who honestly want to help are very far and inbetween in the prison System. It's the lack of Caring that keeps prisons open, on both Sides of the fences.

The way I See it, the first Step towards fixing the Crime problem is the easiest. Care. Care about the inmates who's lives are being Segregated from Society. Care about what Caused them to behave the way they did and

Make it your priority to find out why and what Caused Such behavior in the first place. Becouse without Knowing those things - we Cannot fix our Society. You Cannot fix Something when you dont truely know the Causes and Stresses that made the break in Society in the first place. And trying to fix Something without properly understanding what broke it - It's just putting a bandage on a festering wound. It looks fixed on the outside, but it Still festers all the Same. Causing it to break all over again. Creating the revolving door prison System we Currently have.

Most inmates Coming to prison were under enormous amounts of Stress. Even more So when they are again released back into

Society. In most cases inmates come to prison poor, looking for a quick fix to their problems. they leave prison in even worse shape then they came in. Years have been taken off their lives, and during that time they have nothing beneficial to show for it. When other citizens are building their futures, working jobs, learning careers, inmates are stuck in dead time unable to look towards their futures. most have no job training or careers to fall back on once they are released. Prisons cannot provide such things to inmates for free and few inmates have the money or family with money to pay for such training while they are in prison. Thats if the prison they are in even has such training. So with no career or job prospects, they reenter society, expected

to be able to Cope with all the Stress that made them fold in the first place. It's amazing that any inmate is able to Cope under Such pressure.

Over the years I have watched inmates one by one, leave this place. Only to Come right back. Of the people I know who have been Successful - I can Count them on one hand. In 18 years that is Some really bad odds. It is a Common fact - people Sent to prison always reoffend. Prisons boast about their rehabilitation rates, but the truth about it is the people they Count as rehabilitated are people who have bounced in and out of prison So many times that they finally learned how to Cope with the Stress' of their environment or they are first time offenders Smart enough to See

how to fix themselves.

In the end, it is not the prisons that fix the offenders, it's the offenders finally learning how to think that allows them to fix themselves.

If you have any questions or Comments, feel free to Contact me at;

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I am always looking for new research or interesting topics you Come across as I have No access to anything but news where I am housed. So if you Come across anything you'd like to Share - I always have an open ear.