

The Debriefing Proposal

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In the prison systems all over America there has been an average rate of 50% to 67% recidivism of men who have been incarcerated. Many studies have shown that this recidivism has taken place as early as within 30 days of release up to within 3 years. It has also been shown that many of the crimes in our communities are committed by these repeat offenders over and over again. This may be true, but the prison system and society must accept their own responsibility for the condition and environment which they have helped create that lead to this, until then our problem of recidivism will not be solved. The question might even be asked, "Do we really want to solve this problem" if we continue to not respond to this problem properly.

There have been many correctional ideologies tried over the years; rehabilitation through education and training, lengthier sentences and long term confinements and punishment and now after coming to the understanding and realization that long term confinements and the practice of mental and emotional degradation only creates an economic burden on the correctional system and more dangerous and bitter individual being released upon our communities; they are now once again reverting back to the "Rehabilitation theory" but now they call it "Re-entry".

I am not in disagreement with this because the people being release need all the support, assistance and encouragement that they can get upon re-entering society. Unfortunately, I believe the same high recidivism rate may result from it if this additional element that I propose is not added to it. Let us be honest and realistic about the ex-offender's reality. This person is faced with a lot of seen and unseen obstacles; discrimination, prejudice, bias, fear, lack of trust, lack of education and skills, lack of legal economic opportunity and support. The correctional system has tried to address some of these issues with limited support and resources. But if we add this most important element to the processing and transition of a person before they leave prison we would eliminate a large percentage of recidivism by attacking the center and core of the person's fears or needs prior to release. This can be addressed by a process I call "Debriefing".

There is nothing more traumatic to the human soul then being taken away from his family and life's liberties and freedoms. The impact of being placed

in an environment with some of the most dangerous, ruthless and deprave minded individuals upon the earth is devastatingly life changing. It doesn't matter that they may even deserve it or you can even conclude that it is the price they have to pay; the fact remains that they have been subject to direct and forceful cultural shock and after being subjected to this for a period of time they should be mentally, emotionally and spiritually "Debriefed" from this "psychological trauma" and re-socialized before re-entering back into our communities and society.

In addition to this trauma; then you have to deal with the psychology of institutional dependency that may be developed or "contracted". It is just like an addiction; they know it wrong and no good for them but they lack the psychological and emotional discipline and will to free themselves from its grasp. Many of them have become a group of people who say they want to be free and often fight to meet the conditions to be free but are really addicted to the dependency of institutionalization, selfishness and lack of responsibility. This addiction has caused them to not respect and appreciate freedom and its values; therefore they have no problem risking it just to return to the comfort of their dependency of institutionalization. It doesn't matter if they have made the best of their time or not; they have been affected by this inhuman and psychologically degrading environment.

There are many studies that confirm that "one day" in prison can dramatically change a person's life. Just imagine 5 years, 10 years or even 25 years or more; the affects that this may have on the mental and emotional perception of an individual subjected to this. I propose that the following issues be addressed prior to release:

- A. the issues of abandonment, betrayal, feelings about legal injustices, anger and revenge
- B. the issues of self-esteem, hopelessness, personal fears of being released, issues of drug abuse and homelessness
- C. the issues of socialization adjustment and how to transition from prison attitudes to social and the current societal attitude as it relates to their values

These issues if addressed will assist the soon to be ex-offender and his parole agent and family in understanding his needs.

How would this be done? It would be done by some of the following methods:

- A. psychological evaluation
- B. re-socialization interviews and settings
- C. one-on-one's counseling
- D. group sessions and discussion with peers
(These groups will allow an opportunity for every participant to express, discuss and seek assistance and help for their fears or life's issues prior to returning to society)
- E. family re-integration

Criteria:

1. any person who has served 5 or more years of incarceration
2. any person who is within 4 years of an anticipated release or parole date
3. the person must commit themselves to at least 18 months of participation and transitional programming
4. cannot have any major infraction within the last 3 years

It truly makes sense that this process be implemented to the pre-release transition. It is a necessary tool that I believe would drastically reduce the high level of recidivism in Maryland and in this country. Why not? This is the same exact procedure used by the military with men, who have come out of combat and a war zone. It is the same procedure used by the government state and federal when there has been a disaster, unexpected death or traumatic injuries and events. Definitely, experiencing a term of confinement in any correctional institution in this country will qualify for this required "Debriefing".

If it is really our intent to protect and make society and our community safer from crime and violence, then getting to the root of recidivism through social preparation and prevention (Debriefing) is the element we need to add to the pre-release and re-entry process.