
A Minnesota Experience

Qualitative Analysis
of Minnesota
Department of
Corrections Policy

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By Maurece L. Graham © October 11, 2017

Since this addendum is composed from the perspective of a correctional client versus that of a correctional official, little attention has been paid to traditional penal models. Instead, most of the focus is upon conveying the actual experience of incarceration itself, with as much objectivity as possible under the circumstances entailed by being a direct observant and participant. To this end, the Minnesota experience has been broken down into three categories: policy; conditions; and psychology.

A. Policy

Policy in the D.O.C. isn't much different than policy at a company, hospital, or other agency in need of organization and structure. It has been designed, I think, to streamline operations and to comply with applicable state and federal law. Having been incarcerated continuously for over 19 years, I have been able to learn a lot about correctional policy and – importantly – how it's actually applied.

It's easy to pay attention to the letter of policy. There are ample avenues for acquiring the actual wording of the rules and regulations that the Department of Corrections (MnDoC) has in place. These policies can be found at <http://policy.mndocoff.local/> on any prison's internal computer network, or on the department's public website. The Minnesota State Law Library also has access to MnDoC policy and can usually be consulted when trying to access such information.

At any rate, according to the mission statement available to the public on the DOC's website, the department's mission is to "reduce recidivism by promoting offender change through proven strategies during safe and secure incarceration and effective community supervision." In furtherance of these stated objectives the DOC lists the following values:

1. **Safety:** by supporting a safety-conscious environment for staff and offenders.
2. **Research-supported practice:** by providing offender programs and interventions based on evidence-based principles.
3. **Open and transparent communication:** by ensuring that information is shared with staff, offenders, and stakeholders.
4. **Commitment to employee growth and development:** by fostering collaboration, initiative, and opportunities for growth knowing that our strength lies in our skilled and talented employees.
5. **Culture of professionalism:** by commitment to a high standard of ethics, behavior, and work activities.
6. **Organizational development:** by providing an environment that encourages strong quality results through teamwork, technology, training, and process improvement.
7. **Collaboration:** by facilitating cooperative interaction with staff and justice partners, building consensus to support our common interest of reducing recidivism.

In addition to its values the DOC has a list of goals:

1. Provide effective correctional services.
2. Hold offenders accountable.
3. Change offender behavior.
4. Provide restorative services for victims.
5. Engage staff and promote workplace safety.

Keeping in mind that many words like *recidivism*, *offender*, *change*, *proven*, *effective*, and *secure* are very subjective, it is necessary to have at least an operative definition before analyzing such policies. Personally I follow the standard definitions from the Random House Dictionary 2nd Edition Unabridged.

All technicalities aside I have a clear picture, in my mind at least, of what the tenor of the DOC's statement projects as. Basically, the idea seems to be that the DOC wants to keep people from getting hurt or from hurting someone while giving them an opportunity to confront the behaviors that have gotten them stuck in prison. There is a belief that the practices used must be based upon good research if possible, and that a positive culture that fosters good communication and a real understanding of the mutual stakes involved is a necessary part of meeting their goals. This is quite reasonable and supposing that these aims are actually attainable I'd assume that this philosophy has the potential to be helpful to everyone involved.

The problem I've encountered with the DOC, however, isn't in the projected philosophy, it's in the way things actually occur. For starters, DOC personnel do not racially or ethnically reflect their client base. While around 51% of the prisoners are racial or ethnic minorities, these same groups make up less than 5% of the staff. In spite of the tenor of policy, there remains a tremendous communication barrier; this lack of communication has also translated into a lack of empathy, and without those two critical elements of human interaction the system just doesn't run smoothly.

A good example of the effect of the empathy disconnect is how some policies play out in everyday interaction. The values and goals of the department are not always reflected in the day-to-day decision making of staff. I cannot speak to the reasoning as to why this is the case, only the outcome. Some staff repeatedly express their feeling that it is their job to punish inmates. The methods they use range from overuse of informal disciplinary sanctions (which there is nearly no oversight over) to explicit threats to abuse their positions of authority.

There have been a number of occasions when I've been lied on by staff and when I've witnessed staff lie on other staff and other prisoners; in such instances it is almost impossible to receive fair arbitration. Of course

inmates lie as well, but such statements aren't afforded the full weight of state authority and thus have fewer tendencies to carry a detrimental affect (except against another inmate). This circumstance most certainly isn't in line with department goals or values but nonetheless is a pervasive part of the correctional environment.

Undoubtedly there are more egregious violations of DOC policy, state, federal, and international law that I could mention, however, the gist of the violations stem from the gulf that exists between the common understanding of DOC values and goals as envisioned versus their application by some prison staff. Once the fact that there is a large difference between *written* regulation of prison and *de facto* operation of prison is understood, then it is easier to connect what happens during incarceration to the currently popular narrative linking felonization to Jim Crow and slavery.

For the DOC to move in a more positive direction, i.e., one that supports its values and goals, then the most significant thing that can be done is to focus on employee accountability to the spirit of its mission statements. The most difficult situations I've witnessed within the DOC have related to the fact that employees can and do abuse their positions – with at least tacit approval from their peers – and this causes more hardships than any other single thing faced within prison outside of healthcare.

Attention could also be paid to the purpose of some policies so that redundancy and irrationality can be eliminated. Since redundancy seems to be an easier problem to identify, I've focused on irrational policies. In a situation that appears irrational, the DOC doesn't consider **private treatment** plans and education as “successful” compliance with rehabilitative directives. Being that one of the DOC's standard retorts to criticism of its rehabilitative programming is that of resource deficiency, it only makes sense that those with independent resources be allowed to seek and provide for their own psychological care.

Instead no treatment programming other than those it offers is considered valid. Not only is the cost onus of treatment thrust on the public, but alternatives are *prohibited*. In addition, if an inmate were, prior to incarceration, a resident of a different state that has treatment opportunities available, the prisoner cannot even pay for a transfer to that state in order to participate in such treatment *even though the DOC has a multi-year long waiting list for its programs*.

The DOC posits in a memo to me that they don't expect other states to foot the bill for rehabilitation of its inmates; however, it says nothing about why private, often better, psychological care isn't acceptable. This is but one example of many irrational policies that hinder rather than enhance the state's ability to promote its values and goals.

B. Conditions

Conditions of confinement are a sticky matter altogether. According to some there are worse places to be incarcerated than in Minnesota, but this is a matter of perspective and relativity. In states where there is little investment in infrastructure in general there is a clear relationship between the lack of available public funds and the condition of their correctional facilities. Coincidentally, those states that do not meet the needs of their prisoners experience greater repercussions in the form of continued impoverishment and criminality post-incarceration by its felons than states which don't have such distinguishments.

Minnesota is subject to the same public influence, and its effectiveness reflects this. It excels in the formulation of sane mission statements; it falls short in sane application of those same goals. From what I can see, this is because very little of the correctional system's contractors for educational and treatment programs are from diverse institutions. Consequentially, those whose communities are most impacted by and who are most passionate about correctional operations are the ones with least direct input and decision-making capability in administration of its programming.

It is a classic situation where the educated elements of leadership haven't integrated successfully with the moving organs of the community it serves. If more funding were issued to such diverse community institutions than there would be a more energized, sustained push to see the DOC mission statements fulfilled. Additionally, the links for working across community boundaries to benefit Minnesota in general cannot be established unless you have proportionate participation of all parties involved.

More to the point, Minnesota has a blend of **volunteers** who do a lot to see justice – whether criminal or social – served both behind bars and in the streets. These volunteers are handicapped when there are few publicly financed avenues for them to work together across color and religious lines. Many volunteers come as part of particular religious groups and as a consequence don't have an official medium whereby which they can work with

others not of their faith. Likewise, volunteers from the cities who are largely persons of color have few direct lines of communication with other volunteers who come from colleges or other programs. Without public support, their individual efforts are hampered.

Many of the best **programs** aren't officially sponsored by the DOC; they're voluntary or primarily voluntary in nature. This needs to change. Although many things can affect the success of individuals both behind bars and post-release, I've seen tremendous adjustments in attitude and outlook by those involved in programs like Power of People Leadership Institute and the Alternatives to Violence Project.

People who complete those programs and stay involved actually hold their heads higher and try to put themselves on a road to success. There is a greater focus on self-improvement and educational attainment. Behavior while incarcerated improves, levels of personal fulfillment increase, and the language they use is more conscientious.

One common thing is to hear racial slurs and conversations about past troubles. These conversations are usually replete with references to drug and alcohol abuse, manipulative relationships, and the glorification of materialism. People who I've known over the past couple decades of incarceration that have become involved in Power of People and/or Alternatives to Violence programming have distanced themselves from such negative or counterproductive conversations, and encourage others to do the same.

There is a difference between the results of volunteer-administered programs and the programs like the Power of People offered or made available through institutional channels. Early in my incarceration I started a prisoner-operated **restorative justice** program called the Whole Heart Project of St. Cloud. It was the first restorative justice program in Minnesota that was ran this way, and the focus was on fostering a greater sense of community within the prison walls, searching for ways to contribute to the community outside of the walls, and learning more beneficial ways to break the cycle of crime and violence.

Since the program was voluntary and prisoner-ran, the goals were adhered to and there was a marked focus upon self-improvement by the participants. The institution responded by shipping all of the original participants to different institutions and co-opting the program in favor of a type that is overseen by a prison administration hierarchy.

The results of this have been mixed. There have been some improvements in the ability to facilitate drives to fundraise for causes assisting the greater community, and more money for such efforts is being made now than under prisoner's direction. On the other hand, the majority of Restorative justice programs offered do not have as many conscientious, driven people at their helms.

Reports from friends in Shakopee, Moose Lake, Rush City, and at Faribault prisons indicate that the staff responsible for operating those programs have done a lot to hamper the operation of restorative justice outside of community fundraising. There is no emphasis on empowerment of the participants or of acquiring the peacemaking and communication skills that make restorative living a possibility. As a result, while those programs still raise considerable funds for the community, their membership is plagued by distrust, infighting over direction, dissatisfaction with the program, and a general lack of understanding of restorative justice principles.

In short, while the programs like Alternatives to Violence and Power of People have strengthened over the years, the restorative justice program has flirted with becoming largely a fundraising mechanism of the victim services unit. The aim of seeing transformative social justice integrated into the prison system is increasingly a thing dependent upon the availability and time constraints of outside volunteers rather than an institution supported, prisoner-driven effort. If the funding and logistical support available to the hybrid restorative justice program were made available to the Power of People and AVP programs the resources could have a much greater impact both within the prison and in the greater community at large.

Another facet of prison conditions is actual **physical environment**. Other than St. Cloud, Stillwater, and the older units of Faribault, the majority of prison housing is climate-controlled, with air cooling in the hotter months and heating in the cooler months. Running water, showers, irons and microwaves are generally available, and in some places there are ice machines and machines for doing laundry. Outside recreation for at least one hour per day is available everywhere except for segregation, and every prison has a gymnasium with exercise equipment and basketball/handball courts.

Perhaps the quality of recreation could be improved, yet that isn't as big a concern as would be thought coming from prison. The main issue is the amount of time allocated to actual recreation. Minnesota is a "no work,

no play” prison system, and if you don’t have a job – even if it’s due to physical or mental disability – you are confined to your cell for around 20 hours of each day.

For those who work, they get the four through eight hours per day out while working, but no recreational opportunities are afforded during this time. Consequentially, yard times, gym times, opportunities for using the phones, showers, and other things are crowded into a short period where adequate facilities are stressed and impossible to be made available on an equitable basis.

A good example of this is the computer kiosk situation at Faribault. There are 104 prisoners in each unit, and only one kiosk. Each kiosk usage period is 15 minutes, which means in the 3 and ½ hour period available (minus dinner) for usage, a total of 14 people are able to use this. That means around 90% of people don’t actually have a chance to use this machine. Therefore, while its *presence* is a positive condition, its *availability* is definitely inadequate.

That seems to be the problem in general with programming in Minnesota. There are some rather ambitious opportunities technically available, but practically not functional. There is an opportunity to secure a **G.E.D.**, which is mandatory in order to work a job in the facility, but the education building sends people to segregation and other punishments for minor infractions; this prevents many – especially those with developmental or functional disabilities – from advancing their education.

In the same way, pay in the DOC is .25 cents per hour, half of which is taken for fines, restitution, cost of confinement, and release money (GATE fee). In most work areas pay can increase every three months until you reach \$1 per hour. This money must be used to pay for all needs, including hygiene, stationary supplies, and phone calls. In education, pay is fixed at .50 cents per hour, all deductions still apply, and it is common for your hours to be less than three hours per day. This discourages, if not prevents, many from seeking the opportunity it presents. The suspicion is that many opportunities in prison are offered not for their utility to the general population but, rather, to satisfy progressives and other watchdogs involved in the Minnesota political scene. Whether this suspicion is a fact or not is unimportant considering that the effect is the same: there are few opportunities to take advantage of the opportunities that exist.

Traditionally prisoner petitions have challenged conditions in general. In the past there were no state mandated educational or vocational offerings, and prisoners had to agitate for improvements. Now, the complaints are more individualistic. Mandatory treatment schemes, transferring long-term prisoners to be housed in county jails instead of prisons, and impractical waiting lists to participate in the marginally available programs that exist are the primary focus.

Mandatory treatment has surfaced as a primary source of discontent, and not just from those with drug offenses. Prisoners having **sex offenses** or charges on their records are likewise mandated to undergo treatment. Without addressing the merits of non-voluntary treatment, the real setbacks come when people are assigned to sex treatment who have: a) fought the case at trial, passed polygraph examinations, and proclaim their innocence; b) convictions based upon the activities of a co-defendant, especially without their actual participation; and c) categorical sex offenses, like close-age statutory rape, illegal digitized pornography, and withdrawn/dismissed criminal sexual conduct complaints.

Treatment will be failed if a lack of progress is shown, if there is a refusal to admit an "addiction", and if there is a refusal to admit guilt. The consequences of failure are enhanced supervision upon release, higher public risk assessments, more onerous community notification procedures, lengthened prison sentences, and other harsher conditions of incarceration and release.

Housing prisoners with lengthy sentences at **county jail facilities** due to alleged prison overcrowding is another factor affecting the conditions of confinement. Often these county jails have poor recreational facilities, little or no employment, vocational, or educational offerings, and much more expensive canteen, hygiene, and telephone fees. Since these county jails have exemptions from state-mandated care provisions because of the supposedly temporary nature of their housing, state contractors are relieved of the financial burden of prisoner upkeep with no consideration for the prisoner's needs. This is the cause of much tension within prison circles and a key factor not often addressed when debating the conditions of confinement in Minnesota prisons.

Finally, program availability seriously affects the conditions of confinement. Within prison, there are custody levels based upon a number of factors, including: length remaining to serve on sentence; institutional

adjustment patterns; and bed space. These custody levels are: maximum (level 6), close (level 5), medium (levels 3-4), and minimum (levels 1-2).

Persons at maximum custody are generally people the institution has deemed as high risk for violence or escape. Their movement, recreation, and programming opportunities are generally the most restricted in the DOC. Close custody is for prisoners awaiting placement at lower or higher custody facilities, persons with long sentences that are not having institutional adjustment problems, and individuals who have failed to transition successfully to the lower custody facilities. That level of privileges is similar to maximum with greater programming opportunities.

Medium custody is for anyone with less than ten years remaining on their sentence that is not having institutional adjustment problems. In medium the expectation is to begin preparing for eventual release, with an emphasis upon meeting program and treatment requirements, educational needs, and lesser restrictions on movement and recreation. Minimum custody is reserved only for persons with less than four years remaining to serve and is marked by freer movement, recreation, and interaction with the community.

In actuality, nearly all of the significant, condition altering benefits of prison are located at the minimum custody facility. Work release, which allows participants to enter the community to work jobs for up to the last eight months of their sentence, is only available from minimum. Boot camp is also located at minimum, and that program allows for supervised release from prison after completion of an intensive six month structured program. This could potentially shave many years off of actual time served.

The problem for most prisoners, and the community, is that minimum is generally available only to low-level drug and alcohol prisoners, or prisoners who have person to person offenses with the exception of sex cases, which are automatically ineligible to participate. Since sex cases have the lowest level of recidivism outside of lifers, and drug offenders have the highest recidivism of any category, minimum security is nowhere near as responsibly set up as supposed.

Low level drug offenders generally have severe addictions which are anathema to freer access to the community. It is almost guaranteed failure to send a person with an addiction to the community under an honor system, especially since the treatment programs offered in prison are so inadequate to the task.

Likewise, those with property offenses are generally substance abusers with the same attendant problems, and another large category of minimum custody prisoners – those with domestic abuse cases – fall into this classification as well. This is bad for the moral of prisoners, who constantly see these individuals released only to see them re-incarcerated for more addiction-related behavior, and it is bad for the community, who experience spates of crime almost uninterrupted because of this “revolving door” scheme.

Since the high majority of real, condition-changing benefit is effectively unavailable to the general prison population, the bulk of Minnesota’s most positive incarcerative aspects are for all intents and purposes a fallacy. This problem extends to vocational and life skills courses that are present in medium custody facilities. Nearly all of those programs, Thinking for a Change, Anger Management, Victim Impact, Career Tech, and the few college offerings included, are offered based upon proximity to outdate (when prisoner is expected to leave prison).

This outdate-based assignment of opportunities ensures that a) prisoners who are eligible to go to minimum are the same prisoners prioritized to receive programming in medium custody; and b) prisoners outside of the target group become further disgruntled over the state of their conditions of confinement.

Since the presence of these programs also constitute the main body of the DOC’s defenses against criticism directed at its conditions of confinement, institutional excuses for neglecting the needs of prisoners falls flat to the prisoners themselves. This is a large part of the disconnect between the way the public sees incarceration and the descriptions of the same incarceration by prisoners. This is also why many prisoners view the conditions of confinement as harmful even when good programs are at least tacitly a part of the DOC’s opportunities.

The final note on conditions of confinement would be the issue of so-called “wet” cells versus “dry” cells. Wet cells are cells where a toilet is present within the prison cell in close proximity to bunks. During periods where the prisoners are locked into the cell, usually two together, all toilet activities must take place in the presence of the other inmate.

This means that urinating, defecating, and any medical details that need to be taken care of must happen in full view of another individual situated less than ten feet away. The attendant smells and unwanted sights are a humiliating and degrading experience for both parties, especially if there is a sensitive medical situation like prostate problems or irritable bowel syndrome.

When one party is sick or elderly, conflict often results. Even if prison guards respond promptly the possibility of injury in such a conflict is great, especially considering a person's vulnerability during bowel movements. As a result, such sick or elderly persons often pay a fee to their cellmate as a way of compensating them for the difficulty incurred by bunking with an unhealthy/undesirable inmate, rather than hoping the guards protect them.

In a dry cell, there is no toilet and prisoners are allowed to exit the cell to use a public restroom facility located elsewhere in the living unit. This allows for a more humane sleeping situation and lessens the potential for dangerous conflicts between cellmates. Additionally, since the room is not locked from the inside the inmates may escape and draw attention of the guards if necessary to avoid injury.

Even if all cells were not converted into dry cells, allowing a prisoner to step outside of the cell while the other uses the toilet is perfectly feasible. All cells are constructed in a manner that allows for a clear view both from a central guard bubble and from security cameras. The problems encountered from a security standpoint would be no greater than those of currently existing dry cell units. This one change would do the most to ameliorate the quality of confinement for prisoners in Minnesota.

C. Psychology

The term *psychology* is being used in this instance to refer to the conversation that attends the word "incarceration" by prisoners in Minnesota. Understanding how prisoners talk about prison, and some of the meanings that accompany these conversations, is helpful to gaining insight into the prison experience itself. Since incarceration is projected as primarily an opportunity to increase safety of our communities, it is necessary to learn about what it means to individuals so confined.

There are a number of popular phrases in prison: "Don't do the crime if you can't do the time"; "I brought myself here"; "I came by myself, I'm gonna leave by myself"; "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result"; "I'm not a quitter"; "We're all not guilty, right?"; and "These people do what they want to do" are just a few examples that in my experience typify prison thinking.

Although the phrases may seem self-explanatory, which to an extent they are, there is also a lot of conversation underneath the expressions I've selected. Mostly what you'll find is a strange mixture of what I call

fatalist optimism. This means that there is a lot of guilt and belief in responsibility for the bitterness of the incarcerative experience, something that can change if the person is committed to bettering themselves. It also means that underneath the guilt lies a sense that the whole circumstance misrepresents who the individual is and is a type of unfairness unrelated to the person's actions.

Within prison you will find people who blame their girlfriends or wives, the system, their addiction, society, religion (or lack of), and bad luck for their incarceration. You will find those who believe that they are good people who must do bad because they are so good and loyal that if they only made good choices it would mean they aren't trying hard enough to succeed. There are also those who realize that their crimes are a result of a multitude of factors, some of which are beyond their comprehension, and they spend most of their time seeking those missing answers. In short, beneath the common slogans is a wide variety of very complex thinking.

The psychology, then, is less a thing of listening to the words spoken and more a product of following the complete conversation. In my experience, the prisoners who never get stuck in one type of viewpoint are the ones who do the best as far as acquiring or sharpening the skills needed to be productive in society. Lack of dogmatism seems to promote continual studying and a habit of self-analysis that prevents old experiences from dominating future choices. This psychological flexibility usually manifests itself as rejecting the use of the common phrases outlined at the beginning of this section.

To be clearer, the prisoners most apt to use the commonest phrases are the ones least likely to understand **prison culture**. Slogans in here tend to attract users who haven't underwent or completed the intense process of self-analysis it takes to develop or maintain an understanding of what it is exactly they are experiencing by living behind these walls. After this superficial substitute is exhausted, the mental health of the prisoner generally requires a more substantial understanding of their circumstance than that contained by any catch phrase.

By this reasoning, then, prison psychology is something delineated into two broad classifications: Those of us who use slogans as a means of adjustment; and those of us who study as a means of adjustment. Neither of these classifications does justice to the complexity of thinking involved, yet they do provide a workable basis for getting a deeper understanding of what prisoner culture is like.

Religious affiliation and prison treatment programs are the largest generators of slogans within prison. Coming to prison is hard. It is painful. You lose loved ones and cherished situations, and the mental anguish even for the least empathetic is real. Attending religious service and following the institutionally established regimen are the most common coping mechanisms because of their visibility and because of their lack of clear connection with any of the mistakes that bring people here.

Without judging the value of religion or prison-based treatment, I can say that it is definitely easier to memorize religious doctrine or treatment protocol than it is to discover the needs and experiences at the root of personal struggles with getting along in society. It is also less risky, in that there are readily available community organs such as churches and law enforcement that support prisoners based upon doctrinal agreement rather than actual proof of positive change.

For persons with low self-esteem and a lack of belief in their ability to break cycles of addiction or so-called criminality, going with the program serves as a readily available alternative to committing to combating deep-seated habits. Since failure is often connected to the pain of incarceration – and the pain of the trauma that spawned the journey to incarceration – it is more psychologically comfortable to avoid opportunities for failure, and this means there is a powerful reluctance to confront personal issues that have beaten the person in the past. In this way established structure becomes the enabler for a continued **criminal pathology**.

The quicker one breaks from a dependence upon slogans for adjustment, the more rapidly the opportunity presents itself for challenging the beliefs and conditions that prevent escaping the incarcerative trap. Outside volunteers like Shane Price from Power of People Leadership Institute often state that, “The real prison is in the mind; the razor-wire and bars are only a symbol.” Likewise, authors like Bo Lozoff exhort that it is possible to be “Free on the inside.” The people in prison that I’ve seen who live as if quotes like these are true are the same people that I generally don’t see return to prison, and I believe that’s because acceptance of this type of thinking represents an embrace of the challenge of self-analysis that leads to psychological health.

The DOC, however, is a political organ whose policies are controlled by the legislature and whose Commissioner is appointed by the governor of the state. This means that the psychology advanced within prison must be in line with the thinking of the state overall. Therefore, the very institutions whose presence serves as the

least catalyst for psychological transformation are the exact institutions whom receive the most official support in DOC policy planning.

Lino Lakes prison has an entire prison wing dedicated to PFA (Prison Fellowship Academy, formerly the Innerchange Freedom Initiative) whose purpose is to use Christian-based spirituality to confront the recidivist behaviors of prisoners. Nearly every prison has a wing dedicated to Chemical Dependency treatment and/or sex offender treatment as well. These programs are a sign of the positive intent of correctional policy, but also a clear signal that there is a wide gap between what is believed works, i.e. faith-based therapy and mandatory treatment, and what prisoners see working while living here (higher education).

Conclusion

Any analysis on the prison experience will always be a subjective analysis based upon the views of the writer; this report is no different. I am a prisoner in Minnesota who has served nineteen years behind bars, and in addition I have made it a point to study the *why* and the *how* of my circumstance. I believe my perspective is a valuable contribution to understanding the Minnesota incarcerative experience but it is no means an island unto itself; it is my hope that through my writings, in conjunction with statistics and conversations with others involved in prison – operators and volunteers, and loved ones of prisoners – a more complete understanding of the need for genuine transformative justice in prison is acquired.