

Part II

The U.S. Prison Asylums: Why Americans Should Be Concerned by Jack Hays*

"[P]risons are designed for keeping secrets, for holding inside not just men [and women] but also their lives and the details of those lives. In prison, social isolation is a matter of policy..."¹ Over 100 years the courts and prison officials have known that the consequences of social isolation and solitary confinement include violent insanity, psychosis, mental illness, exacerbated mental illness, and all too frequent-suicide.² The people who are making money to put people in prison will not profit by having the media and legislators inform and protect citizens.³ The path that our current prison policy has been on is a juggernaut of unimaginable suffering,

* I apologize that I must write this by hand. There are no computers to be used in this prison, there is one working typewriter for 1000 men, and I sit in this cell 22-25 hours per day. Moreover, contact with all of you is suppressed. No one may ever read this...

torture, and a World pandemic of mental illness resulting in more violence, crime, and death. ⁴ There is no more time for loyalties to political party or any other group that is an illusion of separation between human beings. In the 1980's, in just 4 years federal law enforcement budgets soared from \$8 million to \$95 million... While treatment, education and prevention was reduced. ⁵ In the 1990's President Bill Clinton flew home to Arkansas during his campaign to watch the execution of Intellectually Disabled Ricky Ray Rector; the man was retarded and even asked for dessert from his last meal served. After he was killed, Clinton gave his trademark smile and thumb-up, then exclaimed, "[N]o-one can say I'm soft on crime." ⁶ As Malcolm X said it best, "I'm for justice no matter who it is for or against. I'm a human being first and foremost, and as such

I'm for whoever and whatever benefits humanity as a whole." The problem is, I do not see anyone clamoring to brainstorm and enact solutions, quite the contrary. Here in Iowa, they have shut-down Mental Health Facilities in-and-out of prison. Moreover, there are more Mentally Ill in prisons than all American hospitals and Facilities. ⁷ Indeed, they are trapped in a "closed circuit of perpetual marginality" ⁸

As I write this, men on the cell ranges beside me, above me, and below me scream obscenities at each other with wild abandon. Men like myself with "serious mental illness" (Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, etc.) — some of whom were with me at the Clinical Care Unit before it closed. One man two cells down has a Brain Injury from a stroke, his name is Lyle. At one point Lyle was part of the "minimum work-outs" program and went outside of the prison each day. After an argument with the staff he now sits in his cell 22.25 hours

per day because of a new "program" enacted in the last few years, called the "Transitional Incentive Program" (TIP). Some former prison guards (now Warden & Ass. Wardens) cooked-up a way to save the state more money — in 3 years they have cut food, clothing, medical services, pay, etc. — by keeping us in our cells longer. This way they have cut-down on staff. The kid with the brain injury is 21 yrs. old and he will never be fit for any "Outs" program or society again. The things heard most around me are: (1) "a ss rape", (2) "beat your ass", (3) "shut the fuck-up", (4) "this cock" in various sentences, (5) "these nuts" also varied, (6) "bitch" or "bee-a-itch", and roaring with glee and wild abandon that only the truly disturbed could know! And these men are neither aware of their degeneration nor do they care to hear the "smart ass jailhouse lawyer" (at your service) point out to

them that they are "jumping head-first and willingly into the abyss"...

This prison is more than 100 years old. Recently, the "Social Services" closed its doors after decades of "open door" policy. I feel so far away from family, society and friends... it is as though I am in a dark, lonely cave on a deserted island and these essays are my messages in bottles. I am a big man — 6 ft., 250 lbs., and strong. In some ways, I am still that little boy beaten, scalded ("dirty, dirty lil' boy!"), and even occasionally locked in a cage. ¹⁰

I recently spent 35 days in a psychiatric isolation cell because I refused to live in a cell similar to a cage... After being in-and-out of state institutions since 1987, I have never attacked, assaulted or hurt anyone... but myself... this is a matter of record. I have felt a myriad of feelings beyond words or any medium (I am an artist, musician, like my Schizo-effective Mother)

but I must admit, I find myself feeling less toward despair and more toward fury, rage, wrath... I am frequently afraid when I wake, as well as confused. More often I am afraid of losing myself in this horror I live...

I do not know if I will see change in my lifetime... I doubt I have much longer to live. For all of our sake it must become as important as "global warming"!!

Jack Hays
November 2017
Anamosa State Pen.

ENDNOTES TO PART II

- 1 Prison Profiteers: Who Makes Money from Mass Incarceration, ed. by Tara Herivel and Paul Wright (The New Press 2007), pg. 180
- 2 GOOGLE or BING "In re Medley, 134 U.S. 160, 168 (1890)?" see also, solitarywatch.com, and "Psychopathological Effects of Solitary Confinement," 140 American Journal of Psychiatry 11 (1983)
- 3 Corporations with a stake in prison expansion invested 3.3 million dollars in 2 years for state political candidates; "Policy Lockdown: Prison Interests Court Political Players", pg. 4 (Institute on Money in State Politics, April 2006)
- 4 "Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates", by Doris J. James and Lauren E. Glaze (50% Mentally Ill); also supra, "Prison Profiteers", pg. ix (25% of World's prisoners)
- 5 In 1982, President Reagan officially announced his War on Drugs...; pg. 53 Katherine Beckett, "Making Crime Pay: Law and Order in Contemporary American Politics" (New York: Oxford Univ. Press 1997)
- 6 "Frying Them Isn't The Answer", TIME, 3.14.1994, pg. 32; see also "The Politics of Imprisonment: How The Democratic Process Shapes The Way We Punish Offenders" (2009)
- 7 www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/storage/documents/Final_jails-v-hospitals-study.pdf
- 8 "The New 'Peculiar Institution': On the Prison as Surrogate Ghetto", Loic Wacquant, 3 Theoretical Criminology 4, pgs. 377-89 (2000)
- 9 Mumia Abu-Jamal is the Vice President of the "Jailhouse Lawyers" division of the National Lawyers Guild (nlg.org), his book, "Jailhouse Lawyers..." (2009), puts Jailhouse Lawyers and mentally ill #1 and #3 as "the most targeted", pg. 48
- 10 GOOGLE or BING "Betty Warrnock", "cages", "Des Moines Register", and "1982", when I was 9 years old this lady went to trial for what she did to us
- 11 "Why Scandinavian Prisons Are Superior", by Professor Doran Larson, The Atlantic, 9.24.2013, www.theatlantic.com