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I'm a 32-year-old California prisoner serving a 137 years-to-life sentence. Eight years I've been here, mired in murders, suicides, riots, drug overdoses, guard beatings, prison corruption, widespread abuse, and normalized insanity. And within this insane existence, ironically, I found my sanity. But who the hell ever believed that this insane environment would produce sane people? That stupid and sadistic prison officials would produce smart policies and positive prison conditions? Why aren't sociologists and psychologists and other scientists with insight into the human psyche, afforded a major role in the designing of "rehabilitative" institutions?

Like most prisoners, I grew up in poverty, in a dysfunctional home, in the city of Los Angeles. Marauding hordes of homeless people and shootings and crime and gangs and physical abuse at home were just facts of life. In my case, so were abnormalities in my head which I struggled to understand for a long time and which I learned to keep to myself, like having hallucinations and very odd and paranoid beliefs. At 13 I believed there were cameras everywhere and that the FBI was spying on me. I didn't tell anyone about this and so much more until age 15, in a juvenile camp, to a psychiatrist, right before being released and going on a wild police pursuit where I tried crashing into the patrol cars I thought were demons coming to take me to hell.

Years later, at 24, after a long history of imprisonment

and several psychiatric hospitalizations, I began to kidnap and rob certain individuals, operating within a deadly street gang, and living in a very dangerous psychotic realm. I shot at certain people and at the "mechanical pigeons" I believed the FBI was using to spy on me. I suspected everyone and everything, even sticking a pistol in my girlfriend's mouth when I suspected she was trying to set me up. I believed the "end war" was coming, and I scrambled to stockpile supplies for it.

Two years later I was convicted of various kidnapping and robbery charges. I refused to attend my trial for certain reasons and delusions. During my two-year stay in the L.A. County Jail I received two beatings by deputies, and once I was kept in a cold and dark tank for two days, naked, handcuffed in the back and chained to a bench, punched and kicked intermittently to prevent me from sleeping, throwing buckets of cold water on me, and several times setting a towel over my face and pouring water up my nose and mouth. They'd choke me until I passed out, and all I could do was smile at them to not give them any satisfaction. They wanted information I did not know. The experience did something to me that I still can't understand.

Today it feels like I'm living in some sadistic Orwellian dystopia, ruled by contradictions and absurdities and corruption and normalized insanity. C.O.'s consistently beat inmates, and then charge them with a false "battery on a peace officer" to legitimize their crimes. They create the "facts", and

as an inmate you are always wrong. This recently happened to me. For months I had been severely harassed by sadistic pigs, and I had to stop going to school, yard, and the dining hall just to avoid them. I even spoke to the warden about this, but three days later these pigs were in my cell beating me while I was handcuffed in the back and held down. Five days later it happened again, while I was cuffed in the back and wearing only boxers. Both times I received serious injuries and had to be taken to an outside hospital. Mental health staff are usually indifferent and don't report C.O. abuse, but I had a great psych' who had filed two reports prior to the beatings, regarding the harassment and threats by C.O.'s. But nothing came of it, of course. You think a prison would name as a Chief Psychologist one who advocated for prisoners' rights and challenged corruption? — Ha.

Lately I've been seriously deteriorating. A guy recently got hacked to death and it really bothered me and I couldn't stop thinking and dreaming of him, of how he died. Another guy tried killing himself (unsure if he survived), and they left his cell uncleaned for several days, and I'd go to his cell to look at the huge puddle of blood on the floor, at all the blood smeared across the cell, and I'd wonder many things about our petty mortality. Most of the time we're kept in our cells for over twenty hours a day, and often don't get let out at all. I've noticed that this has made me anxious and uncomfortable around people, and at times I get this very primal urge to

attack the walls, attack my captors, and try to run free.

It took me a long time to admit and accept, reluctantly, the Bipolar Disorder these prison "doctors" had diagnosed me with. It is a frequent torture, a real and tangible and horrible pain within. A curse. Sometimes I'll go days without leaving the cell, without eating or showering, just paralyzed over the mattress and staring at the walls and having bad dreams. Or I'll go days unable to sleep, tackling ten projects at once, punching the obscene walls, talking to myself and having hallucinations and wrecked with anxiety. In desperate lapses I'll hang from a sheet around my neck for a moment, or cut a vein open. The prison mental health system is a sham, and a majority of inmates are resentful toward them because of their hypocrisy, their collusion with prison officials, their bureaucratic sinecure. Yes, there are saints working here, but they are a very small minority who the system neutralizes with its cancerous might.

For a long time I felt ashamed and disgusted with myself, and feelings of guilt and unworthiness haunted me daily. I thought I deserved this punishment and more. I'd feel guilty when I ate, thinking I did not deserve food. C.O.'s would make comments about how much taxpayer money is being wasted on us, about how it would be more practical to just start shooting us, and I'd believe them. I thought I deserved to die here. But I don't believe these things anymore.

I think that it's something like about ten billion dollars spent on CDCR, yearly. Now, the food and clothing for inmates is very low-grade and cheap, plus they're both made and prepared by inmates who get paid cents per hour. The medical system, like the mental health system, is actually shoddy and ineffective and ripe with bureaucratic careerists concerned with saving money and stalling treatment and minimizing diseases and conditions to ignorant inmates that know no better. The nurses are the worst and become extensions of the C.O.'s they blatantly fraternize with and routinely assist in fabricating paperwork.

From what I see, only about ten percent of inmates have "jobs", which pay a lucrative salary (cents/hour), and that merely help the prison operate. About another ten percent are crammed in school. The rest are idle. From what I see and where I've been, even if all the "rehabilitative" programs in prison were filled to capacity, it would still leave about two-thirds of inmates lacking "rehabilitation". So where's all those billions of dollars going? —

To very shady medical and pharmaceutical contracts. To the contracts of the vast array of corporations providing CDCR with the products necessary to function. To a slew of administrative and "professional" sinecures. To an army of prison employees with wonderful benefits and job security. And to the C.O.'s and their filthy, greedy union that bullied from congress ridiculous salaries

and benefits, many of whom make well over a hundred thousand a year and own boats and stocks and get to go on expensive trips.

When the guy mentioned earlier was being stabbed to death, C.O.'s let it go on a while before intervening reluctantly. About three weeks ago, when people were yelling "man down", C.O.'s, in keeping with tradition, took fifteen minutes to begrudgingly get off their royal asses to check on the cell, and found a man hanging (don't know if he survived, they never come back), and then scrambled with the nurses to revive him, and meanwhile, also true to tradition, deemed it necessary and appropriate to crack jokes. (I have met honorable C.O.'s, great people with tremendous sympathy and insight and work ethic, but I have more than enough fingers to count them all.)

So it is not prisoners who billions of dollars of taxpayer money is being wasted on. It is wasted on C.O.'s and their toxic union, on nepotism and corruption and shady contracting, on all the corporations dealing with CDCR.

Prisoners are also no angels, of course. Sadly, the majority lack insight into the societal factors afflicting us, have no desire to improve our communities, and are narrow-minded and concerned with B.S. Sometimes they just irritate the revolutionary out of me. But we are products of a

violently capitalist society, and I believe "criminals" embody the barest form of this socio-economic system, with its emphasis on war and violence and selfishness and vanity and materialism and most of all, profits. I think there is very small hope for us already here, especially with the way prisons are set up now.

I believe resources should be drenched on children — more counselors and programs and teachers and money for schools and communities in poverty and high-crime areas. Triple the budget for juvenile jails to provide more intense education, therapy, and to do all to avoid crime in adulthood. I believe possession and use of drugs should be decriminalized, and drug centers erected, where addicts can go to get and use drugs, and they can be offered treatment and job training and other resources (as in many other countries). This will not only stop drug users from committing crimes for drugs, but it will also leave the dealer unemployed, and it will have a trickle down effect up the whole illegal drug enterprise. The money not spent on judges and lawyers and jails used to prosecute these "criminals" would be transferred to these more rational programs. And about "lost jobs", a new array of jobs would be created in these truly rehabilitative measures.

In prison now, I believe prisons should be divested of their right to secrecy, and activists and the media given the right to enter at will. Funding should be created for a team of lawyers to represent inmates who file civil suits against guards for being beaten or enduring other

abuses while in prison. Way more money should be allocated for public defender offices. An independent and comprehensive audit should be taken on all prison affairs, with the intent of ending corruption and prison profiteers, enforcing accountability, and investing much more on actual rehabilitation. I believe in Labor and socialism, but guard unions need to be destroyed, and their impunity and sinecures ended.

I believe some sort of subsidy program needs to be started, where all parolees can be employed for at least one year, along with many more resources offered to reduce recidivism rates. I think that state prison systems need to be phased out and offenders jailed at their home counties instead, with new Rehabilitation Centers (change negative labels) built and designed by social scientists to maximize rehabilitation efforts.

Once, I kept graphs for seven months, noting every violent incident, who was involved, and why it happened. I learned that a higher rate of drugs precipitated a higher rate of violence (duh!). But, in these seven months, it was a mere 17% of the population who was responsible for 81% of the violence. And of those 17%, I found many similarities between them — age, aggression, being more socially active, etc. And it got me thinking:

Imagine if non-police resources were focused on these most likely to commit violent acts in the community — If, like a team of social workers and activists (with no police ties)

were to go into a community and identify those committing violent acts and those most likely to commit them. Treating a minority of men would eliminate a majority of violence. And what if a group of social scientists and activists were tasked with identifying the factors which contribute to crime, formulating a plan that battles these factors, and presented it to congress for implementation?

One very important thing I nearly forgot to mention is that more resources need to be allocated for mental health facilities (independent of prison). Time and again I see people here that have absolutely no business being in prison, people with tragic mental disorders who this shady system victimized by not giving them the treatment they require and instead sending them to prison. And then in prison they hardly receive any actual therapy, while all these "professionals" grow wealthier.

Finally, I think you should look at all others who profit from keeping this system in place. A few companies keep a monopoly on prison canteens and package vendors, and these have very close ties to prison officials. I believe all prison profiteering should be eradicated, and that new state-owned canteen and package vendors be instituted, with the profits going to the victims of crime. Outside, it is munitions manufacturers, the military industrial complex, who profits from crime by arming and militarizing police departments and cyphoning tax money for their

war on drugs and crime, all across America, across the world!
To reduce poverty and its byproducts, you must reduce capitalism
and inequality, and when has capitalism ever reduced itself
for societal concerns?

I think all these issues, and many more, need to be
addressed in any conversations about fixing the prison
system. To me it seems that prisons are just another vehicle
for the upward redistribution of wealth, another weapon
to protect the status quo. You can't just attack the symptoms.
Attack the disease as well. Society as a whole needs
rehabilitation. Again, everywhere, look at where all the money
is going, at how it's being wasted.
Why isn't everyone pissed?