

Broken?

6-1-18

Some people claim that our criminal justice system is horribly broken, and to most Americans that probably deserves a nod of recognition for the appearance of truth it presents to our general public. Let's look at it from that perspective for a minute. Most prisons in the United States are extremely unsafe places to both live and work. The facilities for the most part are out dated and in disrepair, due to lack of funding by the state and Federal governments. Training for the officers is, (and this is just my observation from the prisoners perspective) inadequate at best, and directly designed to promote the current atmosphere, at the worst. The standard operating procedure is geared not towards rehabilitation, but instead punishment, which I would like to point out is not D.O.C's job or responsibility. The courts sentenced us to a term of years, in which we will be separated from society, to protect said society from the incompatible behaviors we exhibited that led to the sentence. That term of years is the punishment, the guards job is care, custody, and control. The transition back into society from the prison system is too abrupt and offers very little help to those returning to a life most of them won't even recognize, which leads to behaviors and activities that are familiar, but ultimately are just more incompatible and unacceptable to living in a civilized community. So yeah sure I can see the logic of saying that the system is broken.

On the other hand though, I would like to present those same previous statements as evidence that the system is working exactly how the people in charge want it to run. For instance let's take the fact that our prisons are unsafe to both live in and work at. Of course an environment such as this is inevitably going to be filled with more risks than in the public due to the

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Concentration of people prone or inclined towards criminal activity or violence. That aside living in such a place, where a mistrust of the officers is guaranteed either due to the officers attitude or conduct towards the inmate, or the fact that any consorting with an officer is viewed by the population as signs of a "snitch", which can be dangerous to the inmate and is often avoided. Living under those conditions for an extended period of time creates a mindset that is not conducive with becoming a law abiding citizen upon re-entry. And I don't need to explain that this atmosphere is promoted and not discouraged in the least.

As for the outdated and falling facilities, that is much easier to explain. To build enough new facilities to replace the ones that need to be shutdown would be way more money than either the state or federal government is willing to spend on men and women who are considered something less than a citizen. To the powers that be, our living conditions are adequate to our status as human beings. Also to shut down the number of facilities which need it would displace an amount of inmates that this overcrowded system has no more ~~place~~ room to house.

Lastly the training and officer protocol demand a hostile disposition towards the inmate. This not only is dangerous and unhealthy for the officers, it also creates many unnecessary hostile interactions between officer and inmate that result more often than not in further abuse of the inmate or injury to the officer. Not to mention new charges and additional time being added to the inmate. This could all be avoided with a different approach being taught to new recruits to the Department. But alas keeping the inmate population as "Violent Animals" is helpful to the justification of department jobs. If

the public were to think of prisons as a not so hostile environment, Joe a public might decide to raise the question of, why is so much of my tax money going towards all those guards? And that would do at all for the people who run this over sized, unwieldy prison complex. The result is a picture being painted for the money running this operation (You the taxpayer) that only gives the impressions that are helpful to them. To maintain this charade any and all attempts at getting the other side of the coin to the light of day is suppressed utterly and completely. And I suppose if my livelihood depended on silence from the inside of the walls all across this country, I would say and do whatever I had to, to maintain the status quo, for the continuation of a job for me. If this system was actually designed and run to rehabilitate inmates and prevent recidivism it would be depriving itself of the fuel that runs it, the inmates. If more men and women were to leave prison a more productive and law abiding citizen, whom could act as a role model for our youth heading down the same path that led them to incarceration in the first place, then the prison complex would virtually collapse under its own burdensome weight. So it only makes sense that the people, and I use that term reluctantly when referring to the individuals in charge of the continuation of The Department of Corrections, decide to frame rules in such a way as to promote living conditions that force men and women into personas that they may or may not have been predispositioned to, or deny inmates to access to certain programs or material that would benefit them under the label of a "security risk to institutional safety", or prohibit any activity that would allow someone to support themselves in a system that charges for everything, yet pays nothing for the work it gets from the inmate. I guess when you label everything as prohibited it helps reinforce the idea that inmates are

~~incapable~~ incapable of following rules and are there for a threat to society, simply because they are forced to "Hustle" to get deodorant or soap, which should be provided for, but which is not, due to budget cuts that target the inmate before the officers. And to close this out I'll touch on the way, after enduring years of this attitude, behavior, perception, and life altering daily routine, we are abruptly handed \$50.00, kicked out the door and promptly told to leave the premises. And to state it mildly it takes a little more time than that to allow your mind to re-adjust to living in the outside world. And its sad to say that during those first few weeks or months is when the Man or woman will violate the terms of their parole or probation, and be sent back to incarceration. Call me a cynic, but it seems to me that if you prescribe to the second view in this piece, then the system is not broken, but a well oiled machine that is doing exactly what it was designed to do, keep the beds full.

I want to thank you all for your time and consideration in giving me the opportunity to maybe open your eyes to a world you thought you knew. All I ask is you give my thoughts and perceptions some honest thought. I will continue to write as long as I feel my ideas and words are having a meaningful impact on the situation we all find ourselves in, whether inmate guard, or civilian. Also let me apologize for my poor handwriting, I know its chicken scratch, but its what I've got.

Yours truly,
