The Long-term Prisoner: Warehousing the Elderly

By Robert (Bob) Clark

Let me introduce myself. My name is Bob Clark. I'm serving a very lengthy sentence, 121-222 years, for a series of violent assaults in prison years ago. I've been incarcerated for 50 years. Came in the prison system at the age of 13 and I'm now 63. My essay is on warehousing elderly prisoners. At the present time, there is an aging crisis in the American prison system. The cause is brought on by law-makers with the mentality of getting tough on crime will solve all of the problems of the judicial system.

But what it is doing is the prison populations have been soaring to record numbers. They are warehousing elderly prisoners until they get so old until their medical and mental capacities are so bad they are just waiting to die. From a financial view, they could cause less. But from a financial point it's causing states all sorts of problems. Prisoners from the age of 50 and up cause these prisons more than half of the cost that prisoners under the age of 50 do. Statistics show that prisoners over the age of 50 cost taxpayers $7,000, whereas prisoners under 30
Cost to taxpayers around 35,000. The United States is the largest jail in the world with the highest incarceration. There are 26 thousand prisoners at this time in America 65 years and older. It makes no sense to keep people that are no longer a threat to society to still have to be warehoused in prison when they have the lowest efficiency to re-offend for any person housed in prison. These elderly are rotting away in our prisons because of politics. All these laws have lacked sentences of life without parole, or life with parole but the very seldom parole the elderly prisoners who have served 40 to 50 plus years in why would you keep the aged and graylocked away so they can keep costing the taxpayers huge amounts of money. These get tough policies by lawmakers have did nothing but create nursing home for the elderly prisoners. They don't even have enough cells for the young and violent because we are taking up all the space. I know first hand I've served 50 years in prison, if you keep a man locked up so long past what he can do to be productive he's so out of touch with reality he's no longer able to function on his own.
A lot of these elderly suffer from dementia, wheelchairs, cane, and walkers and more. A lot of them have but lived their family so they have no one left in society. The whole world has passed us by. Being 50 plus in prison does not mean old by society's standard. But inside prison walls it is considered elderly. The prison diet and the stresses of prison life stresses you pre-maturely inside. Three fourths of these elderly have ailments such as blood pressure that's high, or diabetes. Being old in prison has so many negative factors. For example, climbing stairs, and having to live in cell-blocks where they have bunk beds. They make exceptions usually but I knew for 9 months at the age of 63 I was forced to sleep in a top bunk. Back in the times of your age there were a very low number of elderly prisons locked up compared today it's not even close. Sometimes younger prisoners are assigned to assist in caring for the elderly prisoners but usually they are on their own. Elderly prisoners feel so isolated and lonely around these young prisoners. It is no more than a slow death and agony of death torture to
these aged prisoners. You also have situations where the elderly prisoners feel vulnerable. We come into prison young and healthy and eventually we decay mentally and then our body goes. Some of these young geysers mistake elders as push overs because of their age, so the elder still feel pride, and sometimes they clash. These needless policies that the law makes are putting but need to be reconsidered for re-consideration because it is not fair to the taxpayers who is really trusting. We have to start having some type of policy to start letting these elderly prisoners out. The majority of them are harmless. These parole boards are letting younger and younger prisoners out with less time done and by passing us aging prisoners that have served 40 and 50 years of incarceration. It has been proven that the elderly are the less dangerous of all prisoners. So let's hope for some change in policy and look for a solution so society can get a break on their taxes and the elderly can quit taking up room and give a chance at a chance to live and die with dignity. 🌹 Robert (Bob) Clark, #44033